Painstaking, original, and useful, and to anyone new to English, a boon.

- EDWIN NEWMAN

“DON’T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER!”

“A DICTIOMARY OF 3,800 PICTURESQUE IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

N. E. RENTON
"STRIKE GOLD," "DELIVER THE GOODS," AND "SET THE THAMES ON FIRE!"...WITH THE BOOK THAT GIVES YOUR ENGLISH COLOR, CLARITY, AND POWER.

Aristotle said it best: "The greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphors." Rich with historical lore that takes us from bygone trades and traditions to the computer age, these wonderful expressions convey shades of meaning more succinctly than ordinary phrases. Using them well can improve your writing and speech. Now Metaphorically Speaking offers you 3,800 metaphors—from "alpha to omega"—in an easy-to-use, uniquely organized dictionary. Think of a word, and this book will give you the metaphors where it appears. Think of a metaphor, and Metaphorically Speaking will explain its meaning and often its origin. Think of the idea, and this indispensable reference will supply you with "an Aladdin's cave" of metaphors that convey it.

So when you need a fresh figure of speech, don't "get your knickers in a knot" or "bust your boiler." "Look for elephants in elephant country"—look it up in...

METAPHORICALLY SPEAKING

• Ideal for writers, teachers, students, and public speakers
• Invaluable for users of English as a second language
• Features three separate, self-contained listings: a dictionary, a thematic section, and a thesaurus
• Includes suggestions for party games, advertising copy, public addresses, and crossword puzzles

ISBN 0-446-39353-3
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF METAPHORS

1. WHO WAS THE ORIGINAL "REAL McCoy"?

An American boxer who became world welterweight champion in

[1890.]

2. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "A DARK HORSE" AND "A TROJAN HORSE"?

About the fall of Troy (it refers to the large gift horse full of soldiers used to bring a dark horse is a person with unsuspected talents; a Trojan horse isfull of soldiers used to bring)

3. WHY IS "A WHITE ELEPHANT" SOMETHING TO AVOID?

These gifts of sacred pachyderms from the King of Siam often ruined their recipients with the expense of their upkeep.

4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN "TO PLAY DUCKS AND DRAKES"?

To not take a matter seriously.

5. WHERE WAS "THE CAT LET OUT OF THE BAG"?

Public fairs, where cats wrapped in sacks were passed off as pigs.

6. WHAT IS "A MILCH COW"? (HINT: THIS BOOK IS ONE!)

An easy and plentiful source of some desired benefit.

AND EXPAND YOUR COMMAND AND UNDERSTANDING OF ENGLISH WITH...

METAPHORICALLY SPEAKING

The book that "leaves no stone unturned"!
To all the people who think that they never use any metaphors
In a time when the visual image is such a powerful influence on our attitude and thoughts, it is well to be reminded of the miracle of language. How and when was it invented? How do we explain its richness and variety? By what extraordinary transformation did words which have quite literal and specific meanings take on metaphysical significance? Which expression conveys the most vivid meaning, "the top dog," or its definition, "the person in the most powerful position?"

The metaphor wins every time.

For metaphor is the spice of language. It also activates the reader's or listener's inner eye to produce images which are just as vivid as visual ones. Without its color, wit and concreteness would disappear.

Here is a dictionary and thesaurus of metaphors which is both a practical guide to meaning and a stimulus to enquiry. Only a person in love with words could have compiled it; and there are surprises in it for even the most knowledgeable student of language. Mr. Renton achieves the aim that Sir Philip Sidney saw as the central principle of poetry—to teach by delighting.

Leonie Kramer
Metaphors which have the community’s seal of approval roll off the tongue so readily that by any yardstick they are invariably thick on the ground. A person in the pink who plays his cards right and who takes up the cudgels for the cause will without going overboard or changing tack find an avalanche of metaphors under his very nose. Unless he puts a foot wrong or goes off half-cocked he will regard them all as useful tools and as grist to his mill. He will already be in the picture and will not need to engage in a witch-hunt or rely on the grapevine in order to put his finger on them.

Without matters getting out of hand or losing any momentum it stands out a mile that metaphors are in the blood of every Tom, Dick and Harry worth his salt and willing to show the flag. Many expressions have been gathering dust for donkey’s years and are so much a hallmark of our society that their down to earth use at the drop of a hat does not ring a bell or cause any eyebrows to be raised.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART I</th>
<th>1: INTRODUCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background ....................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objectives ....................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coverage .....................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arrangement ..................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Borderline Cases .............................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common Keywords ..............................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2: SOURCES OF METAPHORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors from Literature ........................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors from Politics ...........................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors from Religious Sources ....................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors from Heraldry ............................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of Foreign Languages .....................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3: THE METAPHOR IN DAILY USE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Prevalence of Metaphors .......................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Graphic Nature of Longer Metaphors ........................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Metaphors ..................... ................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors in Transition ................................. ........</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4: METAPHORS IN VARIOUS CATEGORIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Thematic Section ..................... ................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport ........................................... ........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Human Body .......................... ................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals ....................................... ........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The World of Sail ............................. ........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music .......................................... ........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce ......................................... ........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amusements Generally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics of Usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5: METAPHORS EXPRESSING IDEAS IN CERTAIN SUBJECT AREAS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Thesaurus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Difficulty&quot; as a Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money Matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors Used Euphemistically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6: SELECTED CASE STUDIES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Living English Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays on Words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Need for Precision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense Expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colloquialisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexist Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double Metaphors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Misconceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words are Fun!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7: SOME GRAMMATICAL ASPECTS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical Form of the Metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles Used in the Listings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors Involving a Change to the Part of Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs Requiring Special Subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Use of Quotation Marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idioms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synecdoche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART II:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8: DICTIONARY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors Arranged Alphabetically by Keyword</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9: THEMATIC SECTION

Metaphors in Various Categories

Animals .................................................. 292
Art ................................................. 305
Aviation ............................................. 306
Buildings .......................................... 306
Cards .................................................. 312
Chess ............................................... 313
Circuses ............................................. 313
Clothes .............................................. 314
Colors ................................................ 318
Commerce ......................................... 321
Crime ................................................. 323
Death .................................................. 324
Education .......................................... 325
Farming ............................................. 326
Food and Drink ................................. 327
Furniture ............................................ 333
Gambling .......................................... 335
Geography ......................................... 336
Government ....................................... 341
Heraldry ............................................ 342
History .............................................. 342
Human Body ...................................... 344
Law ...................................................... 375
Manufacture ..................................... 376
Meteorology ...................................... 378
Mining and Oil ................................. 381
Music ................................................. 382
Mythology ........................................... 384
Nautical ............................................. 386
Plants .................................................. 389
Religion and Biblical .................... 393
Science and Medicine ..................... 396
Sex ...................................................... 399
Sport .................................................. 400
Theater .............................................. 405
Transport .......................................... 407
War and Military ............................. 410

10: THESAURUS

Metaphors Expressing Ideas in Certain Subject Areas

Abuse .................................................. 416
Achievement ....................................... 416
Activity ................................................................. 418
Advantage ............................................................. 421
Agreement ............................................................. 423
Aim ................................................................. 423
Alternative .......................................................... 424
Anger ............................................................... 425
Annoyance ........................................................... 425
Approval ............................................................. 426
Argument ............................................................ 426
Behavior .............................................................. 428
Belief ................................................................. 429
Benefit ............................................................... 429
Bigness .............................................................. 431
Care ................................................................. 432
Chance ............................................................... 432
Change .............................................................. 433
Confusion ............................................................ 434
Correctness ........................................................... 435
Courage .............................................................. 435
Criticism .............................................................. 436
Danger ............................................................... 437
Decision .............................................................. 437
Development ........................................................ 438
Difficulty ............................................................. 439
Disappointment ...................................................... 442
Displeasure .......................................................... 442
Ease ................................................................. 443
Employment .......................................................... 444
End ................................................................. 445
Enthusiasm ............................................................ 448
Equality .............................................................. 450
Excess ............................................................... 450
Expectation ........................................................... 451
Expense ............................................................. 452
Experience ............................................................ 453
Expertise ............................................................. 454
Fact ................................................................. 454
Factor ............................................................... 455
Failure .............................................................. 456
Falsity ............................................................... 458
Frankness ............................................................ 458
Fright ............................................................... 459
Future ............................................................... 459
Happiness and Enjoyment ....................................... 460
Harm ................................................................. 460
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inference</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interference</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misleading</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistake</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naivete</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicability</td>
<td>479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretense</td>
<td>479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price and Value</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride and Humility</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal and Rejection</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenge</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sameness</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secrecy</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skill ................................................................. 495
Slowness ............................................................ 496
Smallness ............................................................ 496
Speech ................................................................. 498
Speed ................................................................. 500
Standard ............................................................ 500
Start ................................................................. 501
Strategy ............................................................. 502
Stupidity .............................................................. 502
Success .............................................................. 503
Surprise .............................................................. 506
Truth ................................................................. 506
Unexpected Happenings ....................................... 507
Unrealistic Ideas .................................................. 508
Unwelcome ........................................................ 508
Waiting ............................................................... 509
Wealth ............................................................... 509
Welcome ............................................................. 510
Work and Effort .................................................... 510
Worry ................................................................. 512

Appendix 1: Keywords Occurring Most Frequently .......... 513
Appendix 2: Statistical Summary of the Categories .......... 515
Appendix 3: Material for Party Games .......................... 519
Appendix 4: Metaphors Derived From the Bible ............... 521
Appendix 5: “Yes, Prime Minister’” ............................ 528
PART I
INTRODUCTION

It is one of the maxims of the civil law that definitions are hazardous

Samuel Johnson (The Rambler)

I am a Bear of Very Little Brain and long words bother me

A.A. Milne (Winnie-the-Pooh)

BACKGROUND

A cynic once defined a metaphor as "a simile with the words of comparison left out." Less frivolously, the Concise Oxford Dictionary puts it as the "application of name or descriptive term to an object to which it is not literally applicable." The word is derived from two Greek roots—meta with and phero bear—which in combination denote "transfer" (of meaning).

The modern English language—as employed in ordinary conversation, as used on radio and television, as seen in newspaper and magazine articles and headlines, and as found in more serious literature—is remarkably full of metaphors. Some of these have been in currency for a hundred years or more, giving rise to the description "fossil poetry."

Many metaphors involve colorful analogies. Every day one talks of "missing the bus," of "being in the same boat" as someone else, of "getting down to brass tacks" or of "not having a crystal ball." People are always "getting a feather in their cap," "earning brownie points," "building bridges," "grasping at straws," "muddying the waters," "cutting the Gordian Knot" and "missing something by a whisker."

For the most part such figures of speech involve combinations of words sounding very familiar to their audience and their use is quite subconscious. In practice very few metaphors are written inside quotation marks. Such a tell-tale sign is generally absent, thus clearly indicating that the writers were not focusing on the aspect that their words did not represent the literal truth. Fowler in Modern English Usage characterizes such phrases as "dead metaphors."

A metaphor is often used because it can convey a particular shade of
meaning much more succinctly than other words. This work demonstrates that metaphors serve to enrich both speech and writing, although at the price of making communication in English much more difficult both for foreigners and for computers used on translation tasks.

OBJECTIVES

This book includes, as self-contained listings, a dictionary, a thematic section and a thesaurus. It is intended as a handy reference tool for both general readers and educational institutions in all English-speaking countries.

The book is designed to serve a number of assorted purposes, including the following:

1. To set out in an easily-read and popular style the meanings of the various metaphors
2. To help persons for whom English is a second language
3. To assist writers and public speakers to become more articulate
4. To provide resource material for teachers of English wishing to design imaginative courses
5. To give an overall perspective of the subject
6. To show students and lovers of words the richness and diversity of the living English language
7. To refresh memories of half-remembered phrases
8. To provide some amusement from the patterns presented by the different categorizations
9. To illustrate that some particular words and concepts are especially prevalent in figurative use
10. To provide raw material for party games, advertising copy, church sermons, crossword puzzles and other specialist applications.

The book takes into account the fact that English can rightly be described as "the language of buried metaphors" and that this feature, while no doubt fascinating to word-buffs, must be very frustrating to non-native speakers. Even secondary students for whom English is their first language tend to see things very literally.

Each metaphor has been given a separate entry, thus avoiding the practice in many dictionaries of jumbling up related material, which saves space but causes inconvenience to users. The form of presentation in this book also allows similar-sounding figurative formations to be compared and contrasted with each other very easily.

While from the nature of the subject matter this work inevitably involves some overlap with other books on idioms or picturesque expressions, it is original in terms of the selection of the phrases included, of
their presentation and analysis, and of the simplicity of the definitions given.

**COVERAGE**

This short word-book, despite its specialized nature, makes no pretense as to completeness—that would be an impossible task, particularly as people with an eye out for resemblances are free to coin their own metaphorical expressions at will. However, the book contains some 14,000 dictionary-style alphabetical entries listing over 3,800 different metaphors commonly found in current usage, selected from the wide range available on the basis of the criteria described above. Many of these could be described as "classical" expressions, but the book also includes some other metaphors of special interest because of their origins in fields such as history, mythology, religion, commerce, science or classical literature or because they are illustrative of typical modern innovations.

Minor instances of figurative phrases based on local customs and circulating only in some communities can be found. However, most of the tabulated metaphors will be readily understood throughout the entire English-speaking world. This is, no doubt, due to the common origins of the language in the case of metaphors of long standing and to their use in films and television in the case of the more recent formations.

There is some overlap between metaphors, cliches, idioms, colloquialisms and even pithy sayings and proverbs. No attempt has been made to draw very fine distinctions, although similes, jargon and euphemisms have for the most part been deliberately excluded. Many outright slang terms have also been ignored, although a few borderline cases have been admitted. Some common picturesque expressions which may not strictly speaking be metaphors have been included where it seemed likely that this would be of convenience to users of this book.

Phrases such as "the chair upheld the point of order," "he has a good pen" or "the land belonged to the crown" are examples of the figure of speech known as metonymy and are also outside the scope of this book. In the same vein, expressions such as "I want a word with you" (in reference to a desired lengthy discussion), a subdivision of the figure of speech called synecdoche (see Chapter 7), have been disregarded.

Prepositions used metaphorically have also been excluded: "to be in difficulties," "to be within one's rights," "to be beyond help," and so on.

The main criterion for listing an expression was that in normal contexts its words are not used in their true or literal sense. However, in each case the user's intention would have been to convey a message which was meant to be readily understood by his particular public and which expressed a specific idea in a picturesque or emphatic way.
INTRODUCTION

To enable the book to remain at a reasonable length, obscure phrases occasionally found in textbooks but which are not actually in current circulation have for the most part been excluded.

The richness of the English language can be demonstrated and put in perspective by comparing the number of metaphors mentioned above as included in this book even on this limited basis—namely, over 3,800—with the number of words in "Basic English"—a mere 850.

ARRANGEMENT

The bulk of this book is in three separate parts. First of all there is a main list in Part I which sets out each metaphor dealt with and which gives a deliberately brief yet concise explanation of its import. Occasionally where appropriate some further background information is added. This is followed in Part II by subsidiary lists showing the relevant metaphors occurring in each of a number of readily identifiable categories. Part III is a special section, not normally found in dictionaries. It is designed more for writers than for readers, although it is hoped that the latter will still find it of interest. It contains lists showing metaphors classified according to the broad subject areas in which they express ideas or concepts. These lists will also be of particular relevance to public speakers when preparing their material.

In addition, some general comments relating to metaphors at large and dealing with historical and other interesting aspects of the subject are made in Chapter 2 and the succeeding chapters. Some of these comments are based on a computer analysis made while researching this project. In particular, the categories relevant to Part II are discussed further in Chapter 4. They have regard to the literal or original meaning of the words—not to their figurative or borrowed usage. The basis of the thesaurus in Part III is explained in Chapter 5. A number of miscellaneous case studies are presented in Chapter 6. Some aspects of grammar and punctuation are dealt with in Chapter 7.

Of course, short definitions—while no doubt convenient to most users—do suffer from one disadvantage, in that they cannot readily cover exhaustively all the various shades of meaning being attributed to some phrases in actual practice.

The main list is in alphabetical order of the "keyword" of the phrase, usually the noun or the verb but on occasions where appropriate an adjective or an adverb. Simple verbs occurring frequently—be, get, give, have, let, put, take, etc.—have, however, been ignored. For the convenience of readers many metaphors and their explanations have been set out in the alphabetical sequence under more than one keyword. This eliminates the need for a separate index or extensive cross references. This presentation thus overcomes a weakness and an annoying feature of the
few other books in this area. (Nouns are shown in the singular, except
where only the plural form is relevant. Similarly, adjectives and adverbs
are normally shown in the positive degree and verbs in the active voice
and in the infinitive. Transitive verbs are shown with an appropriate
object, such as “someone” or “something.”) With minor exceptions—for
special reasons—pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections
are not listed.

It should be recognized that because English is a living language most
metaphors can occur in numerous variations depending on the taste or the
mood of the writer or speaker. For instance, words of qualification or
alternatively of emphasis can be added or omitted. Many subjects can
also be approached from more than one angle—for example, the expres-
sions “something coming to light” and “someone bringing something to
light” were both regarded as involving the same figurative concept and
only the latter version was included in the list. Similarly, “to run for
cover” and “to duck for cover” were treated as really being the one
metaphor despite the use of a different verb in the two versions.

In some instances a pair of opposite metaphors exists—for example:

“to run off the rails” and “to be back on the rails”
“to give a thumbs up” and “to give a thumbs down”
“to be on the right track” and “to be on the wrong track”
“cold-hearted” and “warm-hearted”
“to be the first cab off the rank” and “to be the last” (or “latest”)
cab off the rank”
“to give someone the green light” and “to give someone the red
light”

and so on.

In other instances two related words exist—for example, “crusade”
and “crusader,” or the same word is used as two different parts of
speech—for example, “to snowball” and “the snowball effect.”

For space reasons some editorial selection has had to be made in many
such cases. Thus if a phrase is not found at the first attempt a different
keyword should be tried (such as a synonym or an antonym, a derivative
or related term, or a word from a different part of the phrase). (In a few
selected cases two alternative versions of a particular keyword or a
particular phrase have been included for ease of reference.)

Hyphenated and unhyphenated compound words which are not tabulat-
ed as such will be found shown under their components. In practice the
words “one,” “someone,” etc., used for convenience in the listings can
be replaced by other appropriate words—nouns or pronouns, etc.

The subsidiary lists in the thematic section (Part II) are each in
alphabetical order of the keyword relevant to the category concerned.
This approach should assist readers wishing to locate metaphors momen-
tarily forgotten. Where appropriate, a phrase is included in more than one category or even more than once in the same category. The lists themselves are in alphabetical order of category.

The subsidiary lists in the thesaurus (Part III) are each in alphabetical order of the full metaphor in the form in which it appears in Part I. The lists themselves are in alphabetical order of subject area.

This book is essentially a practical work, more concerned with examples of metaphors actually encountered in daily use than with the obscure theories of metaphor devised by some academic commentators. Writers, whether using existing metaphors or coining new ones, and whether setting out to do so deliberately or acting subconsciously, are not really assisted by theoretical considerations. Nor is such theory of much interest to readers coming across metaphors, whether or not they understand the underlying message.

BORDERLINE CASES

A number of phrases such as “to jump at the opportunity,” “to swallow one’s pride,” “to sift the evidence” and “to have a sweet tooth” contain some words used literally as well as other words employed figuratively. Other examples are “to be bankrupt of ideas,” “to shoulder the blame,” “to sing someone’s praises,” “not to mince words” and “a passport to success.” In such cases only the figurative components have usually been treated as giving rise to tabulated keywords, although for ease of reference some exceptions to this principle were made.

One of the difficulties faced by compilers of dictionaries such as this one is how to draw a clear-cut and unambiguous dividing line between words having more than one literal meaning and words used figuratively. For example, while the verb “to stand” has a primary literal meaning of “to have or take up an upright position” it also has over 20 secondary meanings, found in expressions such as “to stand on one’s dignity,” “to stand up for one’s rights,” “to stand up for a case over,” “to stand firm,” “to stand for tax reform,” “to stand on ceremony,” “to stand one’s ground” and so on. Most expressions of this type have been regarded as being literal, in contradistinction to expressions which can convey a mental picture of an erect person, such as “to stand up and be counted,” “to stand out from the crowd” and “to stand on one’s own two feet.”

COMMON KEYWORDS

Appendix 1 shows—purely as a curiosity—the tabulated keywords occurring most often, set out in order of their frequency. (For this purpose a
compound word listed as such has been treated as being a different word from its components.)

Words representing important parts of the human body score particularly well—"head," "hand," "eye," "heart," etc. Some of these words are, of course, also used in other contexts—for example, "head" in "head of steam," "head of the pack," the "head of a nail," "heads and tails" on coins, heads of animals, etc. The word "hand" is also used in three different senses—a part of the body; an employee or worker; and the cards dealt to a player in a game of cards.

The most common noun among the tabulated metaphors which is not related to the human body is "water" and the animal referred to most often is the dog.

Phrases containing these very common keywords may in some cases be found more easily if the search is based on one of the secondary keywords.
SOURCES OF METAPHORS

The greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphors
Aristotle (The Poetics)

Much matter decocted into a few words
Thomas Fuller (definition of a proverb in The Worthies of England)

METAPHORS FROM LITERATURE

Metaphors abound in poetry, but such a specialized usage is dealt with by many other analysts and is outside the scope of this book.

Somewhat surprisingly, comparatively few metaphors in contemporary use by the general public have their origins in the major literary works.

William Shakespeare was responsible, inter alia, for “something is rotten in the State of Denmark” (in Hamlet), “the devil can cite scripture for his purpose” and “to want one’s pound of flesh” (both in The Merchant of Venice).

Of course, other Shakespearean passages, such as “all the world’s a stage,” are sometimes quoted by people, but these have not really passed into the modern language as living metaphors.

Cervantes contributed “to tilt at windmills” and “neither fish, flesh nor good red herring” (both from Don Quixote).

Hans Christian Andersen wrote a story entitled “the Ugly Duckling,” while the expression “curate’s egg” dates back to a Punch cartoon first published last century which featured a curate’s response to his bishop, a response to the effect the parts of his breakfast egg were excellent!

Sir Walter Scott wrote “O, what a tangled web we weave” (in a line continuing “When first we practice to deceive!”)

“To do a Jekyll and Hyde” refers to a book by Robert Louis Stevenson. Catch 22 and The Last of the Mohicans are the titles of novels by
SOURCES OF METAPHORS

Joseph Heller and James Fenimore Cooper, respectively. *Box and Cox* is the name of a play.

The concept of somebody being a real Scrooge refers to a character in Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*.

Virgil, who died in 19 B.C. probably originated the modern expressions involving the Trojan horse and the Greeks bearing gifts.

Many well-known quotations are, of course, literally true and thus do not rank as metaphors—for example, John Donne’s famous “no man is an island.”

The works of Shakespeare also lend themselves to the coming of brand new expressions. For instance, a writer recently mentioned the “Macbeth Principle,” in reference to the view that if something unpleasant needed to be done, then it should be done without delay (or, as the immortal bard himself put it, “if it were done when ’tis done, then ’twere well it were done quickly”).

METAPHORS FROM POLITICS

While politicians no doubt invent numerous metaphors in the course of their daily speech making, few of these seem to survive.

Oliver Cromwell’s famous direction to Sir Peter Lely to paint his portrait “warts and all” has, however, become a contemporary idiom.

Benjamin Disraeli once told a conference that he was “on the side of the angels.”

Sir Winston Churchill invented the term “the iron curtain,” but the Churchillian ring to some of his other sayings has probably militated against their use in ordinary situations.

Churchill is also credited with describing his successor, Clement Attlee, as a “sheep in sheep’s clothing.”

In America at the turn of the century President Theodore Roosevelt coined the oft-quoted expression “speak softly and carry a big stick.”

Two phrases attributed to another United States president—this time Harry S. Truman—are “if one can’t stand the heat one should stay out of the kitchen” and “the buck stops here.” The latter expression built up on a much earlier metaphor, “to pass the buck,” which in turn referred to the buckhorn knife passed around the table during certain card games in order to indicate who the dealer was.

A well-chosen political metaphor can be remarkably powerful in its psychological effect—consider, for example, the expression “the cold war.”

Clever politicians can also use existing classical metaphors to good advantage—for instance, British prime minister Harold Macmillan once said of an opponent: “If Harold Wilson ever went to school without any boots, it was merely because he was too big for them.”
METAPHORS FROM RELIGIOUS SOURCES

The ancient non-Christian European religions gave rise to a number of current expression, such as "to be in the lap of the gods" and "Delphic."

Primitive tribes in Africa originated the term "mumbo jumbo," while Australian Aboriginal culture was the source of the expression "to point the bone at someone."

Both the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible contribute a number of phrases which are used by both believers and non-believers in circumstances far removed from those of their origin. Some of these phrases sound distinctly biblical, but many others do not.

For example, the Old Testament uses the oft-quoted "to hold out an olive branch," "the writing is on the wall," "to cast one's bread upon the waters" and "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Somewhat surprisingly, the very modern term "to be in an ivory tower" also comes from this source.

Other Old Testament passages which give rise to currently-used expressions involve forbidden fruit, David and Goliath, the walls of Jericho, a fly in the ointment, the tower of Babel, the road to Damascus, the mark of Cain, feet of clay, manna from Heaven, the flesh pots of Egypt and the wisdom of Solomon. "To sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage" (in other words, for a mere portion of soup) is another contemporary expression, although one which admittedly sounds rather quaint because of its archaic language.

The famous test word shibboleth has also passed into the language as the term for an out-dated political principle. (It is actually a Hebrew word meaning "stream in flood." Its significance in biblical times was that the way in which it was pronounced made it possible to tell an Ephraimite from a member of another tribe, because of his inability to pronounce the initial "sh" sound in some words correctly.)

The New Testament uses the popular "by their fruits ye shall know them" and refers to a wolf in sheep's clothing, the salt of the earth, putting one's hand to the plow, turning the other cheek, killing the fatted calf, being a doubting Thomas, separating the sheep from the goats, being a good Samaritan and seeing the mote in another person's eye.

For metaphors which are derived from the Bible the chapter and verse citations pertaining to them are set out following the definitions given in this book. Such metaphors are also shown in Appendix 4, arranged for ease of reference in alphabetical order of both the keyword and the relevant book of the Bible.

A special classification called "Religion and Biblical" is included in
Part II. However, this approaches the subject from a completely different perspective from that just presented, focusing more on words such as angel, devil, saint, soul, heaven and hell, rather than on actual religious origins.

Actually the use of such terms raises an interesting philosophical point which is best illustrated by an example. Consider the expression “to send someone to Coventry.” This can clearly be used literally in relation to the English city of that name, and those employing the expression would obviously believe that such a place existed. However, the same expression can also be used figuratively in the sense of “to ostentatiously and collectively ignore a person by way of punishment.” In contrast, whether heaven and hell really exist is a question of faith rather than a matter of fact. In these circumstances, can phrases such as “manna from heaven” (unexpected benefits) or “on a cold day in hell” (never) be truly regarded as metaphors by those who do not in the first instance ascribe any literal meaning to the words “heaven” or “hell”?

METAPHORS FROM HERALDRY

Metaphors derived from heraldry are comparatively rare and those which exist are not without their controversy.

For instance, the phrase “blue ribbon” (of superb quality) probably refers to the insignia of the Order of the Garter, the highest of the ancient British Orders of Chivalry. However, many heraldry experts feel that the expression really refers to the ribbons used in agricultural shows or at race meetings rather than to the blue ribbons worn by knights on ceremonial occasions.

The “blot on the escutcheon” (a blemish on a person’s character, in reference to one of nine possible marks of disgrace placed on a shield in earlier days) is better known in heraldry as an “abatement of honor.” The expression actually refers to the charges (that is, to the designs, figures or symbols) placed on coats of arms in order to show that the bearer has been guilty of some unknighthly conduct or dishonorable action. Few examples were encountered in practice, because, understandably enough, men would rather not display arms at all than show their disgrace to the world. Blots were in any case regarded as only temporary, as they could be erased by some compensating deed of honor.

The term “bar sinister” in reference to illegitimacy has not been regarded as a true metaphor, but in any case the expression is heraldic nonsense, as bars (horizontal stripes on a coat of arms) can from their very nature be neither “dexter” nor “sinister.” Furthermore, the various symbols used for denoting bastardy in heraldry include the bend, the baton and the border, but never the bar.
THE ROLE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Although not widely realized, some ordinary English words originate from the metaphorical use of certain Latin terms—"companions," from *cum panis*, people who eat bread together; "colleagues," from *cum* and *legere*, persons who are chosen with each other; "to conspire," from *cum* and *spirare*, to breathe together; and so on.

In a few instances, English has actually borrowed current metaphors from a foreign language. The following eleven French phrases are examples of this:

"danse macabre"
"bête noire"
"crème de la crème"
"volte face"
"tour de force"
"faux pas"
"coup de grâce"
"enfant terrible"
"esprit de corps"
"touche" and
"carte blanche."

as is the Italian "prima donna."

In a slightly different class is the Swedish word "smorgasbord," which is used both literally of food and figuratively of other things.

Similar remarks also apply to the Latin phrase "postmortem," which is used both literally as a medical term and figuratively in other contexts.
The sole aim of the metaphor is to call up a visual image  
Aristotle

The intolerable wrestle with words and meanings  
T.S. Eliot (‘‘Burnt Norton’’)

THE PREVALENCE OF METAPHORS

Metaphors are so prevalent that if one were to specifically look out for them it would completely spoil one’s reading and listening and thus detract from the author’s purpose.

There are only a few areas of writing in which metaphors are deliberately carefully avoided. Two examples would be material prepared specifically for non-native speakers and material intended for translation into foreign languages.

Another example would be legislation and legal documents generally, where precision is essential and where beauty of expression is an unaffordable luxury. Even the modern trend toward ‘‘Plain English’’ drafting would not make metaphors acceptable in such contexts.

Metaphors are, of course, less likely to be used in technical material such as car or computer manuals than in, say, either ordinary conversation or literary works, whether prose or poetry.

Figurative expressions have on occasion had their opponents—in 1670 one Samuel Parker went so far as to seriously advocate an Act of Parliament actually forbidding the use of ‘‘fulsome and luscious’’ metaphors in England!

THE GRAPHIC NATURE OF LONGER METAPHORS

The standard metaphors listed in this book range from single words to longer phrases and on rare occasions even to complete sentences (see also Chapter 7).
Many idiomatic expressions depend for their effect on the ideas represented by the combination of words rather than by the words individually—consider, for example, the metaphors "to pour oil on troubled waters," "a storm in a teacup" and "to shut the stable door after the horse has bolted."

Writers can, of course, create graphic messages by incorporating metaphorical ideas into longer passages. For example, the plain "a chink of light" can be built up into "a welcome ray of light piercing the gloom." Again, one can draw attention to the ravages of inflation by sentences such as: "Money saved for a rainy day now buys a much smaller umbrella than it used to."

Similarly, ever-increasing government regulation with its many anomalies can be criticized by pointing out that the "level playing field is getting more bumpy all the time."

A lawyer discussing the nature of certain evidence once made his point to the court very neatly in the following terms:

If there is a large elephant on your front doorstep, then it is not a bad idea to take notice of it, even if you cannot weigh it exactly.

Taking particular care can be described as "checking whether every i has been dotted and making sure that every t is crossed."

Original metaphors drawing on contemporary practices can also be very effective. For example, something particularly large or unusual can be described as "justifying an entry in the Guinness Book of Records."

**MIXED METAPHORS**

An anonymous author once wrote "never mix your drinks or your metaphors" and this accords with the traditional advice on this subject given to young writers. However, mixed metaphors frequently arise in practice without any intention on the part of their creators and without their absurdity necessarily distracting readers.

For example, a government official investigating a fraud case was recently reported as saying:

When the music stops the house of cards collapses and the emperor is found to be wearing no clothes.

Again, a politician has criticized his opponents for "orchestrating the emasculation" of a particular law.

The most frequently quoted mixed metaphor comes from a speech by Sir Boyle Roche to the Irish Parliament some 200 years ago:

Mr Speaker, I smell a rat; I see him forming in the air and darkening the sky; but I'll nip him in the bud.

One further example: "While the iron is hot, stay on your toes, keep the ball rolling and don't throw a spanner in the works."
Of course, even a single metaphor can sound absurd—for example, a reference to the Yiddish Art Theater as a "Mecca for Jewish theater-goers."

It is also possible to create amusing results by twisting and parodying commonly-used metaphors, as in "Mr. Smith is all tip and no iceberg. He always has his head buried under the desk."

The lists in this book will provide raw material for party games—see Appendix 3—and also for script-writers seeking to achieve comic effects by stringing together chains of unrelated or inconsistent metaphors, as in the following two illustrative passages:

Keep your back to the wall, your shoulder to the wheel, your ear to the ground, your nose to the grindstone, your eye out for trouble, your chin up, your head down and your feet firmly on the ground.

Our staff get exercise by jumping to conclusions, flying off the handle, carrying things too far, dodging responsibility and pushing their luck.

METAPHORS IN TRANSITION

Sometimes expressions which originally started off in figurative usage later on make a complete transition and over time virtually become "regular" words—for instance:

"to be petrified"
"to unmask" someone
"to be in the limelight"
"to have overtones"
"to set up a smokescreen"
"to be in the pipeline"
"a watchdog role"
"a snowball effect"

as well as both components in "a pastor and his flock."

Possible further examples of this trend would include the nouns:

"a backlash"
"a catalyst"
"a pipedream"
"a whitewash"
"a framework"
"an avalanche"
"a loop-hole"
"a crusade"
"a sounding board"
"a nightmare"
THE METAPHOR IN DAILY USE

"a yardstick"
"a stalemate"
"a blueprint"
"a bottleneck"
"a watershed"
"a scenario"
"a stumbling block"
"a footing"
"a scapegoat"
"a breadwinner"
"a windfall"
"a nosedive"
"a deadline"
"a figurehead"
"heresy"
"fanfare"
"pecking order"
"chicken feed"
"spectrum" and
"imprimatur;"

the adjectives:

"pedestrian"
"fruitless"
"apocryphal"
"half-baked" and
"short-sighted;"

and the verbs:

"to encapsulate"
"to backfire"
"to crystallize"
"to polarize"
"to choreograph"
"to highlight"
"to undermine a person"
"to ferret something out"
"to hand pick"
"to paralyze a city"
"to pontificate"
"to backpedal"
"to crucify a person" and
"to pre-empt something."
Other such verbs are mentioned later in the section headed "Metaphors involving a Change to the Part of Speech" in Chapter 7.

It seems likely that many of the other terms in this book, particularly those lacking short synonyms, are heading in the same direction and will become "regular" words in due course.
Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind
Rudyard Kipling

That’s nothing to what I could say if I chose
Lewis Carroll (the Duchess in Alice in Wonderland)

THE THEMATIC SECTION

The 37 different sets of tabulations in the Thematic Section (Part II) reflect the attempt at classification referred to in Chapter 1. They are included mainly as a matter of general interest, but also because in some cases the category gives a shorthand indication as to the origin of the metaphor concerned.

Of necessity the categorization process involved the making of a number of arbitrary decisions. There is, for example, some overlap between certain animals and plants viewed as such or alternatively regarded as food or alternatively again as a product of farming. Some words were accordingly allocated to the nearest available category. However, despite this roughness the counts go some way toward demonstrating the unevenness of the literal subject matter which gives rise to the phrases listed.

The comments below will serve as a brief general introduction to this aspect, but the detailed listings really speak for themselves.

SPORT

Understandably, analogies based on sport are fairly common: “to be given riding instructions,” “to be slow off the mark,” “to be right behind the eight ball,” “to play by the book,” “to throw in the towel,” “to give a blow by blow description,” “to hit someone below the belt,”
"to jump the gun", "saved by the bell," "hook, line and sinker," "a master stroke" and "track record"—to name just a few.

Cricket terms are particularly prevalent in the countries favoring that game: "it's not cricket," "to have the runs on the board," "to have had a good inning," "to be on a sticky wicket," "until stumps are drawn," and so on.

THE HUMAN BODY

However, the most frequent references involve parts of the human body: "to scratch one's head," "to twist someone's arm," "to burn one's fingers," "to have broad shoulders," "to have one's ear to the ground," "to step on someone's toes," and so on. Some people get "itchy feet" while others merely get "cold feet."

Nearly a quarter of all entries relate to just this one important category.

ANIMALS

The next most popular category is the one based on animals: "to let sleeping dogs lie," "to throw a cat among the pigeons," "to take the bull by the horns," "to be an ostrich," "to stir up a hornets' nest" and "to buy a pig in a poke"—not to mention "black sheep," "red herrings," "dark horses," "underdogs," "sacred cows," "guinea pigs," "sacrificial lambs," "flies in the ointment," "can of worms" and the well-known "dog in the manger."

The range of animals found in metaphors is quite uneven—some less common species, such as giraffes, platypuses and zebras, are not represented at all.

The term "animal" has been used in its correct sense, including birds, fish, insects and so on, and not merely mammals.

In some cases it is not clear whether a particular expression refers to human beings or to animals. For example, the analogy in "to put flesh and bone on something" could have either in mind.

THE WORLD OF SAIL

The era of sailing ships has left its legacy in phrases such as "to learn the ropes," "to trim one's sails," "to change tack," "to be plain sailing," "to nail one's colors to the mast," "to sail close to the wind," "to take the wind out of someone's sails," "I like the cut of his jib" and "the calm before the storm." There is also the pair of opposites, "to sail under false colors" and "to show one's true colors."
One of the expressions mentioned above, "to be plain sailing" (to be quite straightforward and very easy), is actually a corruption of "plane sailing," in reference to navigation by means of a "plane chart" on which meridians and parallels of latitude are represented by equidistant straight lines, an approximate method which ignores the curvature of the earth and which is therefore simpler for short distances.

Sailing expressions are shown in the "Nautical" category.

**MUSIC**

Music is another rich source. Examples include "to change one's tune," "to sing for one's supper," "to hit a sour note," "to have another string to one's bow," "to softpedal," "to be a one-man band" and "to face the music." There are also the rather similar in meaning "to beat one's drum" and "to blow one's own trumpet"—presumably in contrast to the position of the person who "plays second fiddle" to somebody else.

The listings include three similar examples based on the verb "to strike" and the adjective "right," namely, "to strike the right chord" (to appeal successfully to someone's emotions), "to strike the right key" (to find the appropriate solution) and "to strike the right note" (to make a good impression). While these definitions have been given to demonstrate the shades of meaning which are possible, the phrases may well be being used more or less interchangeably in practice.

Other variations to this theme are "to strike a responsive chord" (to get a favorable reaction to a proposal) and the plain "to strike a chord" (to sound familiar or to recall something to mind). The last-mentioned idea can also be rendered as "to ring a bell."

**COMMERCE**

Expressions such as "Al at Lloyd's," "to give someone a blank check," "the other side of the coin," "to show dividends" and "to be below par," together with the concept of something "not adding up," have all come into wider usage from the world of commerce.

The terms "to burn one's fingers" and "to fly a kite"—the latter in the sense of issuing uncovered checks in the hope of covering them before clearance—have moved in the reverse direction, although this particular phrase is also used in a different way in politics (the testing of public reaction to contemplated legislation by leaking broad details of it to the media).
AMUSEMENTS GENERALLY

Apart from sport and music, as discussed above, many other forms of popular amusement are understandably enough also noteworthy sources of metaphors—for instance, art, theater, circuses, gambling and various indoor games such as cards and chess.

The origins of some of the expressions relating to cards which are in popular use today may not be obvious on the surface. For example, a "showdown" occurs in poker games when the players put their cards down on the table face up in order to show the strength of their hands, while "level pegging" refers to the marking of the score with pegs in cribbage.

Two other cards phrases, "passing the buck" and "the buck stops here," have already been mentioned in Chapter 2.

STATISTICS OF USAGE

Appendix 2 summarizes the main categories adopted. It also shows their relative frequencies and the number of items in each. Apart from anything else, the statistics provide an interesting sociological commentary on the activities which most readily spring to mind when writers and speakers wish to make a point by using an analogy. In most cases the association will be readily understood by readers and listeners with a twentieth-century English-speaking cultural background.

About 13 per cent of the listed metaphors did not conveniently fit into any of these categories, while some of the defined categories such as "Sex" and "Heraldry" produced astonishingly low scores.
METAPHORS EXPRESSING IDEAS
IN CERTAIN
SUBJECT AREAS

Let thy speech be short, comprehending much in few words
Ecclesiasticus 32:8

Be not the slave of words
Thomas Carlyle (Sartor Resartus)

THE THESAURUS

The Thesaurus (Part III) is to some extent the reverse of the Dictionary (Part I). Instead of starting with metaphors and then presenting their meanings, it starts with base words summarizing the meanings and then sets out the various metaphors relevant to the broad subject area concerned. (Sometimes for convenience several different subject areas are shown together, where the base word has more than one meaning.)

To illustrate, “taking a risk” is an area in which many metaphorical expressions abound, although they all have slightly different connotations:

“to go out on a limb”
“to stick one’s neck out”
“to rush in where angels fear to tread”
“to take the plunge”
“to play with dynamite”
“to go through fire and water”
“to chance one’s arm”
“to jump in feet first”
“to play Russian roulette”
“to take a punt”
“to be sitting on a volcano.”

The opposite of this concept is “to play it safe.” These and various other such phrases are shown under “Risk” in Part III.

Of course, the main alphabetical list in Part I also contains some entries which deal with subject concepts—for instance, phrases relating to
"newness" can be obtained by looking up "new" and "old" in Part I, while some phrases implying completeness will be found under "all" and "every."

In some cases, the listings contain both positive and negative usages—thus entries actually relating to "Lack of Enthusiasm" will be found under the general heading "Enthusiasm," and so on.

The subject areas chosen for tabulation are set out alphabetically in the table of contents. As there is some overlap between them, users interested in a particular subject area may need to consult more than one list, depending on the shade of meaning desired—for example, it might be appropriate to look at the two lists headed "Risk" and "Danger"; or alternatively at the two lists headed "Risk" and "Chance."

Once again, the unevenness of metaphorical usage causes some surprise—for instance, why should there be three times as many expressions for the end of various activities (namely, 110) than for the start of something (namely, 39)?

**"DIFFICULTY" AS A CONCEPT**

To take a further example, the concept of "difficulty" gives rise to a great many figurative expressions. On the first encounter with a difficulty one "runs into a roadblock," "strikes a snag" or "runs into heavy weather." In fact, one "has a job in front of one" and may need "to put one's thinking cap on" in order to solve the problem.

If the difficulty is shared with other people then they are all "in the same boat." As one prepares to overcome the difficulty, one decides that "the show must go on" and alternatively "sharpens one's ax" or "battens down the hatches."

The actual attempt to overcome the difficulty involves "grasping the nettle," "taking the bull by the horns," "grabbing the devil by the tail" or "biting the bullet." After that one "jumps the hurdle," "irons out" the problem or "makes a good fist" at trying to fix it. If one fails, one "sinks deeper into the mire" (or "into the mud"). If one succeeds, one has "fallen on one's feet." One is then "out of the woods" and can "heave a sigh of relief."

To take unfair advantage of someone already in difficulty is "to kick a man when he is down." To desert a person who is in difficulty is "to leave him in the lurch." A period fraught with difficulties is "a sticky patch." Something very difficult is said to be "sheer murder."

There are well over a dozen different expressions for actually "being in difficulty." Some involve shades of additional meaning—
from (a): just being agitated because one is in a slight muddle, through (b): being stuck in a delicate situation or experiencing bad luck, to (c): facing near despair because some task is beyond one’s capabilities.

In rough order of severity (least to most) these expressions are as follows:

“to be in a pickle”
“to be in a stew”
“to be in a jam”
“to be in a hole”
“to be out of one’s depth”
“to have a hard row to hoe”
“to be pushing uphill” (or “fighting an uphill battle”)
“to be on a sticky wicket”
“to have the cards” (or “the odds”) “stacked against one”
“to be in a quagmire”
“to be in deep water” (or “in hot water”) and
“to be in the soup.”

A difficult query is a “sixty-four thousand dollar question.” If, on the other hand, one encounters no difficulties at all, then one is said to be having a “dream run.”

The above 42 illustrations do not, of course, exhaust all the possibilities.

**MONEY MATTERS**

Financial journals use ordinary metaphors all the time—for example, share prices either “skyrocket” or “go into a tailspin,” takeovers are made “with much fanfare” and new chief executives “take the helm.” Special metaphors with technical meanings also exist—for example, securities held by investors can be said to be “above the water” (above cost price).

Political allusions to spending taxpayers’ funds occur in expressions such as “to pork barrel” and “to engage in pump priming.” For a humorous effect, large sums of money can be referred to as “telephone numbers.”

The actual word “money” used in its literal sense is found in the partly-figurative phrases “money for jam,” “to see the color of someone’s money,” “to have money burning a hole in one’s pocket,” “putting one’s money where one’s mouth is,” “money down the drain” and “the money is rolling in.”

When a purely figurative expression for “money” is desired, words such as “pocket,” “purse” or “penny” are often used, as in:
METAPHORS EXPRESSING IDEAS IN CERTAIN SUBJECT AREAS

"to have deep pockets"
"to line one's pocket"
"to button up one's purse" and
"to cost a pretty penny."

However, not all terms fall into this pattern. People can be "in the black." They can also "feather their nest" or they may "burn their fingers."

Strange things happen when a country's sterling currency is decimalized. Phrases such as "in for a penny, in for a pound," "the penny dropped," "a ha'p'orth of tar," "penny-pinching" and the ungrammatical "he doesn't have two pennies to rub together" remain unchanged. On the other hand, "to throw in one's six pennies' worth" (sometimes rendered as "... one's two bobs' worth") becomes "to throw in one's two cents' worth," while "to have two bob each way" is converted to the version "to have fifty cents each way"—hardly close decimal equivalents.

Similarly, expressions involving imperial distances or weights do not always get metricated—for example, "to drain every ounce out of something," "to go the extra mile," "a yardstick," "a milestone," "not to give an inch," "to stand out a mile," "to get mileage out of some matter" and "to inch forward."

Of course, everyone with even 28.3 grams of common sense realizes that exact conversions would not be appropriate in all circumstances.

METAPHORS USED EUPHEMISTICALLY

Metaphors can be used as a device for being tactful or to soften a harsh message. For example, instead of saying to a person "you are an unmitigated liar" one can put it more gently—but just as effectively—in the form of "that is just a cock and bull story."

Similarly one can say "a cobbler should stick to his last," rather than "you are a fool for trying this"; "your friend is a slippery customer," rather than "your friend tried to cheat me"; and "it was under your very nose," rather than "you are an idiot for not spotting the obvious."

Again, in a business context a short reference to a "new broom" can sound more positive than a formal utterance about "changed management practices."

Whether this tactic really works and the words sound less hard may, of course, depend on other factors, such as accompanying the message by suitable body language, by a smile or by a twinkle in the eye of the speaker.

Other euphemisms will be found in Part III under headings such as:
“Mistake”—“to put the cart before the horse,” etc.
“Naivete”—“to be babes in the wood,” etc.
“Slowness”—“to drag one’s heels,” etc.
“Stupidity”—“to put forward a cock-eyed proposal,” etc. and
“Unrealistic Ideas”—“to have one’s head in the clouds,” etc.
Proper words in proper places make the true definition of style
Jonathan Swift ("Letter to a Young Clergyman")

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone,
"it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."
Lewis Carroll (Through the Looking Glass)

THE LIVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The origins of most of the figurative expressions currently in circulation are lost in antiquity and their authors are unknown.

However, the heterogeneous nature of English metaphors and the power which they add to the language can best be demonstrated by examining some actual cases. The following illustrations are taken more or less at random from the vast collection used to compile this book.

It is, for example, intriguing to note that often words which when taken literally are quite inoffensive acquire not only color but also pejorative overtones when engaged as figures of speech—for example, "to split hairs."

On another tack (!), interesting effects can also be obtained by deliberately misquoting well-known expressions, producing renditions such as "every silver cloud has a dark lining."

The word "metaphor" itself can be used in a non-literal way. For example, a film on "home entertainments and theater" was given the subtitle "metaphors of decadence and blurred reality," while one writer coined the phrase "metaphors of evil" in connection with "contemporary German literature and the shadow of Nazism."

It will be interesting to see whether the new computer technology inspires any additional metaphors for the wider community. As regards the reverse situation, many computer terms—such as "bit," "memory," "hardware," "window" and "word"—are ordinary English words given special meanings, rather than figures of speech. The word "software"
SELECTED CASE STUDIES

(meaning a computer program) is an artificially-coined term, based on the long-established word “hardware” (meaning building materials, tools, etc., in ordinary usage—but also adopted by the computer industry to mean the physical components of a computer, as distinct from the programs). Perhaps the term “garbage” is a true metaphor—“garbage in, garbage out” (if there are errors in the input data then there will inevitably be errors in the output data).

DUPLICATIONS

On occasions a whole series of commonly-used metaphors is evolved in order to express just one simple idea—such as “to be within a bull’s roar of something,” “to be within a hair’s breadth of something” and “to be within an ace of something”—or when speakers refer to only a postage stamp (or alternatively a cigarette paper or alternatively again a wafer or a tissue) separating either two objects or two close contestants in a race.

Again, wishful thinking has inspired several different phrases—those referring to the impossibility of turning the clock back, of unscrambling an omelette, or of putting the genie back in the bottle.

Some further examples of this pattern are “to miss the boat,” “to miss the bus” and “to miss the train”—three transport phrases which all mean much the same thing—and “to hold a winning hand,” “to hold all the aces” and “to hold the trump cards”—three phrases from the world of cards which once again have an identical meaning.

One can also be in something “up to one’s shoulder,” “up to one’s neck,” “up to one’s elbow,” “up to one’s freckles” or even “up to one’s eyeballs.”

There are also many pairs of duplicates. To name just a few:

“to give a hand” and “to lend a hand”
“to escape by the skin of one’s teeth” and “to escape by the skin of one’s nose”
“to bore someone to tears” and “to bore someone to death”
“a thorn in one’s side” and “a thorn in one’s flesh”
“a drop in the ocean” and “a drop in the bucket.”

“To be on the wrong tack” (another sailing term) parallels “to be on the wrong track” and “to be on the wrong tram” (from onshore activities).

PLAYS ON WORDS

Although similes in general are outside the scope of this book, special mention should be made of those which amount to a play on words rather than a true comparison—for example, “to charge like a wounded bull”
SELECTED CASE STUDIES

(to impose excessive prices) and "to be flat out like a lizard" (to be hard at work).

EMPHASIS

Particular attention is drawn to a series of phrases which contain some words used quite literally in combination with figurative fancy expressions and elaborations inserted purely for the purpose of greater emphasis. Some examples of this pattern are as follows:

"to vanish into thin air"
"at a break-neck pace"
"crystal clear"
"every man and his dog"
"to be the end of the road"
"to get away with murder"
"to confront something head on"
"to refuse point blank"
"to save a bundle"
"a long time between drinks"
"why in the world?"
"No way!"
"in every nook and cranny"
"short and sweet"
"enough to sink a battleship"
"alive and kicking"
"the last of the Mohicans"
"to go post haste" and
"to cost an arm and a leg."

Again, it is sometimes said that prices are "going through the roof" or that some innovation is "the hottest thing since sliced bread."

In a slightly different class is the picturesque insult in which a person is described as being "lower than a snake's belly!"

Some metaphors used by way of elaboration really add little of substance—for example, "for my sins."

THE NEED FOR PRECISION

In many metaphors the precise words do not matter and synonyms or other variations according to the speaker's preferences can readily be used. In other cases, however, the exact word is essential. For example,
the two words "street" and "road" are not interchangeable in either direction in:

"to be streets ahead"
"not to be in the same street as someone"
"to be on the right road"
"to be at the crossroads."

Similarly, something can be "up one's street" or more commonly "up one's alley," but never "up one's road."
Again, a person can "pull himself up" either "by his bootstraps" or "by his own shoelaces." But a person is "British to his bootstraps" without such an alternative.

OVERLAP

Is a "shot in the dark" really different from a "stab in the dark?" There are, no doubt, differences in the shades of meaning which may make one term or the other better in some particular circumstances. In the listings the former has been defined as an "intelligent or lucky guess" and the latter as a "sheer guess." However, in the context of a living language spoken by millions of people it should not be assumed that such clear-cut distinctions are made every time people use these expressions. These remarks apply not only to the specific illustration just given but also in the general case.

Again, some rather similar combinations of words occur in two or more really quite distinct metaphors. Thus, "that is a fine kettle of fish" (that is a terrible muddle) can be distinguished from "that is a very different kettle of fish" (that is something very dissimilar).
Again, "to undermine a person" (to injure his reputation) has only a small overlap with "to undermine a proposal" (to sabotage it).
"That is all water under the bridge" (that no longer matters) is not quite the same as "a lot of water has passed under the bridge since he came" (much has happened since he came).
"To give someone a hand" (to assist a person) is significantly different from "to give someone a free hand" (to authorize a person to act as he sees fit).
"To rekindle an old flame" (to inspire the reinstatement of a former loving relationship) might even refer to "an old flame" (a former lover).
"An activity on the horizon" (one expected, but not immediately) differs both from "a cloud on the horizon" (a faint indication of possible future trouble) and from the worse still "black clouds on the horizon" (anticipated bad news).
A person can either "see the light" (understand the real situation) or
"see the light at the end of the tunnel" (be close to finalizing a long exercise), while a document can "see the light of day" (be made public). Again, a matter can be "brought to light" (drawn to general attention) so that those responsible can "shed light on it" (give explanations about it).

A person can "keep his own eyes open for something" (be on the lookout for useful information) or he can "open someone else's eyes to something" (alert another person to the truth of some matter). He can also receive a real "eye opener" (surprise) or he can go into something "with his eyes wide open" (fully conscious of the ramifications).

The expression "to put one's feet up" (to relax) can be contrasted with the expression "to put one's foot down" (to exert one's authority and insist on something).

In the area of near slang, "to have a shot at someone" (to tease a person) is very different from "to have a shot at something" (to make an attempt at achieving some goal).

NEGATIVE EXPRESSIONS

A great number of rather colloquial expressions seem to work only in the negative—for instance:

"it is not the end of the world"
"don't hold your breath for the outcome"
"he is not Robinson Crusoe"
"you're not here to win prizes"
"don't let the grass grow under your feet"
"that is not cricket"
"don't bust your boiler"
"it does not matter a row of beans"
"she didn't give an inch"
"that is not my cup of tea"
"I would not touch that with a ten-foot pole"
"that cuts no ice with me"
"he didn't miss a beat"
"he held a gun with no bullets"
"he is not the only pebble on the beach"
"it's not over till the fat lady sings"
"he did not turn a hair"
"nothing is sacred"
"she did not bat an eyelash"
"don't lose any sleep over this"
"I would not know him from Adam"
"not for love or money"
"he didn't have a dog's chance"
SELECTED CASE STUDIES

“it was no picnic”
“he did not put a foot wrong”
“she didn’t pull any punches”
“I cannot for the life of me…”
“to make no bones about it…” and
“you haven’t a leg to stand on.”

The corresponding affirmative phrases would just not be idiomatic. On a slightly different tack, the expression “he is no angel” is not at all the opposite of “he is an angel.”

NONSENSE EXPRESSIONS

Then there are also some “nonsense” metaphors, such as:

“since the year dot”
“to increase exponentially”
“to the nth degree” and
“to move at a rate of knots.”

These are all expressions which when taken literally are actually quite meaningless.

“To fly in the face of my specific orders” contains not one but rather two quite absurd terms.

There is also the expression “with 20/20 hindsight,” which sounds more impressive and plausible than is really justified.

COLLOQUIALISMS

Some phrases can be used orally although they would be regarded as unacceptable in literary pieces—for instance:

“stiff cheese”
“fair crack of the whip”
“shoot!” (in the sense of “speak”)
“buzz off”
“I’ll nail him”
“I have to fly”
“he can get lost”
“if I’ve told you once I’ve told you a thousand times”
“between you and me and the gatepost”
“you can go and jump in the lake”
“you can eat your heart out”
"that is on your head"
"that is your funeral"
"keep your shirt on!" and
"more power to your elbow."

Another "negative only" expression, "no dice," is also in the same category.
A rather different example is "if he were alive today he would turn in his grave."

SEXIST LANGUAGE

Many metaphors involve sexist language, having been coined long before attention was paid to such matters. Examples include "the man in the street," "a mansize job," "soul brother," "to separate the men from the boys," "as every schoolboy knows" and "he is your man."

Of course, not every reference to males paints that sex in a good light—consider, for example, the expression "a man of straw." However, the relatively few references in metaphors to females tend to be unflattering—for instance, "witchhunt" and "it's not over till the fat lady sings."

DOUBLE METAPHORS

The expression "a backseat driver" is a rare example of a double metaphor. Clearly, the word "driver" is not being used literally even when the phrase is employed in the context of monitoring. When it is used with the figurative meaning of "a person seeking to exercise control" then the whole phrase becomes yet a further metaphor.

A more modern example is the radio term "feedback." Originally it referred to the interaction between amplifiers and speakers, which must have suggested to its early users some analogy to food. The secondary concept in turn gave rise to the contemporary meaning of the phrase (a response from a target audience to those trying to influence it), an analogy based on an analogy.

POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS

Some metaphors in colloquial use are based on a misunderstanding as to the correct meaning of the literal words. Six examples of this are as follows:

"A leading question" (a very pertinent question): This involves the
misuse of a legal term used in relation to cross-examinations—a term which actually means a question so framed as to suggest the answer.

"Opening gambit" (the first in a series of strategic moves): This is a tautological expression, which also involves a misunderstanding of a technical chess term concerned with the making of a sacrifice.

"To decimate" (to greatly reduce in size): This expression is often used in the sense of "to reduce to one tenth," although its original meaning was "to reduce by one tenth," in reference to executing every tenth soldier as punishment for mutiny or cowardice.

"To create a Frankenstein" (to create something wicked and out of control): This is a reference to the fictional creator of "Frankenstein's monster" in a story by Mary Shelley, in mistake for a reference to the monster itself.

"At the eleventh hour" (at the last moment): As a day has 24 hours and half a day has 12 hours, this phrase is doubly wrong; "at the twenty-fourth hour" would be much more logical. (The phrase actually refers to the twelve hours between sunrise and sunset, the "day" in biblical times.)

"To compound the felony" (having already acted improperly to make matters worse): This also involves the misuse of a legal term. Compounding a felony is the crime of agreeing for money not to prosecute a person for felony. In reality it is therefore an offense by a different person—not a second and worse offense by the original culprit.

As indicated under the heading "Hyperbole" in Chapter 7, the expression "light years" is often used incorrectly to mean "a long time." It is actually a term used in astronomy. A "light year" is the distance travelled by light in a 12-month period.

Another common practice is to use the phrase "to come full circle"—which obviously implies returning to one's original starting point—in mistake for another metaphor, "to turn around 180 degrees"—which means reversing one's previous stance and now going in the opposite direction.

Again, the mathematical term "lowest common denominator" is often used when speaking of the highest level of taste, etc., found among all the members of some target audience.

Some metaphors periodically get misquoted—for example, "to have a hard row to hoe" is sometimes rendered as the meaningless "to have a hard road to hoe."

Sometimes the popular meaning of a phrase acquires a different emphasis from that intended by the classical author. For example, "to be an albatross around someone's neck," from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, now usually means "to be a great burden
from which one cannot easily escape.” The original overtones of doom and the earlier meaning of the phrase, “a source of bad luck,” rarely apply nowadays.

WORDS ARE FUN!

Technically speaking, the phrase “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet”—actually, another quotation from Shakespeare, this time from *Romeo and Juliet*—is not a metaphor. Clearly, the statement is literally true. However, speakers using it would not be referring to roses, or to smelling, or to sweetness. The phrase taken as a whole is clearly much more powerful than its separate components might suggest.

Finally, another curiosity. Sometimes an interesting reversal of the normal pattern occurs. A humorous effect can be achieved by actually employing a commonly-used figurative expression in its literal sense, as in the caption to an amusing press photograph published recently. This showed two policemen exchanging their official headgear with two pretty female party-goers wearing Mickey Mouse hats. The imaginative caption was “If the cap fits...”

Words are fascinating and their study can be fun. Metaphors can almost be regarded as an art form. Readers who may never have become aware of the multitude of metaphorical usages even in their own speech will find, it is hoped, the analysis and examples in this book both entertaining and instructive.
GRAMMATICAL FORM OF THE METAPHOR

Metaphors can take a great variety of different grammatical forms, including nouns by themselves—for example, “a figurehead,” “a honeymoon”; nouns qualified by adjectives—“a round robin,” “a lame dog”; adjectives by themselves—“apocryphal,” “ham-fisted”; and adjectival phrases—“off the cuff,” “for the long haul.”

Nouns qualified by adjectival phrases with or without other adjectives are relatively common—“an ocean full of fish,” “the other side of the coin,” “a knight in shining armor,” “a share of the cake,” “a trap for young players,” and so on.

A few metaphors are adverbial phrases—“with a heavy heart,” “with a flourish of trumpets”; or adverbial clauses—“when the chips are down,” “when it comes to the crunch,” “when one’s ship comes in.”

Some metaphors are mini-sentences—“his name is mud,” “there is no such animal”; exclamations—“chalk it up!,” “tell it to the marines!”; or even questions—“just what is his game?,” “were your ears burning?”

Some sentences start with the indefinite pronoun “it”—“it takes two to tango,” “it will all come out in the wash.”

A number of metaphors are direct conditional statements—“if the cap fits, then wear it,” “if the mountain will not go to Mahomet, then Mahomet will go to the mountain.” Others merely imply conditions—“first in, best dressed,” “love me, love my dog.”

About 70 per cent of all the expressions listed commence with a verb, although it can be argued in some cases that only the words following the
infinitive comprise the real metaphor. Metaphors can involve a verb by itself—"to ruminate," "to pan out"; a verb with a noun or an adjective as a complement—"to be a tonic," "to be kosher"; a verb with an object—"to throw a long shadow," "to trump a person," "to beard the lion in his den"; a verb modified by an adverb or an adverbial phrase—"to ebb away," "to be in hand"; and so on.

Sometimes only the passive voice gives an idiomatic expression—for example, "to be cheesed off."

The phrase "to give the devil his due" is different again. It exists only in the infinitive and can be used only in parenthesis, as in: "To give the devil his due, John was always loyal."

There are really no limits to the grammatical forms which a metaphor can take. Furthermore, no logical rules govern this aspect.

PRINCIPLES USED IN THE LISTINGS

Where the infinitive is shown in the listings, all forms of the verb concerned are normally usable except where specifically stated otherwise—for example, "to rest on one's laurels" extends to "he rested on his laurels," "are you just going to rest on your laurels?," and so on. On occasions, however, an expression involving a verb exists in a more restricted way, such as "I could eat a horse," which is used mainly in the first person, or the near slang "join the club!", which is found only in the imperative mood. In such cases the listings show the commonly-used form of the metaphor.

Nouns shown with either the definite or the indefinite article in the listings are usually encountered only in that form.

No attempt has been made to correct the language of ungrammatical or inelegant expressions in popular use—for example, "fast and furious" (when used as an adverb) or "this is nothing to write home about."

METAPHORS INVOLVING A CHANGE TO THE PART OF SPEECH

Some expressions are based on nouns when used literally but on verbs when used figuratively, as in "a white ant" and "to white ant someone" respectively.

Other examples of this phenomenon include the following:

"to snowball"
"to pinpoint"
"to cave in"
"to earmark"
"to rubber stamp"
"to grandstand"
"to mushroom"
"to spearhead" and
"to mothball."

Some examples of phrases which moved in the reverse direction, namely, verbs when used literally and nouns when used figuratively, are as follows:

"a breakthrough"
"a standstill" and
"a walkover."

VERBS REQUIRING SPECIAL SUBJECTS

Some verbs used as metaphors can be combined with only a narrow range of nouns as their subjects in their figurative applications. For example:

only a price or a value can "skyrocket"
only a telephone or some similar piece of equipment can "run hot"
only alleged facts can be "taken at face value"
only an unpleasant incident can "come back to haunt a person"
only a joke or a funny story can "fall flat"
only an argument can be "shot to ribbons" and
only information can be brought "out into the open."

Again, only the participants in some contest such as an election can be said to be "running neck and neck."

THE USE OF QUOTATION MARKS

The metaphors listed in this book can, generally speaking, be regarded as perfectly respectable. As mentioned in Chapter 1, they are therefore not usually written inside quotation marks. Such punctuation would not really be appropriate, as it would indicate to readers either that the author felt guilty and apologetic about the use of the expression (in the case of slang) or that he was feeling particularly proud of himself for having invented something brilliant and wanted to draw special attention to it.
IDIOMS

Outside the scope of this book are a large number of colorful idioms which represent the literal truth—picturesque expressions such as “this is not the end of the world” (you will get over this setback), “he does not wear horns” (he is much more like you than you expect), “you should practice what you preach” (you should do yourself what you tell others to do) and “you got it in one” (your first hypothesis, as just enunciated, is correct).

SYNECDOCHE

In some metaphors the abstract is treated as though it were the concrete, as when a proposal is “thrown out of the window” or “swept under the carpet” or “taken with a grain of salt.” Again, one can “pour cold water” on an idea or “knock it on the head.”

A person can “come to grips” with a problem, “bare” his soul, “unveil” a plan, “eat” his words or know something “inside out.”

Such phrases are further examples of the figure of speech called synecdoche.

PERSONIFICATION

Other metaphors involve personification, for instance, “to break the back” of a task, a “glaring error” and “the kiss of death.”

Again, the solution to a problem can “stare someone in the face.”

HYPERBOLE

The expression “light years” is both a metaphor and a hyperbole. It can legitimately be used to mean “a great distance.” However, it is also frequently used—quite incorrectly, as it happens—in the sense of “a long time.”

On the other hand, “breathing space,” despite appearances, does refer to an interval of time.

The expression “if I’ve told you once I’ve told you a thousand times” also involves a hyperbole.

Some metaphors comprise deliberate oversimplifications or understatements, as “to dot the i’s and cross the t’s” and “to turn an honest penny.”
IRONY

Some metaphors involve elements of *irony*—for example, "deafening silence" and "people stayed away in droves."

It is also possible to invent metaphors in order to be ironical. For instance, a copper coin tendered in mistake for a silver coin can be described as being "rather sunburnt."
PART II
### A

**A** from *a* to *z*  
from start to finish

**A1 to be A1 at Lloyd’s**  
to be in perfect order (refers to the classification of ships in Lloyd’s register in London)

**ABANDON to abandon ship**  
to abrogate one’s responsibilities or to abandon a project

**ABOUT to do an about-face**  
to reverse a previously enunciated policy

**ABYSS to be close to the abyss**  
to face imminent total destruction

**ACE to be within an ace of something**  
to be extremely close to something

**ACE to have an ace up one’s sleeve**  
to hold an impressive counter-argument in reserve

**ACE to hold all the aces**  
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

**ACHE heartache**  
sadness

**ACHILLES to be someone’s Achilles’ heel**  
to represent a weakness in an otherwise strong position (refers to the Greek warrior who was the hero of Homer’s *ILIAD*)

**ACID to be the acid test**  
to establish something beyond doubt

**ACID to put the acid on someone**  
to make demands on a person

**ACORN tall oaks from little acorns grow**  
even major enterprises have to have small beginnings (from “Lines written for a School Declamation” by David Everett)

**ACT to act out a charade**  
ostentatiously to pretend to be doing something in an ethical fashion

**ACT to be a hard act to follow**  
to be an impressive performance, not easily matched by the next person

**ACT to clean up one’s act**  
to fix up the deficiencies in one’s affairs

**ACT to get in on the act**  
to participate in some activity started by others

**ACT to get one’s act together**  
to organize one’s activities so as to make them efficient
ACT to read the Riot Act
to reprimand persons who are excessively noisy (refers to the police reading out to a rowdy crowd extracts from a law requiring its dispersement)

ACTION to have a piece of the action
to be one of several parties to a project

ADAM not to know someone from Adam
to be unable to recognize a person

ADAM since Adam was a boy
for a very long time

ADD it adds up
it makes sense

ADD that takes on added color
there are now further facts which alter the appearance of a matter

ADD to add apples to oranges
to quite illogically lump unconnected things together

ADD to add fuel to the fire
to make a bad situation worse

ADRIFT to come adrift
(of a plan) not to work out as intended

ADVOCATE to act as a devil's advocate
to put a point of view which one does not hold in order to draw out the best arguments regarding a proposition (refers to a church official vetting a candidate for sainthood)

AFLOAT to stay afloat
to remain solvent

AGAINST to swim against the tide
to take up a minority position

AHEAD full bore ahead!
proceed forward!

AHEAD full steam ahead!
get going as fast as possible!
AISLE to have an audience rolling in the aisles
to amuse an audience

ALADDIN an Aladdin's cave
a place full of unexpected treasure

ALARM the alarm bells are ringing
It is unwise to proceed

ALARM to sound alarm bells
to give warning

ALBATROSS to be an albatross around someone's neck
to be a great burden (popularized by Coleridge's ANCIENT MARINER)

ALEC to be a smart Alec
to give witty but cheeky responses to one's superiors or customers

ALIVE to be alive and kicking
to be in good form

ALIVE to eat someone alive
to soundly defeat a person

ALL I would not do so-and-so for all the tea in China
I will never do so-and-so

ALL a Jack of all trades
an amateur who can turn his hand to anything

ALL all hands on deck
everybody is requested to help out

ALL all hands to the pumps
everybody is requested to help out

ALL all hell broke loose
great confusion erupted

ALL all his Christmases came at once
he was overjoyed

ALL all roads lead to Rome
all alternatives will have the same outcome

ALL all that glitters is not gold
things are not always what they seem

ALL all the dogs are barking
this news is being widely disseminated

ALL it is all grist to the mill
this is useful but unexciting additional material

ALL it will all come out in the wash
the facts will emerge as work proceeds

ALL not to be all beer and skittles
not to be all pleasant and easy

ALL not to put all one's eggs in one basket
to spread one's risks

ALL someone's fingers are all thumbs
a person is clumsy with his hands

ALL to all sing from the same hymnal
to act consistently with each other

ALL to be all ears
to be very attentive

ALL to be all eyes
observe very closely

ALL to be all over but the shouting
to be virtually finished

ALL to be all systems 'go'
to go ahead as fast as possible

ALL to be all that it is cracked up to be
to be as good as the claims made for something

ALL to be all washed out
to feel feeble

ALL to compete on all fours with someone
to strive on equal terms

ALL to get the worst of all worlds
to get a series of disadvantages without achieving any corresponding advantages

ALL to hold all the aces
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

ALL to hold all the cards
to be assured of victory
ALL to laugh all the way to the bank
to appreciate one’s good fortune
ALL to let it all hang out
to unburden oneself
ALL to pull out all stops
to make maximum effort
ALL to spark on all cylinders
to work extremely well
ALL to walk all over someone
to act in a way which completely disregards another person’s sensibility
ALL to want to jump all one’s fences at once
to be unrealistic
ALL warts and all
with the unfavorable features as well as the favorable ones (Oliver Cromwell’s direction to an artist painting his portrait)
ALLEY to be up one’s alley
to be right within a person’s expertise or area of interest
ALLEY to rush into a blind alley
to make a precipitate move which does not lead one anywhere
ALLIANCE an unholy alliance
da working relationship for a nefarious purpose between unlikely partners
ALPHA from alpha to omega
from start to finish (refers to the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet)
ALTAR to sacrifice something on the altar of some belief
to give up some benefit as a matter of principle
AMENDMENT to plead the Fifth Amendment
to refuse to answer an unwelcome question (refers to the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution, which provides protection against self-incrimination)

AMMUNITION ammunition
arguments helpful to a case
ANCHOR the sheet anchor
the source of one’s confidence
ANCHOR to anchor
to fix firmly
ANCHOR to weigh anchor
to move to another address
AND neck and neck
(of contestants) with little between them
ANGEL a fallen angel
a previously trusted person who has transgressed
ANGEL fools rush in where angels fear to tread
unsophisticated persons take unwise risks in circumstances where more knowledgeable persons would exercise caution
ANGEL someone’s guardian angel
someone’s friend, watching over him and advancing his interests
ANGEL to be an angel
to be very helpful
ANGEL to be no angel
to have a great many serious faults
ANGEL to be on the side of the angels
to be on the side of righteousness (from a speech by Benjamin Disraeli)
ANIMAL there is no such animal
that does not exist
ANIMAL to be a political animal
to want to be in politics
ANOINT the anointed one
the desired successor
ANSWER the answer to a maiden’s prayer
an unexpected but very welcome happening
ANT to white ant someone
to surreptitiously seek to destroy a person
ANTEDILUVIAN antediluvian
very outmoded (lit., "before the Flood")

APART to be miles apart
to have great philosophical differences

APART to be poles apart
to have ideas which are very different

APART to drift apart
to lose contact or to change feelings once held in common

APART to tear someone apart
to ruthlessly destroy another person's case

APOCRYPHAL apocryphal
fictitious but resembling truth and illustrating a point (refers to certain Old Testament books included in only some versions of the Bible)

APOLOGY to be an apology for something
to be a poor substitute for something

APPETITE to whet one's appetite
to arouse one's curiosity or interest

APPLE a rotten apple
an isolated dishonest person in an otherwise honest group

APPLE in apple pie order
in perfect order and condition

APPLE to add apples to oranges
to quite illogically lump unconnected things together

APPLE to be the apple of someone's eye
to be a person of whom another person is proud

APPLECART to upset the applecart
to engage in conduct disturbing a peaceful state of affairs and thereby cause discomfort

APPLY to apply the blowtorch to something
to totally destroy something

APRON to be tied to someone's apron strings
to be excessively influenced by a female

ARCHITECT to be the architect of something
to be the person devising something innovative

AREA to be a gray area
to be in an undefined position straddling two or more possibilities

ARM I would give my right arm for something
I am very keen to acquire something

ARM a shot in the arm
something to revive a person's enthusiasm

ARM at arm's length
between parties who are strangers bearing no special duty to each other and who have no financial or other relationship with each other (a legal term)

ARM to be armed to the teeth
to carry many weapons

ARM to chance one's arm
to take a great risk (refers to the stripes on the uniforms of non-commissioned officers)

ARM to cost an arm and a leg
to be excessively expensive

ARM to have a long arm
to have far-reaching power

ARM to lose one's right arm
to lose some highly-valued assistance

ARM to twist someone's arm
to coerce another person to do something against his will or better judgement

ARM with open arms
enthusiastically

ARMCHAIR to get an armchair ride
to be given a particularly easy time
| ARMOR | a chink in someone's armor  
an opportunity to take advantage of a weakness  
a knight in shining armor  
a very helpful person, who is also gallant and idealized  
ARMOR | a knight in shining armor  
a very helpful person, who is also gallant and idealized  
ARMPIT | to be in something up to one's armpits  
to be very deeply involved in something  
ARMS | to be up in arms against something  
to express violent opposition to a proposal  
AROUND | to get around some difficulty  
to use an approach which overcomes some difficulty  
AROUND | to get around someone  
to induce a person to do as one wishes  
ARROW | another arrow in one's quiver  
an additional reason  
ART | to raise something to a fine art form  
to become very clever at doing something  
ARTHUR | I don't know whether I'm Arthur or Martha  
I haven't time to think  
ARTICLE | an article of faith  
a fundamental belief on which certain behavior is based  
ASCERTAIN | to ascertain the lay of the land  
to establish the pertinent facts and opinions  
ASHES | to rise from the ashes like a Phoenix  
to be the replacement for something destroyed in some disaster (refers to a mythical bird which was supposed to rise from the ashes of its funeral pyre with renewed youth)  
ASHES | to wear sackcloth and ashes humbly to demonstrate repentance  
ASK | someone asked for it  
a person deserves his fate  
ASS | to make an ass of oneself  
to act stupidly in public  
ATMOSPHERE | atmosphere  
psychological environment  
ATMOSPHERE | in a rarefied atmosphere  
in ignorance of the real world  
ATTACH | to have strings attached  
to be subject to conditions  
AUNT | an Aunt Sally  
a person who can readily be singled out and criticized as the proxy for a group  
AVALANCHE | avalanche  
a great volume manifesting itself in a short time  
AVENUE | avenue  
method of approach  
AWASH | to be awash with something  
to have plenty of something  
AWAY | to be carried away  
to be excited by something imaginative  
AWAY | to be unable to keep people away with a big stick  
to be faced with a large crowd or much demand  
AWAY | when the cat is away the mice will play  
in the absence of supervision discipline will be lax  
AX | an old battle-ax  
a formidable, quarrelsome and hostile woman  
AX | the ax has fallen  
it is now too late  
AX | to ax  
to cancel |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>AX to have an ax to grind</strong></th>
<th><strong>BACK feedback</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to have a vested interest; to bear a resentment or a grudge</td>
<td>response from a target audience to those seeking to influence it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AX to sharpen one’s ax</strong></td>
<td><strong>BACK it fell off the back of a truck</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get ready for a difficult task</td>
<td>(of goods) they were stolen; (of a politically sensitive document) it was leaked to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AX where the ax falls</strong></td>
<td><strong>BACK on the back of something</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who gets terminated</td>
<td>by virtue of something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td><strong>BACK put your back into it!</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BABE out of the mouths of babes</strong></td>
<td>work energetically!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(as indiscreetly revealed) the truth</td>
<td><strong>BACK so-and-so would give one the shirt off his back</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BABE to be babes in the wood</strong></td>
<td>so-and-so is very generous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be excessively naive and inexperienced and thus ripe for exploitation</td>
<td><strong>BACK something is on the back burner</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ABEL a tower of Babel</strong></td>
<td>consideration is postponed pending further research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a noisy and confused assembly (Genesis 11)</td>
<td><strong>BACK the straw which broke the camel’s back</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BABY to be left holding the baby</strong></td>
<td>the latest step, which, when added to a large number of seemingly harmless previous steps, sets off a disaster resulting from the cumulative effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be tricked into accepting responsibility for someone else’s problems</td>
<td><strong>BACK through the back door</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BABY to be one’s baby</strong></td>
<td>unofficially or surreptitiously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be one’s area of responsibility</td>
<td><strong>BACK to backpedal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BABY to throw out the baby with the bathwater</strong></td>
<td>to reverse to some extent previously applied policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to discard a major benefit in the course of obtaining a comparatively minor advantage</td>
<td><strong>BACK to back someone into a corner</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BACK a backseat driver</strong></td>
<td>to drive a person into a position from which escape is difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a person seeking to exercise control</td>
<td><strong>BACK to back the wrong horse</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BACK a thought in the back of one’s mind</strong></td>
<td>to have faith in, give support to and/or invest in a project which proves to be unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an undeveloped idea</td>
<td><strong>BACK to be able to do something with one hand behind one’s back</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BACK as soon as someone’s back was turned</strong></td>
<td>to be able to do something very easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the moment it became possible to do something without a person’s knowledge</td>
<td><strong>BACK to be back on deck</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BACK back-breaking</strong></td>
<td>to have returned after an absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overburdening</td>
<td><strong>BACK to be able to do something with one hand behind one’s back</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BACK behind someone’s back</strong></td>
<td>to be able to do something very easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a way which deliberately conceals an activity from a person</td>
<td><strong>BACK to be back on deck</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to have returned after an absence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BACK to be back to scratch
  to have to start all over again
BACK to be fed up to the back teeth
  to be disgusted
BACK to be like water off a duck's back
  (of advice or criticism) to be completely rejected
BACK to break the back of a task
  to complete the bulk of the work
BACK to bring someone back to the pack
  to make a person conform
BACK to cover one's back
  to take precautions
BACK to engage in back biting
  to criticize in an unfriendly manner
BACK to get back on one's feet
  to recover from an illness or some other setback
BACK to get off someone's back
  to leave a person alone to carry on without constant criticism
BACK to get one's own back on someone
  to extract revenge
BACK to get someone's back up
  to annoy or antagonize a person
BACK to go back to square one
  to start all over again
BACK to have eyes at the back of one's head
  to know more of what is going on than is generally realized
BACK to have one's back to the wall
  to be hard-pressed by creditors or opponents
BACK to make a rod for one's own back
  to act in disregard of likely disadvantages for oneself
BACK to need to watch one's back
  to find it necessary to take care in case others act against one's interests
BACK to pat oneself on the back
  immodestly to congratulate oneself
BACK to pat someone on the back
  to congratulate a person or to reassure a person
BACK to put one's back into something
  to work hard at achieving some goal
BACK to put someone back in his box
  to make it clear to a person that his views are not welcome
BACK to put someone back in his place
  to make it clear to a person that he should not continue to act as though he had greater seniority than he really has
BACK to put someone on the back foot
  to cause a person to adopt a lower profile
BACK to put something back on its feet
  to repair something
BACK to ride on the back of someone
  without effort to benefit from the prior efforts of others
BACK to scratch one another's backs
  to help each other
BACK to see the back of someone
  to know that a person is no longer involved in something
BACK to stab someone in the back
  to deliberately and surreptitiously harm a person who regarded one as a friend
BACK to take a backseat
  not to actively involve oneself
BACK to tie someone's hands behind his back
  to make it impossible for a person to act at all
BACK to turn back the clock
to have another opportunity to do something which should have been done already or to undo something which cannot be undone
BACK to turn one's back on someone
to decline to further assist or deal with a person
BACKBONE backbone
chief strength or character
BACKFIRE to backfire
to be counterproductive
BACKGROUND background
information
supplementary information relating to some matter which enables the main information to be seen in context and understood better
BACKGROUND one's background
the environment in which one grew up
BACKHANDED a backhanded compliment
a polite expression seemingly of praise but really intended as an insult
BACKLASH a backlash
adverse reaction to some move
BACKROOM a backroom boy
an expert unable to communicate effectively with the lay public
BACKWARD to bend over
backward to do something
to go to great trouble to accommodate another person's wishes
BACKWARD to take a step backward
to move farther away from one's goal
BACKWASH backwash
consequence
BACKWATER a backwater
a place of little activity
BACKYARD in one's own backyard
in one's own domain
BACON to bring home the bacon
to be successful
BACON to save one's bacon
to escape harm
BAD to give a dog a bad name
to malign a person
BAD to make bad blood between two parties
to cause ill feeling between two parties
BAD to throw good money after bad
to waste further money in a vain attempt to recover money already lost
BAG a mixed bag
some advantages and some disadvantages
BAG a whole bag of tricks
a series of articles or a series of artificial devices
BAG it is in the bag
the enterprise has succeeded
BAG to let the cat out of the bag
to reveal an embarrassing secret (refers to the exposure of cheats at fairs, attempting to pass a cat wrapped in a sack off as a piglet)
BAG to pack one's bags
to signal one's intention to depart
BAG yes sir—yes sir—three bags full!
(in servile response to some request)
yes, very willingly!
BAIL to bail someone out
to render assistance to someone unable to help himself
BAIL to bail out of something
to abandon an enterprise in anticipation of disaster
BAILIWICK to be in someone's bailiwick
to be some other person's responsibility
BAIT to swallow the bait
to succumb to a temptation deliberately put in one's way
BAKE half-baked
not well thought out

BALANCE to balance the books
to get one’s own back

BALANCE to balance the picture
to put the other side of the story or
to quote facts in contradiction

BALANCE to tip the balance
to provide further information or argument which results in an issue, which could have been decided either way, being determined in a particular way

BALANCE to weigh two alternative propositions in the balance
to assess the relative significance of two alternative propositions

BALL a crystal ball
accurate knowledge of the future

BALL the ball is in someone’s court
it is some other person’s responsibility

BALL to be a new ball game
to be subject to completely revised rules or very different conditions

BALL to be in the right ballpark
to be approximately correct

BALL to be line ball
to be equal

BALL to be on the ball
to be fully informed

BALL to be right behind the eight ball
to be in a position of extreme disadvantage

BALL to blackball someone
to reject a person as unsuitable

BALL to have a ball
to have an enjoyable time

BALL to have the ball at one’s feet
to have unlimited opportunity

BALL to have too many balls in the air
to attempt to do more than can be coped with

BALL to keep an eye on the ball
to monitor a fast-changing situation

BALL to keep the ball rolling
to take advantage of the existing momentum or to participate actively

BALL to keep up with the ball
to stay on top of the situation

BALL to pass the ball along
to cooperate with others

BALL to play ball
to cooperate

BALL to run with the ball
to make the most of the opportunity

BALL to start the ball rolling
to commence and enthusiastically advance an activity involving people

BALL to take one’s bat and ball home
as a gesture of spite to remove an essential ingredient which one has contributed to a joint enterprise

BALLOON to go down like a lead balloon
to receive a very cool reception

BALLOON when the balloon goes up
when the adverse facts come to light

BANANA a banana republic
a country with a poor economy

BAND a band aid
help which is superficial or ephemeral rather than substantial or permanent

BAND a one-man band
a person performing many different roles single-handedly

BANDWAGON to hop onto the bandwagon
to join the majority (the antonym of “bandwagon effect” is “underdog effect”)

BANDY to bandy something about
to discuss something in a light-hearted manner
BANG a big bang
a sudden major change in the environment

BANG to bang one's head up
against a brick wall
to fight an unwinnable case

BANG to finish with a bang
to conclude something in grand style

BANK to laugh all the way to the bank
to appreciate one's good fortune

BANKRUPT to be bankrupt of ideas
to be bereft of ideas

BAPTISM a baptism of fire
the commencement of an operation which presented great difficulty

BAR no holds barred
without any limitation

BAR not to have a bar of something
to be totally opposed to something

BARE the bare bones
(of a story) nothing but the essential elements

BARE the cupboard is bare
the wished-for resources are just not available

BARE to bare one's soul
talkatively to give a revealing insight into oneself

BARE to bare one's teeth
to imply threats

BAREFACED barefaced
shameless

BARGAIN bargaining chips
benefits which can be conceded in negotiations in order to obtain some advantage

BARGAIN to be more than one bargained for
to be more than one expected

BARK all the dogs are barking
this news is being widely disseminated

BARK someone's bark is worse than his bite
the harsh words belie the reality of mild action

BARK to bark up the wrong tree
to reach an incorrect conclusion

BARK why keep a dog and bark oneself?
it is silly to pay for assistance and then do things personally

BARN to barnstorm
to visit accompanied by a show of force

BARREL a barrelful of something
many of something

BARREL lock, stock and barrel
entirely

BARREL to have someone over a barrel
to take advantage of someone's weakened position in relation to oneself

BARREL to look down the barrel of a gun
to be given little choice in a matter

BARREL to pork barrel
to spend taxpayers' money in one area in order to attract political support

BARREL to really scrape the bottom of the barrel
to lower one's standards because one is short of important or relevant issues

BARREL with both barrels blazing
with great intensity

BARRICADE to go to the barricades for something
to very strongly believe in something

BARRIER to break down the barriers
to do away with the prejudice preventing something

BARROW to push a barrow
to promote a particular cause
BASE to get to first base
to succeed in getting others to start comprehending a problem

BASH a bible basher
a person who makes unwelcome attempts to force his religious beliefs on others

BASKET a basket case
a poorly-performing enterprise

BASKET not to put all one's eggs in one basket
to spread one's risks

BASKET to put something into the "too hard" basket
to defer consideration of a difficult issue

BASTARD a bastard
an unpleasant person

BASTION the last bastion
the only remaining defensive measure

BAT not to bat an eyelid
to fail to express any surprise

BAT off one's own bat
on a person's own initiative and without outside help

BAT to go to bat for someone
to carry out a task on another person's behalf

BAT to have bats in the belfry
to be mad

BAT to maintain a straight bat
to be efficient

BAT to open the batting
to be the first in a series of persons speaking or doing something

BAT to take one's bat and ball home
as a gesture of spite to remove an essential ingredient which one has contributed to a joint enterprise

BATED to wait with bated breath
to be excited in anticipation of some event

BATH a bloodbath
catastrophic losses

BATH to give someone a bath
to dramatically defeat a person

BATHWATER to throw out the baby with the bathwater
to discard a major benefit in the course of obtaining a comparatively minor advantage

BATON to have a field marshal's baton in one's kit
to be ambitious

BATTEN to batten down the hatches
to get ready for expected difficulties

BATTERY to recharge one's batteries
to have a recuperative break

BATTLE a battle royal
a fight or argument with many simultaneous participants

BATTLE an old battle-ax
a formidable, quarrelsome and hostile woman

BATTLE to fight an uphill battle
to face difficulties or to have formidable opposition

BATTLESSHIP enough to sink a battleship
more than sufficient

BAY to hold someone at bay
to successfully resist an attacker

BAY to keep the jackals at bay
to pay one's creditors just sufficient to avoid repercussions

BAY to set the hounds baying
to excite the gossips by providing material which they can use

BE to be kosher
to fulfill all requirements (refers to food complying with all aspects of Jewish religious law)

BEACH not to be the only pebble on the beach
not to be the only available person
BEADLEDOM beadledom
stupid officiousness

BEADY to have one’s beady eyes
on something
to await the chance to acquire some-
thing to which one is not properly
entitled

BEAK to be a sticky beak
to show excessive curiosity into mat-
ters not of one’s concern

BEAM to be off beam
to be mistaken

BEAN not to have a bean
to have no money

BEAN not to matter a row of beans
to be utterly unimportant

BEAN to be full of beans
to be very cheerful

BEAN to know how many beans
make five
to have common sense

BEAN to spill the beans
to indiscreetly reveal sensitive infor-
mation

BEAR I fear the Greeks even when
they bear gifts
I am suspicious of generous behavior
from traditional opponents (from Vir-
gil’s AENEID, in reference to the Tro-
jan horse)

BEAR not to have been born
yesterday
not to be naive

BEAR to be a cross which one has
to bear
to be a difficulty which one has to
endure

BEAR to be born on the wrong side
of the blanket
to be illegitimate

BEAR to be born with a silver
spoon in one’s mouth
to be brought up by wealthy parents

BEAR to bear fruit
to result in success

BEAR to grin and bear it
to suffer adversity cheerfully

BEARD to beard the lion in his den
to visit someone important at his
headquarters

BEARER a standard bearer
a highly visible activist for a cause

BEAST the nature of the beast
the reality of the situation

BEAT any stick to beat a dog
any excuse will do if it serves one’s
purpose

BEAT not to miss a beat
to carry on without the slightest
interruption

BEAT one can’t beat City Hall
the ordinary citizen is powerless
against bureaucracy

BEAT to beat a drum for someone
to propagate another person’s cause

BEAT to beat a retreat
to abandon some project

BEAT to beat about the bush
to hide the unpleasant truth

BEAT to beat by a long shot
to defeat very convincingly

BEAT to beat each other over the
head
to be always fighting

BEAT to beat one’s breast
to express sorrow

BEAT to beat one’s drum
to immodestly publicize one’s own
attributes

BEAT to beat someone at his own
game
to outwit a person in his own special-
ization

BEAT to beat someone to the punch
to get to some objective ahead of
some keen rival
BEAT to beat the odds
to do better than could reasonably have been expected

BEATEN to be off the beaten track
to do unconventional things

BEAUTY beauty is in the eye of the beholder
some things are matters for subjective judgments

BEAVER an eager beaver
a person with great drive and enthusiasm even if this causes annoyance to others

BEAVER to beaver away
to work diligently at some task

BED a hotbed of crime
a place where crime flourishes

BED one has made one’s bed and one will now have to lie on it
one has to bear the consequences of one’s actions

BED to be no bed of roses
to be difficult or uncomfortable

BED to be on one’s death bed
(of an organization or a piece of equipment) to be about to cease functioning

BED to bed something down
to find a taker for something

BED to get out of bed on the wrong side
to be grumpy

BED to jump into bed with someone
to enter into a joint enterprise with another person

BED to put something to bed
to finally dispose of

BEDDING feather bedding
(in industrial relations) creating unnecessary jobs solely to increase employment; (in economics) assisting an inefficient industry by government grants or excessive tariff protection

BEDLAM bedlam
a scene of uproar (refers to the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, which was used as a lunatic asylum from 1547 onward)

BEDROCK bedrock price
lowest possible price

BEE to be a busy bee
to work with great diligence

BEE to have a bee in one’s bonnet
to have an obsession

BEELINE to make a beeline for something
to go straight to something with great enthusiasm or to head for some goal by the most direct route

BEER not to be all beer and skittles
not to be all pleasant and easy

BEER to be small beer
to be quite unimportant

BEER to cry in one’s beer
to show remorse

BEG to beg on bended knees
request in great earnestness

BEGIN charity begins at home
a person’s first responsibility should be to his family

BEHIND behind someone’s back
in a way which deliberately conceals an activity from a person

BEHIND to start from behind scratched
be faced with a handicap

BEHOLDER beauty is in the eye of the beholder
some things are matters for subjective judgments

BELFRY to have bats in the belfry
to be mad

BELL bell-wether
first indication

BELL bells and whistles
imaginative variations
**BELL** right on the bell
at the last possible moment

**BELL** saved by the bell
rescued before disaster strikes

**BELL** the alarm bells are ringing
it is unwise to proceed

**BELL** to be a warning bell
to be a warning

**BELL** to bell the cat
to do some dangerous but highly useful mission (refers to a fable in which none of the mice was willing to put a warning bell on a cat)

**BELL** to ring a bell
to sound familiar or recall something to mind

**BELL** to sound alarm bells
to give warning

**BELLY** I've had a belly full
I have had enough of this

**BELLY** a fire in someone's belly
great enthusiasm

**BELOW** below the salt
in a subordinate position (refers to the seating order at ancient Roman dining tables)

**BELOW** to be below par
to be less than the desired standard

**BELT** to belt someone over the head
to override someone's views or arguments

**BELT** to get something under one's belt
to achieve something

**BELT** to hit someone below the belt
to act unfairly toward another person

**BELT** to tighten one's belt
to lower one's rate of spending

**BENCHMARK** a benchmark
a standard by which something is measured

**BEND** to be hell bent on something
to be very determined to achieve something, regardless of the adverse consequences

**BEND** to be round the bend
to be crazy

**BEND** to beg on bended knees
to request in great earnestness

**BEND** to bend over backward to do something
to go to great trouble to accommodate another person's wishes

**BEND** to bend the rules
to overlook minor infractions of the rules

**BERTH** to give someone a wide berth
to go out of one's way to avoid contact with a person

**BESIDE** to be beside oneself
to be very agitated

**BEST** first in best dressed
persons acting early will do better than latecomers

**BEST** to claim that something is the best thing since sliced bread
to have an exaggerated opinion of the importance or novelty of an invention or practice

**BEST** to put one's best foot forward
to make a special effort

**BEST** to want the best of both worlds
to unreasonably desire to get some advantage without incurring a corresponding disadvantage

**BET** a good bet
a good proposition

**BET** to hedge one's bets
to take action involving a cost but which is designed to reduce the possible adverse consequences of some activity

**BET** you bet!
definitely!
BET you can bet your life on something
something is certain to happen

BETE to be someone's bete noire
to be a person whose ideas and actions cause upset and loathing in another person (French, "black beast")

BETTER to be better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick
be particularly welcome

BIBLE a bible basher
a person who makes unwelcome attempts to force his religious beliefs on others

BIBLE to be the bible
to be the authority

BIG a big bang
a sudden major change in the environment

BIG a big wheel
an important person

BIG someone's eyes are bigger than his stomach
a person is unrealistic

BIG speak softly and carry a big stick
be polite to your potential enemies but maintain an active and visible defense capability (from a speech by Theodore Roosevelt in 1901)

BIG the big smoke
the big city

BIG to be a big fish in a little pond
to be a person holding an important office but in an unimportant organization

BIG to be too big for one's boots
to have an unwarranted belief as to one's capabilities or status

BIG to be too big for one's breeches
to have an exaggerated idea of one's own importance

BIG to be unable to keep people away with a big stick
to be faced with a large crowd or much demand

BIG to stand over someone with a big stick
to intimidate a person in order to get him to act in a particular way

BIG to wield a big stick
to exert power

BILL to fit the bill
to meet all the requirements

BILL to get a clean bill of health
after proper investigation to be found not wanting

BIND spellbinding
fascinating to an audience

BIND to bind someone hand and foot
to completely limit a person's freedom to act

BIND to catch someone in a bind
to find a person in a difficulty from which he cannot readily extricate himself

BIRD a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
a benefit currently available is more valuable than a seemingly much larger benefit which may or may not be achieved in the future

BIRD a bird's-eye view
a general overview or summary of a subject, emphasizing the major features

BIRD a little bird told me
I heard from an unnamable informant (Ecclesiastes 10:20)

BIRD birds of a feather flock together
persons of like interests gather in the same place

BIRD that is strictly for the birds
that is blatant and naive nonsense
BIRD the bird has flown
the person sought is no longer about

BIRD the early bird gets the worm
a person who acts ahead of others
gets an advantage over them

BIRD to be a rare bird
to be an unusual type of individual.

BIRD to have a bird brain
to be stupid

BIRD to kill two birds with one stone
to achieve a second objective in the
course of achieving the first objective

BIRTH to give birth to something
to create or invent something

BIRTHRIGHT to sell one's
birthright for a mess of pottage
through foolishness to exchange some-
thing of substance for something of
little value (Genesis 25)

BIT to champ at the bit
to be impatient

BIT to take the bit between one's
teeth
to face up to a problem

BITE I could have bitten my tongue
off
I wish that I had not made such a
hurtful remark

BITE hard-bitten
toughened by experience

BITE someone's bark is worse than
his bite
the harsh words belie the reality of
mild action

BITE to be bitten
to be swindled

BITE to be bitten with something
to become very enthusiastic over
something

BITE to bite
to respond predictively to a remark
designed to provoke

BITE to bite off more than one can
c Chew
to be overly ambitious and thus unre-
realistic as to one's capabilities

BITE to bite one's fingernails
to anxiously await a decision

BITE to bite one's lip
to control one's anger

BITE to bite someone's head off
to rudely express displeasure at some
person

BITE to bite someone's nose off
to speak to a person aggressively

BITE to bite the bullet
to face up to the difficulties of a
situation

BITE to bite the dust
to die

BITE to bite the hand that feeds one
to show ingratitude

BITE to engage in back biting
to criticize in an unfriendly manner

BITE to get only one bite at the
cherry
to receive no further opportunity

BITE to have a hair of the dog
that bit one
to drink more in an attempt to over-
come the effects of alcohol already
consumed

BITE to start to bite
to start to be effective

BITE to start to bite

BITTER to be a bitter pill to
swallow
to be a great humiliation and disap-
pointment which have to be endured

BLACK a black hole
an intermediate range of values pro-
ducing anomalous results or a particu-
larly obnoxious prison cell

BLACK a black sheep
a disreputable member of an other-
wise reputable group
BLACK in black and white
in writing, spelling out all the details
BLACK the pot calling the kettle black
a person criticizing another person without realizing his own even greater shortcomings
BLACK there are black clouds on the horizon
bad news is expected
BLACK things look black
there is little hope of success or prosperity or a favorable outcome
BLACK to be a black and white issue
to involve very clear distinctions
BLACK to be in someone’s black books
to be out of favor with a person
BLACK to be in the black
to have money
BLACK to blackball someone
to reject a person as unsuitable
BLACK to give someone a black look
to indicate one’s displeasure with a person
BLACK to have a black mark against one’s name
to have a tarnished reputation
BLACK to paint a black picture
to state a set of unfavorable factors
BLACK to paint someone black
to ruin a person’s reputation
BLANCHE carte blanche
freedom to use one’s discretion on behalf of another person (French, “white card”)
BLANK to have a blank canvas
to be bereft of ideas
BLANK to refuse point blank
to refuse outright
BLANK to start with a blank sheet of paper
to commence an exercise without being bound by any established practices
BLANKET to be a wet blanket
to be a spoilsport
BLANKET to be born on the wrong side of the blanket
to be illegitimate
BLANKET to throw a blanket over a proposal
to refuse to proceed with a proposal
BLAZE to blaze a trail
to be the first person to do something
BLAZE with both barrels blazing
with great intensity
BLEED one’s heart bleeds for someone
one feels truly sad for a person’s fate
BLEED to slowly bleed to death
to be heading in gradual steps toward total ruin
BLEEDING to stem the hemorrhage
to put a stop to the financial losses of a project
BLESSING a blessing in disguise
an unwelcome but salutary experience
BLESSING to be a mixed blessing
to be an outcome with some desirable and some undesirable features
BLESSING to give one’s blessing to something
to indicate one’s approval of something
BLIND a nod is the same as a wink to a blind horse
fine distinctions are not appropriate here
BLIND blind Freddy could see that something is such-and-such
it is very obvious that something is such-and-such

BLIND the blind leading the blind
persons without the necessary skills for a task purporting to impart those skills to others

BLIND to be blind to something
to be unaware of some matter and its significance

BLIND to have a blind spot about something
to fail to recognize the adverse aspects of something

BLIND to rush into a blind alley
to make a precipitate move which does not lead one anywhere

BLIND to turn a blind eye to something
to pretend something obvious does not exist (refers to action by Nelson when disregarding Admiralty signals)

BLINDER to take one's blinders off
to face reality

BLINDLY to follow someone blindly
to follow a person unquestioningly

BLOCK roadblocks
difficulties

BLOCK someone's head is on the block
a person is in danger of having his appointment terminated

BLOCK stumbling block
an impediment or difficulty preventing the easy completion of some project or a dilemma involving a moral issue

BLOCK the cheering could be heard a block away
there was great rejoicing

BLOCK to be a chip off the old block
to resemble one's father

BLOCK to block someone's path
to interfere with a person's opportunity to advance himself

BLOCK to put one's head on the block
to have the courage of one's convictions

BLOOD a blueblood
a person of high birth (refers to the appearance of veins on the skin of members of some royal families)

BLOOD bad blood
animosity

BLOOD blood, sweat and tears
hard work and much effort

BLOOD bloodshed
retribution

BLOOD fresh blood
newly joined members of some organization

BLOOD full-blooded
vigorou

BLOOD hot-blooded
very passionate

BLOOD one's own flesh and blood
one's offspring

BLOOD the lifeblood
the main or essential ingredient; or the person or factor instilling enthusiasm

BLOOD there is blood in the streets
much damage has been done to a cause

BLOOD there is blood in the water
something is likely to cause a person to go into a frenzy

BLOOD there is blood on the floor
this has caused great anguish

BLOOD to be after someone's blood
to be keen to make a person the victim of an angry confrontation

BLOOD to be in someone's blood
to be something about which a person is very knowledgeable or keen
BLOOD to curdle one's blood to be horrific
BLOOD to do something in cold blood to be cruel without feeling any emotion about it
BLOOD to draw blood from a stone to do the impossible
BLOOD to draw first blood to get an advantage
BLOOD to give something a blood transfusion to give something new enthusiasm
BLOOD to have blood on one's hands to be the person responsible for someone else's predicament
BLOOD to introduce new blood to recruit new members to some organization
BLOOD to let blood to allow some harm as the price for achieving some greater benefit
BLOOD to make bad blood between two parties to cause ill feeling between two parties
BLOOD to make someone's blood boil to make a person very angry
BLOOD to see blood to be very angry
BLOOD to smell blood to divine imminent victory
BLOOD to thirst for blood to be eager for revenge
BLOODBATH a bloodbath catastrophic losses
BLOODLETTING bloodletting planned reductions
BLOODY to get a bloody nose to suffer an undignified rebuff

BLOSSOM to blossom (of a person's attributes) to develop
BLOT to be a blot on someone's escutcheon to be a blemish on a person's character
BLOT to blot one's copybook to spoil one's previously good reputation or record
BLOW a blow-by-blow description a description overburdened by unimportant or irrelevant detail
BLOW a body blow a very damaging event
BLOW death blow incident which results in the destruction of something
BLOW the affair blew up certain unwelcome facts have become publicly available
BLOW to be a severe blow to be a great disappointment
BLOW to blow hot and cold to vacillate
BLOW to blow one's own trumpet to immodestly publicize one's own attributes
BLOW to blow one's top to show anger (refers to a volcano)
BLOW to blow something unintentionally to destroy some opportunity
BLOW to blow something out of the water to destroy something
BLOW to blow the cobwebs away to revive an old issue
BLOW to blow the lid off something to expose something no matter how embarrassing this might be
BLOW to blow the whistle on someone to report a person's improper behavior to the authorities or to publicize it
**BLOW**

to blow up  
(of a person) to express rage

to blow up in someone's face  
to rebound on a person

to get one's head blown off  
to be very soundly abused

to see which way the wind is blowing  
to establish the factors relevant to a situation

to soften the blow  
to take action to reduce the trauma of bad news

to strike a blow  
to resume work

to strike a blow for some principle  
to work toward the attainment of some principle

**BLOWTORCH**
to apply the blowtorch to something  
to totally destroy something

**BLUE**
a blueblood  
a person of high birth (refers to the appearance of veins on the skin of members of some royal families)

between the devil and the deep blue sea  
to be faced with two equally unpalatable alternatives which cannot both be avoided

blue ribbon  
of superb quality (refers to the insignia of the Order of the Garter)

blue sky  
supremely optimistic

blue-eyed boy  
person shown unjustified favoritism

once in a blue moon  
very rarely (refers to the volcanic eruption at Krakatoa in 1883 when volcanic dust caused the moon to appear blue)

**BLUEPRINT**
blueprint  
a master plan for some activity or a model which others can copy

**BLUSH**
at first blush  
prima facie

**BOARD**
a springboard  
a situation from which one intends to make a rapid advance

across the board  
over the whole range of activity

back to the drawing board  
the details need to be reconsidered

act as a sounding board  
to give, on request, constructive criticisms of ideas tentatively held

be above board  
to be quite legitimate

be on the drawing board  
to be in the process of being planned in detail

go overboard  
to act foolishly and in an excessive way
BOARD to have the runs on the board
to have a demonstratable record of achievement

BOARD to pipe someone on board
to welcome a person

BOARD to take something on board
to offer to give further consideration to a matter

BOARDER to repel boarders
to keep out unwanted persons

BOAT to be in the same boat
to share a common set of difficulties

BOAT to get off the boat
to disassociate oneself from some project

BOAT to miss the boat
to fail to exploit an opportunity

BOAT to rock the boat
to disturb the comfortable status quo

BOB Bob's your uncle
that solves the problem

BOB to have two bob each way
to equivocate

BODY a body blow
a very damaging event

BODY over my dead body
never

BODY to keep body and soul together
to keep alive

BOGGLE the mind boggles
this is astonishing

BOIL hard-boiled
toughened by experience

BOIL it boils down to this
the essential features are as follows

BOIL to bring something to the boil
to bring something to a climax

BOIL to come off the boil
to no longer require urgent attention

BOIL to keep the pot boiling
to ensure that an issue stays current

BOIL to make someone's blood boil
to make a person very angry

BOIL to reach boiling point
to reach a climax

BOILER not to bust one's boiler
not to exert oneself unduly

BOLT nuts and bolts
basic ingredients

BOLT to be a bolt from the blue
to be a totally unexpected event

BOLT to shoot one's bolt
to lose one's temper

BOLT to shut the stable door after the horse has bolted
to take preventive action only after the relevant event

BOMB a bombshell
an unpleasant surprise

BOMB a time bomb
a source of serious problems which are certain to surface later on

BOMB to be a bomb
to be grossly defective

BOMB to put a bomb under someone
to induce a person to take some action

BOMBARD to bombard someone with something
to overwhelm a person with material or to persistently assail a person with words of argument or abuse

BONE a bone of contention
the subject matter of violent disagreement

BONE backbone
chief strength or character

BONE the bare bones
(of a story) nothing but the essential elements

BONE to cut costs to the bone
to economize
BONE to feel something in one's bones
to suspect something without having any real evidence for it

BONE to get close to the bone
to cause discomfort by being accurate

BONE to gnaw one's fingers to the bone
to fret

BONE to have a bone to pick
to have a grievance which requires discussion

BONE to make no bones about it
to be brutally frank

BONE to point the bone at someone
to accuse a person (actually, an Australian Aboriginal method of applying a curse)

BONE to put flesh and bone on something
to supply details of a proposal previously revealed only in outline

BONE to throw someone a bone
to fob a person off with a symbolic but unimportant gesture

BONE to work one's fingers to the bone
to work very hard

BONEHEADED boneheaded
stupid

BONNET to have a bee in one's bonnet
to have an obsession

BOO to be too frightened to say 'boo' to a goose
to be excessively shy

BOOBY to win the booby prize
to do worse than all others

BOOK to balance the books
to get one's own back

BOOK to be a closed book
to be a secret

BOOK to be a turn up for the books
to be a surprising development

BOOK to be in someone's black books
to be out of favor with a person

BOOK to be in someone's good books
to be well regarded by another person

BOOK to close the book on something
to terminate an activity

BOOK to cook the books
fraudulently to maintain false records of financial transactions

BOOK to judge a book by its cover
foolishly to go only by superficial appearances

BOOK to play by the book
apply the rules strictly

BOOK to take a leaf out of someone's book
model oneself on another person

BOOK to talk one's book
present arguments which, while plausible, are really designed to foster one's vested interest

BOOK to throw the book at someone
prosecute a person with all the vigor allowed by law

BOOK to use every trick in the book
to try very hard and use every conceivable argument

BOOKWORM a bookworm
a person who likes reading and study

BOOM to lower the boom
terminate an activity

BOOT the boot is on the other foot
the real facts are the other way round

BOOT to be too big for one's boots
to have an unwarranted belief as to one's capabilities or status

BOOT to give someone the boot
terminate a person's appointment
BOOM to go in boots and all
to do something very roughly

BOOT to hang up one’s boots
to retire

BOOT to have one’s heart in one’s boots
to be terrified

BOOT to lick someone’s boots
to show humility

BOOT to put the boot in
to reprimand a person

BOOT to quake in one’s boots
to be afraid

BOOTSTRAP to be British to one’s bootstraps
to be very demonstrative about one’s Britishness

BOOTSTRAP to pull oneself up by one’s bootstraps
to make a praiseworthy effort to better oneself unaided

BORE full bore ahead!
proceed forward!

BORE to bore someone to death
to greatly weary a person by dull and uninteresting conversation or by lack of action

BORE to bore someone to tears
to greatly weary a person by dull and uninteresting conversation or by lack of action

BORE to bore the pants off someone
to weary a person by dull and uninteresting conversation

BORN not to have been born yesterday
not to be naive

BORN to be born on the wrong side of the blanket
to be illegitimate

BORN to be born with a silver spoon in one’s mouth
to be brought up by wealthy parents

BORROW to live on borrowed time
to live longer than expected

BOTTLE a bottleneck
a factor obstructing an even flow

BOTTLE to be a full bottle on something
to be very knowledgeable

BOTTLE to bottle up some feeling
to keep some feeling entirely to oneself

BOTTLE to let the genie out of the bottle
to cause something irreversible to take place

BOTTLE to put the genie back in the bottle
to undo something which cannot be undone

BOTTOM from the bottom of one’s heart
very sincerely

BOTTOM rock bottom
very low

BOTTOM the bottom line
the conclusion which matters or the net effect of a series of developments

BOTTOM to be at the bottom of the ladder
to be in the most junior position in some hierarchy

BOTTOM to be at the bottom of the totem pole
to be in the most junior position in some hierarchy

BOTTOM to really scrape the bottom of the barrel
to lower one’s standards because one is short of important or relevant issues

BOUNCE to bounce back
to resume a cheerful existence after some setback

BOUND by leaps and bounds
with surprisingly fast progress
**BOW** shots across the bow
warnings

**BOW** to bow down
to succumb to pressure

**BOW** to bow out
to retire from some activity

**BOW** to draw a long bow
to state a conclusion which while possible is unlikely on the known facts

**BOW** to have a second string to one's bow
to have an additional qualification appropriate to the task

**BOW** to take a bow
to receive recognition

**BOWL** to be in a goldfish bowl
to be very open to view

**BOX** Box and Cox
two persons who are never around at the same time (from the name of a play)

**BOX** the whole box and dice
all relevant components

**BOX** to be in the box seat
to be in a very powerful position to control activity

**BOX** to be on one's soap box
to hold forth on an issue about which one feels keenly

**BOX** to be one out of the box
to be unexpectedly superb

**BOX** to open up a Pandora's box
to do something which produces all sorts of undesired and unexpected side-effects (refers to the woman in Greek mythology who brought misery to mankind; the box contained human ills)

**BOX** to put someone back in his box
to make it clear to a person that his views are not welcome

**BOX** to shadow box
to go through the motions without achieving or intending to achieve anything

**BOY** a backroom boy
an expert unable to communicate effectively with the lay public

**BOY** a whipping boy
a person made to suffer for the faults of others

**BOY** as every schoolboy knows
as is recognized by everyone

**BOY** blue-eyed boy
person shown unjustified favoritism

**BOY** since Adam was a boy
for a very long time

**BOY** to be a good boy
to be cooperative

**BOY** to separate the men from the boys
to distinguish between those with and without certain skills

**BRACE** to splice the main brace
to serve an extra ration of rum

**BRAIN** anyone with even half a brain
everyone

**BRAIN** hare-brained
wildly stupid

**BRAIN** someone's brain needs washing
a person is very silly

**BRAIN** to have a bird brain
to be stupid

**BRAIN** to have something on one's brain
to be obsessed with some notion

**BRAIN** to pick someone's brain
to get the benefit of another person's knowledge and experience

**BRAINCHILD** brainchild
inspired original idea
BRAINSTORM to brainstorm
to pool thoughts in the course of a
session designed to generate fresh
ideas and especially to build upon the
ideas of others

BRAINWAVE a brainwave
a suddenly occurring bright idea

BRAKE to put the brake on someone
to stop a person

BRANCH to hold out an olive
branch
to make peace overtures (Genesis 8:11)

BRASS not to have a brass razoo
to be very poor

BRASS to get down to brass tacks
to discuss the aspects which really
matter

BRAVE to brave the water
to enter a venture with courage and
determination

BRAVE to put a brave face on it
to face adversity cheerfully

BREACH once more unto the breach
let us get on with the task (from
Shakespeare’s “Henry V”)

BREACH to stand in the breach
to bear the brunt of criticisms

BREAD a bread and butter issue
a basic issue which is of importance
to many people

BREAD a breadwinner
a person earning by personal exertion
the income of a household

BREAD to be someone’s bread and
butter
to be a person’s livelihood or to be a
person’s everyday experience

BREAD to cast one’s bread upon the
waters
not to expect gratitude or recognition
for one’s good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

BREAD to claim that something is
the best thing since sliced bread
to have an exaggerated opinion of the
importance or novelty of an invention
or practice

BREAD to know on which side one’s
bread is buttered
to be aware of the important con-
siderations

BREAD to put jam on someone’s
bread
to make a good situation even better

BREADTH to be within a hair’s
breadth of something
to be extremely close to something

BREAK all hell broke loose
great confusion erupted

BREAK at a break-neck pace
very fast

BREAK back-breaking
overburdening

BREAK heartbreak
despair

BREAK not to break someone’s door
down
to be quite unenthusiastic about some-
one’s goods or services

BREAK one cannot make an
omelette without breaking eggs
the desired end dictates the means
even if they cause harm to others

BREAK the straw which broke the
camel’s back
the latest step, which, when added to
a large number of seemingly harm-
less previous steps, sets off a disaster
resulting from the cumulative effect

BREAK to be a broken reed
to be a weak and unreliable person

BREAK to break a drought
to resume supplies after an interval

BREAK to break down the barriers
to do away with the prejudice prevent-
ing something
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BREAK</strong> to break new ground</th>
<th><strong>BREAK</strong> to draw a deep breath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to do something for which there</td>
<td>to get ready for exertion or for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is no precedent</td>
<td>emotional news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to break one's duck</td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to take one's breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to end a spell without results</td>
<td>away to greatly surprise or astonish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to break one's neck to do something</td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to wait with bated breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be particularly keen</td>
<td>to be excited in anticipation of some event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to break ranks</td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to waste one's breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to identify oneself as having separate interests or views from the rest of a group</td>
<td>to talk or request something without achieving anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to break the back of a task</td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to breathe down someone's neck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to complete the bulk of the work</td>
<td>to cause annoyance to another person by remaining in his vicinity or by supervising him too closely; or to be narrowly behind another person in some competitive situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to break the ice</td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to breathe easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to take the initiative in starting discussions</td>
<td>(following some crisis) to relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to break the spell</td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to breathe life into a corpse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to spoil the effect</td>
<td>to revive something moribund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to make or break someone</td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to get some breathing space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be a factor leading either to a person's success or to his failure, with no intermediate position</td>
<td>to get more time in which to accomplish something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAKFAST</strong> to be a dog's breakfast</td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to breathe down someone's neck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be a very messy arrangement</td>
<td>to be a factor leading either to a person's success or to his failure, with no intermediate position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAKFAST</strong> to be able to eat someone for breakfast</td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong> to get some breathing space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be able to outwit a person very easily</td>
<td>to get more time in which to accomplish something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAKTHROUGH</strong> a breakthrough</td>
<td><strong>BREECHES</strong> to be too big for one's breeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success in overcoming resistance to a proposal</td>
<td>to have an exaggerated idea of one's own importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAST</strong> to beat one's breast</td>
<td><strong>BREEZE</strong> it's a breeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to express sorrow or anger</td>
<td>it is easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREAST</strong> to make a clean breast of something</td>
<td><strong>BRICK</strong> it is London to a brick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to confess</td>
<td>it is virtually certain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREATH</strong> not to hold one's breath for something</td>
<td><strong>BRICK</strong> one can't make bricks without straw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to give up all expectation</td>
<td>one cannot achieve results in the absence of adequate resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREATH</strong> to be a breath of fresh air</td>
<td><strong>BRICK</strong> to bang one's head up against a brick wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be a pleasant change from the past</td>
<td>to fight an unwinnable case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BREEZE</strong> it's a breeze</td>
<td><strong>BRICK</strong> to be up against a brick wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRICK</strong> it is London to a brick</td>
<td>to be unable to achieve anything because of intractable opposition or apathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRICK</strong> one can't make bricks without straw</td>
<td><strong>BRICK</strong> to bang one's head up against a brick wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRICK</strong> to be up against a brick wall</td>
<td>to fight an unwinnable case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRICK</strong> to be up against a brick wall</td>
<td>to be unable to achieve anything because of intractable opposition or apathy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BRICK to drop a brick
to make a sudden shattering and unexpected announcement

BRICKBATS to throw brickbats at someone
to express displeasure with a person

BRIDGE a lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then
much has happened since then

BRIDGE to be water under the bridge
to matter no longer

BRIDGE to bridge a gap
to fill a need or make up a shortfall

BRIDGE to bridge a gulf
to overcome a wide divergence in views

BRIDGE to build bridges
to work at improving relationships

BRIDGE to burn one’s bridges
to do something irreversible

BRIDGE to cross a bridge only when one comes to it
to await the crystallization of a situation before sorting it out

BRIDGEHEAD a bridgehead
an advance post set up to facilitate further access to some new market, etc.

BRIGHT bright-eyed and bushy-tailed
naive but enthusiastic

BRIGHT the bright side
the favorable aspects

BRIGHT the one bright spot on the horizon
the only hopeful aspect

BRING to bring a plate
to take food to a party

BRING to bring someone down to earth
to disillusion a person

BRING to bring someone to heel
to make a person conform

BRING to bring something to the boil
to bring something to a climax

BRING to bring the house down
to greatly amuse an audience

BRINK to push someone over the brink
by a small action to cause the absolute ruin (financially or emotionally) of someone already in peril

BRITISH the very best of British luck
you will have a hard time of it, but you carry my best wishes

BRITISH to be British to one’s bootstraps
to be very demonstrative about one’s Britishness

BROAD a broad brush approach
rough justice

BROAD it is as broad as it is long
does not really matter

BROAD to have broad shoulders
to be able to cope well with responsibility

BROADEN to broaden someone’s mind
to expose a person to a greater variety of experiences and interests than he had previously

BROADSIDE a broadside
a short verbal attack

BRONZE to be cast in bronze
to be virtually unalterable

BROOM a new broom
a changed regime which is likely to alter the status quo

BROTH too many cooks spoil the broth
one leader is all that is required

BROTHER a soul brother
a person of similar ideals
BROW highbrow
intellectual or cultural

BROW to knit one’s brows
to indicate one’s displeasure

BROWN to be browned off
to be fed-up

BROWNIE to get brownie points
to do a person a favor with the likely result that the recipient will do a favor in return in due course

BRUISE to nurse one’s bruises
to face up to the consequences of defeat

BRUSH a broad brush approach
rough justice

BRUSH to be tarred with the same brush
to be damned merely because of one’s association with another person

BRUSH to brush someone aside
to pass over and ostentatiously ignore a person

BRUSH to give someone the brush-off
to make it clear that one does not want dealings or conversation with a person

BRUSH to have a touch of the tarbrush
to be not quite a full-blood Caucasian

BUBBLE a South Sea bubble
an unrealistic financial venture which is bound to result in total loss

BUBBLE the bubble has burst
the inevitable has occurred or the scheme has come to ruination

BUCK the buck stops here
I accept full responsibility (sign on the desk of Harry S. Truman when president of the United States)

BUCK to pass the buck
in an uncooperative spirit to decline responsibility for a matter on the grounds that someone else more properly has responsibility for it

BUCKET to be only a drop in the bucket
to be quite insignificant in the total scene

BUCKET to kick the bucket
to die

BUCKET to tip a bucket on someone
to point out in a humiliating way another person’s faults

BUD to nip something in the bud
to stop some activity in its early stages when stopping it is still relatively easy

BUGGY the horse and buggy days
long ago

BUILD to build bridges
to work at improving relationships

BUILD to engage in empire building
to set out to expand the size of the business or bureaucratic unit for which one is responsible, especially as a means of increasing one’s own importance

BULL a bull in a china shop
a careless person likely to cause great damage

BULL a cock and bull story
an explanation which is completely unbelievable and unacceptable

BULL to be a red rag to a bull
to be something which makes a person very angry and very excited (refers to the erroneous belief that the color red, rather than the motion of waving, excites a bull)

BULL to be within a bull’s roar of something
to be very close to something

BULL to charge like a wounded bull
to impose excessive prices (a play on words; not a simile)

BULL to hit the bull’s eye
to make the correct decision
BULL to take the bull by the horns
to come to grips with the realities of a difficult problem

BULLDOZE to bulldoze some proposal through
to ensure the passage of some measure in complete disregard of criticism or opposition

BULLET a gun with no bullets
something incomplete and therefore useless for the desired purpose

BULLET a magic bullet
a guaranteed remedy

BULLET to bite the bullet
to face up to the difficulties of a situation

BULLET to have a bullet which can be fired
to have available an effective response which can be used at will

BUMP to bump into someone
to meet a person accidentally

BUN a bunfight
a minor and relatively friendly skirmish

BUNDLE to drop one's bundle
to become despondent

BUNDLE to save a bundle
to save much money

BURDEN to put a burden on someone's shoulders
to impose responsibilities on a person

BURN burning question
a much discussed question

BURN heartburn
regret at some non-achievement

BURN to be better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick
to be particularly welcome

BURN to burn one's bridges
to do something irreversible

BURN to burn one's fingers
to lose money through foolishness

BURN to burn oneself out
to overexert oneself

BURN to burn the candle at both ends
to work excessively long hours

BURN to burn the midnight oil
to work late into the night

BURN to fiddle while Rome burns
to neglect important considerations while concentrating on trivial side-issues

BURN to have money burning a hole in one's pocket
to be impatient to spend or invest available funds

BURN to keep the home fires burning
to maintain normal domestic activity during the temporary absence of the breadwinner

BURN were your ears burning?
we were discussing you

BURNER something is on the back burner
consideration is postponed pending further research

BURST the bubble has burst
the inevitable has occurred or the scheme has come to ruination

BURST the dam burst
the cumulative effect of many things caused a disaster

BURST to be bursting at the seams
to be very crowded

BURY dead and buried
(of some issue) definitely concluded, especially so long ago as to be nearly forgotten

BURY to bury one's head in the sand
to refuse to face up to an unpleasant truth (refers to the reputed habit of ostriches in danger)

BURY to bury the hatchet
to abandon hostilities
BUS the wheels are back under the bus
normal activity has been resumed

BUS to jump on the bus
to join an activity already well under way

BUS to miss the bus
to fail to exploit an opportunity

BUSH a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
a benefit currently available is more valuable than a seemingly much larger benefit which may or may not be achieved in the future

BUSH to beat about the bush
to hide the unpleasant truth

BUSHEL to hide one’s light under a bushel
to keep others in ignorance of one’s skills and experience

BUSHFIRE to fight bushfires
to deal with crises as they arise rather than take preventive action

BUSHY bright-eyed and bushy-tailed
naive but enthusiastic

BUSINESS monkey business
mischievous or underhand activity

BUSINESS to mean business
to demonstrate a serious intent to do something

BUSMAN a busman’s holiday
leisure time spent in a way not significantly different from one’s normal business activities

BUST not to bust one’s boiler
not to exert oneself unduly

BUTT to butt in
to involve oneself uninvited in someone else’s conversation

BUTT to get up off one’s butt
to cease being apathetic

BUTTER a bread and butter issue
a basic issue which is of importance to many people

BUTTER a butter fingers
a person unable to catch and/or hold on to an object

BUTTER someone looks as if butter would not melt in his mouth
a person looks sweet and innocent

BUTTER to be someone’s bread and butter
to be a person’s livelihood or to be a person’s everyday experience

BUTTER to know on which side one’s bread is buttered
to be aware of the important considerations

BUTTERFLY to have a butterfly mind
not to concentrate on the matter on hand

BUTTERFLY to have butterflies in one’s stomach
a feeling of anxiety

BUTTON to button up one’s purse
to refuse to spend money

BUTTON to hit the panic button
to act hastily and irrationally

BUTTON to press a button
to make something happen

BUY I buy that
I accept that idea

BUY to buy a pig in a poke
to buy goods of unknown quality

BUY to buy into some argument
to seek to participate in some discussion

BUY to buy something for a song
to buy something very cheaply

BUY to buy straw hats in winter
to buy in a depressed market when most other people are sellers

BUZZ to buzz off
to go away
CAB to be the first cab off the rank to start ahead of all others
CABBAGE to be on someone's cabbage patch to engage in a competitive activity in a territory regarded by someone already there as rightfully belonging exclusively to him
CAIN the mark of Cain disgrace (Genesis 4:15)
CAIN to raise Cain to create a disturbance (Genesis 4:5)
CAKE a share of the cake a portion of the total available for distribution
CAKE that takes the cake that is quite absurd or outrageous or excessively cheeky
CAKE to be a piece of cake to be very easy or greatly to one's liking
CAKE to be icing on top of the cake to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario
CAKE to want to have one's cake and eat it too to want two mutually exclusive alternatives
CALF to kill the fatted calf to demonstrate welcome and forgiveness on a person's return (Luke 15:23)
cALL he who pays the piper calls the tune a person contributing money or resources to a project is entitled to a say in its control
CALL the pot calling the kettle black a person criticizing another person without realizing his own even greater shortcomings
CALL to call a spade a spade not to mince words
CALL to call it a day to cease involvement with some activity
CALL to call off the dogs to abandon an audit or other inquiry
CALL to call the shots to have the direction over a project
CALL the calm before the storm the quiet period before an expected or inevitable crisis
CAMEL the straw which broke the camel's back the latest step, which, when added to a large number of seemingly harmless previous steps, sets off a disaster resulting from the cumulative effect
CAMP in our camp in the group representing our vested interest
CAMP to have one's feet in both camps to have good relations with two opponents
CAN a can of worms a heterogeneous collection of unexpected problems
CAN to carry the can for someone to accept the blame for another person's actions or inactions
CANCER a cancer an evil which is likely to spread
CANDLE not fit to hold a candle to someone greatly inferior to another person
CANDLE not to be worth the candle to be too expensive in relation to the true value
CANDLE to burn the candle at both ends to work excessively long hours
CANE to take a caning to suffer the adverse consequences of one's acts or omissions
CANNON a loose cannon on the deck
a mistake likely to cause trouble
CANOE to paddle one’s own canoe
to do something unaided and in one’s own way
CANTER to win the prize in a canter
to win very easily
CANVAS to get off the canvas
to recover after near defeat
CANVAS to have a blank canvas
to be bereft of ideas
CAP a feather in one’s cap
a meritorious personal achievement
CAP cap
upper permitted limit
CAP if the cap fits then wear it
if your circumstances correspond with those described then you must endure the consequences
CAP to cap a story
to tell an even funnier story than the one just told
CAP to earn a dunce’s cap
to do something stupid
CAP to go cap in hand
to show humility while soliciting a favor
CAP to put one’s thinking cap on
to concentrate on finding a solution to a difficult problem
CAP to set one’s cap at someone
(of females) to try to attract a person as a marriage partner
CAP to throw one’s cap into the air
to celebrate some achievement
CARAVAN the caravan will roll on
the activity will continue
CARD a house of cards
an organization which gives a misleading impression of solidity
CARD a three card trick
a ruse used by a dishonest person in order to induce his victims to hand over some of their assets
CARD a wild card
an unexpected development
CARD drawcard
feature expected to attract a crowd
CARD let the cards fall where they may
irrespective of what happens
CARD to be on the cards
to be likely
CARD to have a card up one’s sleeve
to secretly have information relevant to a transaction
CARD to have the cards stacked against one
to be faced with many difficulties frustrating a project
CARD to hold all the cards
to be assured of victory
CARD to hold one’s cards close to one’s chest
to keep one’s plans and strategies secret
CARD to hold the trump card
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others
CARD to lay one’s cards on the table
to be utterly frank and open or to honestly disclose one’s position
CARD to play every card in the pack
to try very hard and use every conceivable argument
CARD to play one’s cards right
to approach a matter sensibly
CARD to play the cards as they fall
to deal with problems as they arise
CARD to play the last card in the pack
to lower one’s standards in a final desperate effort
CARD to play the trump card
to make a final move, thereby defeating one's opponents

CARD without any cards to play
without the means to achieve something

CARE a devil-may-care attitude
a reckless attitude

CARE not to care a pin for something
not to have the slightest interest in something

CARPET the red-carpet treatment
courtesies extended to a person to make him feel important and welcome

CARPET to be on the carpet
to be lectured in regard to one's alleged misdeeds

CARPET to get a magic carpet ride to something
to be very fortunate in achieving some objective

CARPET to sweep something under the carpet
to pretend that some blemish does not exist

CARROT sticks and carrots
disincentives and incentives in combination (refers to the handling of donkeys)

CARRY speak softly and carry a big stick
be polite to your potential enemies but maintain an active and visible defense capability (from a speech by Theodore Roosevelt in 1901)

CARRY to be carried away
to be excited by something imaginative

CARRY to carry a spare tire
to be fat

CARRY to carry a torch for someone
to act as an enthusiastic advocate of another person's cause

CARRY to carry coals to Newcastle
to do something ridiculously unnecessary

CARRY to carry the can for someone
to accept the blame for another person's actions or inactions

CARRY to carry the world on one's shoulders
to resent being left to perform a huge task single-handedly (refers to Atlas, who was condemned to bear the heavens on his shoulders for leading the Titans against the gods)

CARRY to carry weight
to be influential

CART to put the cart before the horse
to do things in the wrong order

CART to upset the applecart
to engage in conduct disturbing a peaceful state of affairs and thereby cause discomfort

CARTE carte blanche
freedom to use one's discretion on behalf of another person (French, "white card")

CARVE to be carved in marble
to be virtually unalterable

CARVE to carve out a niche for oneself
to deliberately create an opportunity to use one's talents effectively

CASE a basket case
a poorly-performing enterprise

CASE to be an open and shut case
to be an unarguable proposition (a phrase popular in detective novels and probably a play on the two meanings of the word "case")

CASE to have a cast-iron case
to be absolutely assured of victory in legal proceedings
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE</th>
<th>CAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| to make a Federal case out of something | a cat and dog existence  
a life full of frequent squabbles |
| to attach far too much significance to a trivial issue | CAT a cat may look at a king  
don’t give yourself airs! |
| CAST the die is cast  
the course of action in train is irreversible | CAT a copycat  
a person who imitates another person’s ideas |
| CAST to be cast in bronze  
to be virtually unalterable | CAT a game of cat and mouse  
negotiations between two parties of unequal bargaining power during which the stronger makes some temporary concessions to the weaker without, however, affecting the latter’s eventual total defeat |
| CAST to be cast in someone’s mold  
to take after another person | CAT there is more than one way to skin a cat  
this can be achieved in a variety of acceptable ways |
| CAST to cast a chill over something  
to be a depressing influence over something | CAT there is no room to swing a cat  
this place is very small (actually refers to a cat-o’-nine-tails) |
| CAST to cast a cloud over something  
to spoil the pleasure of an occasion | CAT to be a cat’s paw  
to be a person who is being used as a tool by others |
| CAST to cast a shadow over something  
to introduce a note of warning or sadness in regard to some matter | CAT to be the cat’s pajamas  
to have an exaggerated idea of one’s own importance |
| CAST to cast an eye over something  
to look at something critically | CAT to bell the cat  
to do some dangerous but highly useful mission (refers to a fable in which none of the mice was willing to put a warning bell on a cat) |
| CAST to cast one’s bread upon the waters  
not to expect gratitude or recognition for one’s good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1) | CAT to kick the cat  
to take out one’s anger on some innocent party |
| CAST to cast prudence to the winds  
to cease being prudent | CAT to let the cat out of the bag  
to reveal an embarrassing secret (refers to the exposure of cheats at fairs, attempting to pass a cat wrapped in a sack off as a piglet) |
| CAST to cast sheep’s eyes at someone  
to look at a person amorously | CAT to rain cats and dogs  
to rain heavily |
| CAST to give a cast-iron guarantee  
to give a very secure undertaking to do something | CAT to see which way the cat jumps  
to await developments |
| CAST to have a cast-iron case  
to be absolutely assured of victory in legal proceedings | CASTLE a castle in Spain  
an impracticable proposition |
| CASTLE a castle in the air  
an impracticable proposition |
CAT to throw a cat among the pigeons
to cause consternation by revealing an unpleasant and unexpected fact

CAT when the cat is away the mice will play
in the absence of supervision, discipline will be lax

CAT wildcat
(of a strike) unofficial; (of an oil well) drilled as a pure prospect; (of a financial scheme) very hazardous

CATALYST a catalyst
a factor causing something to happen

CATAPULT to catapult
(of sales, etc.) to increase rapidly

CATAPULT to catapult to fame
to achieve fame unexpectedly quickly

CATCH I wouldn't be caught dead without some object
I regard some object as very important

CATCH first catch your hare
do things in logical order and after proper preparation (advice on how to cook a hare in Mrs. Beeton’s celebrated COOK BOOK)

CATCH to be caught by the tide
to be dealt with by something inevitable

CATCH to catch someone flat-footed
to embarrass a person in the course of his making mistakes or being unprepared

CATCH to catch someone in a bind
to find a person in a difficulty from which he cannot readily extricate himself

CATCH to catch someone in the net
to unexpectedly involve a particular person in the course of activity designed to involve many others

CATCH to catch someone off guard
to surprise a person (a fencing term)

CATCH to catch someone on the hop
to take a person by surprise

CATCH to catch someone red-handed
to apprehend a person in the course of committing a crime

CATCH to catch someone with his pants down
to act when another person least expects it

CATCH to catch someone with his trousers down
to act when another person least expects it

CATCH to catch someone’s eye
to attract the attention of another person or to seek permission to address that person

CATCH to throw a sprat to catch a mackerel
to risk a little in the hope of gaining much

CAVE an Aladdin’s cave
a place full of unexpected treasure

CAVE to cave in
to yield to pressure

CEILING ceiling
upper permitted limit

CEMENT to cement a relationship
to do something in an endeavor to make a relationship permanent

CENT to have fifty cents each way
to equivocate

CENT to throw in one’s two cents’ worth
to modestly supply one’s own facts or views
CENTER the center of gravity
   the place most convenient to the
greatest number
CENTER to be center stage
   to have everyone’s attention
CENTER to be the center of the
   spider’s web
   to control an operation which in-
volves numerous and/or complex in-
gredients
CENTERPIECE the centerpiece
   (of a proposal) the highlight or the
main ingredient
CHAFF to separate the wheat from
   the chaff
   to distinguish between important and
unimportant ingredients
CHAIN the weakest link in the
   chain
   the least efficient component in a
project the overall efficiency of which
is governed by the efficiency of the
least efficient component
CHAIN to drag the chain
   to perform unduly slowly
CHAIR to get an arm-chair ride
   to be given a particularly easy time
CHAIR to play musical chairs
   to be a part of a general reshuffling of
duties or functions which is not nec-
essarily to everyone’s liking
CHALK chalk it up!
   the success was unexpected
CHALK to win by a long chalk
   to win very conclusively
CHAMELEON a chameleon
   a person without character who
changes his stance all the time to
reflect the current circumstances
CHAMP to champ at the bit
   to be impatient
CHANCE a fat chance
   little hope

CHANCE not a dog’s chance
   no hope at all
CHANCE not the ghost of a chance
   no hope at all
CHANCE to chance one’s arm
   to take a great risk (refers to the
stripes on the uniforms of non-com-
missioned officers)
CHANCE to have a snowflake’s
   chance in hell
   to have no hope or possibility at all
CHANGE a leopard cannot change
   his spots
   each person is born with certain unal-
terable characteristics
CHANGE the cold wind of change
   the unpleasant realities of new circum-
stances
CHANGE to be shortchanged
   to be given less than is due to one
CHANGE to change one’s mind
   to alter the views which one had
previously formed
CHANGE to change one’s tune
   to alter one’s publicly-expressed views
CHANGE to change the whole
   picture
   to alter the major assumptions on
which some assessment was based
CHANGE to have a change of heart
   to form a new view in place of a
strongly-held previous view
CHANGE to ring the changes
   to exhaust the number of different
ways of doing something (refers to
the permutations used for ringing
peals of church bells)
CHANGE to swap horses in
   midstream
   to change direction during the course
of a project
CHAPTER to quote chapter and
   verse
   to authenticate the information
CHARADE to act out a charade
ostentatiously to pretend to be doing
something in an ethical fashion

CHARGE to charge like a wounded
bull
to impose excessive prices (a play on
words; not a simile)

CHARGE to recharge one’s
batteries
to have a recuperative break

CHARITY charity begins at home
a person’s first responsibility should
be to his family

CHARLIE tailend Charlie
a person who habitually comes last

CHARM to charm the pants off
someone
to delight a person

CHARYBDIS to be between Scylla
and Charybdis
to be faced with two equally unpalat-
able alternatives which cannot both
be avoided (refers to the voyage of
Ulysses)

CHASE a wild goose chase
a foolish search for something which
does not exist

CHASE to chase a corpse
to harp on something long ago re-
solved or a lost cause

CHASE to chase every hare
to be easily sidetracked

CHASE to chase rainbows
to be quite unrealistic

CHECK to give someone a blank
check
to give another person unlimited del-
egated authority

CHECKMATE checkmate
defeat

CHEEK cheek by jowl
close to each other

CHEEK to turn the other cheek
to show that one has not been inti-
dated (Matthew 5:39)

CHEEK tongue in cheek
full of irony

CHEER the cheering could be heard
a block away
there was great rejoicing

CHEESE cheese paring
stingy

CHEESE stiff cheese!
circumstances which may be unwel-
come but which will not be altered
and in respect of which no great sym-
pathy is felt

CHEESE to be cheeased off
to be disgusted

CHEMISTRY good chemistry
a good ability to work closely to-
gether

CHERRY to get only one bite at the
cherry
to receive no further opportunity

CHESS to be a chess game
to be a complex exercise, requiring
great skill

CHESSMASTER a chessmaster
a clever strategist

CHEST to get something off one’s
chest
to confess

CHEST to hold one’s cards close to
one’s chest
to keep one’s plans and strategies
secret

CHEST to lock something up in the
old oak chest
to put in a safe place and out of mind

CHESTNUT to pull someone’s
chestnuts out of the fire
to retrieve a situation

CHEW to bite off more than one can
chew
to be overly ambitious and thus unre-
realistic as to one’s capabilities
CHEW to chew fat
to eat and talk together
CHEW to chew someone's ear
to force one's conversation on an unwilling listener
CHEW to chew the cud
to reflect on something
CHEW to have something to chew on
to have firm facts on which to base a decision
CHICKEN chicken and egg
two factors each of which results in the other
CHICKEN chicken-hearted
showing little courage
CHICKEN the chickens are coming home to roost
the consequences of past actions are becoming obvious
CHICKEN to be chicken feed
to be small and unimportant
CHICKEN to count one's chickens before they are hatched
to treat as fact the expected results of a future proposal
CHIEF more chiefs than Indians
a disproportionately large number of supervisors
CHILD a problem child
a source of unnecessary difficulty
CHILD brainchild
inspired original idea
CHILD to be child's play
to be easy or to require only elementary skills and knowledge
CHILD to take food out of the mouths of children
cruelly to deprive the needy
CHILDHOOD second childhood
dottage
CHILL to cast a chill over something
to be a depressing influence over something
CHILL to send a chill down someone's spine
to be worrying news
CHIN to keep one's chin up
maintain one's morale
CHIN to lead with one's chin
by one's brash behavior to virtually invite one's opponents to take action against one
CHIN to rub one's chin
muse
CHIN to take it on the chin
to cheerfully accept a misfortune
CHINA I would not do so-and-so for all the tea in China
I will never do so-and-so
CHINA a bull in a china shop
a careless person likely to cause great damage
CHINESE a Chinese puzzle
a perplexing enigma
CHINESE Chinese walls
a system to ensure that different parts of some organization do not gain access to each other's confidential information
CHINK a chink in someone's armor
an opportunity to do something which otherwise could not be done
CHINK a chink in the wall
an opportunity to do something which otherwise could not be done
CHINK a chink of light
a small hope of a solution or breakthrough
CHIP bargaining chips
benefits which can be conceded in negotiations in order to obtain some advantage
CHIP that is the way the chips fall
that is the actual situation
CHIP to be a blue chip stock
to be of excellent quality
CHIP to be a chip off the old block
to resemble one's father
CHIP to chip in
to contribute financially
CHIP to have a chip on one's shoulder
to unreasonably resent something
CHIP to have had one's chips
to have received all that is going to be forthcoming
CHIP to turn one's chips in
to convert one's assets or entitlements into cash
CHIP when the chips are down
when all facts are known and taken into consideration
CHISEL to chisel away at something
to reduce the size of something in a series of small stages
CHOICE Hobson's choice
no right at all to select (refers to Thomas Hobson, a horsekeeper in Cambridge, England, who offered customers seeking a change of horses a single beast on a "take it or leave it" basis)
CHOP to chop someone off at the socks
to stop someone’s proposals prematurely
CHOP to lick one's chops
to look forward to something with pleasurable anticipation
CHORD to strike a chord
 to sound familiar or recall something to mind
CHORD to strike a responsive chord
to get a favorable reaction to a proposal
CHORD to strike the right chord
to appeal successfully to someone's emotions
CHOREOGRAPH to choreograph something
to organize the detail of who does what and when in a project

CHRISTMAS all his Christmases came at once
he was overjoyed
CHUM a green chum
an inexperienced person
CIGARETTE only a cigarette paper between them
virtually equal or close together
CIRCLE the wheel has turned the complete circle
things are now back to where they were before
CIRCLE to do a full circle
to be back to where one was before or (in error) to go in the opposite direction
CIRCLE to run around in circles
to engage in excited but useless activity
CIRCLE to try to square the circle
to attempt the impossible (refers to a classical problem in geometry, namely, to construct with a compass a square of the same area as a given circle)
CIRCUIT to short-circuit something
to do something, eliminating various intermediate steps
CIRCUS to be a real circus
to be a highly disorganized affair
CITE the devil can cite scripture for his purpose
a person can quote a respectable or hostile authority while advocating a disreputable cause of his own (from Shakespeare's MERCHANT OF VENICE)
CITIZEN a second-class citizen
a person not treated as an equal
CITY one can't beat City Hall
the ordinary citizen is powerless against bureaucracy
CIVIL to keep a civil tongue in one's head
to be polite, especially under provocation
CLAIM to stake a claim
to indicate one's desire to obtain something

CLANGER to drop a clanger
to do something indiscreet or which offends social conventions

CLAP to clap eyes on something
to catch sight of something

CLASP to clasp at straws
to have a hopeless case but show unjustified optimism on noting minor positive features

CLASS a second-class citizen
a person not treated as an equal

CLASS to be first class
to be very satisfactory

CLAY to have feet of clay
to be vulnerable (Daniel 2:33)

CLEAN a Herculean cleaning of the stables
a thorough revision of operating procedure (refers to Hercules, a mythical Greek hero who cleaned the stables of Augeas)

CLEAN a clean sweep
the complete removal in an election of all sitting members

CLEAN a cleanskin
a person without a criminal record

CLEAN a spring cleaning
a thorough review occurring a long time after the previous one

CLEAN to clean up a mess
to sort out mistakes or neglect

CLEAN to clean up one's act
to fix up the deficiencies in one's affairs

CLEAN to come clean
to confess

CLEAN to get a clean bill of health
after proper investigation to be found not wanting

CLEAN to have clean hands
to be innocent or to act ethically

CLEAN to keep one's nose clean
to act with circumspection and honesty despite temptation to do otherwise

CLEAN to make a clean breast of something
to confess

CLEAN to wipe the slate clean
to forgive past indiscretions

CLEANER to take someone to the cleaners
to cheat a person financially

CLEAR clear cut
not borderline

CLEAR the coast is clear
there are no observers to one's activity around

CLEAR to be crystal clear
to have a very obvious meaning

CLEAR to be in the clear
to be exonerated or free from suspicion

CLEAR to clear the air
to remove any possible misunderstandings

CLEAR to clear the decks
to get ready for action

CLEAR to clear the ground
to dispose of the preliminaries

CLEAR to come through loud and clear
to be well understood

CLEAR to have a clear picture of something
to have a good understanding of something

CLEAR to jump a hurdle
to overcome a problem or difficulty

CLEAR when the smoke clears
when sufficient time has passed
CLEFT to be in a cleft stick
to be in a dilemma

CLIFF to be a cliff-hanger
to be very exciting

CLIMATE climate
commercial environment

CLING to cling on by one's fingertips
to have only a slender hold

CLIP to clip someone's wings
to reduce another person's freedom to act as he thinks fit

CLOAK cloak and dagger activity
secret activity

CLOAK to cloak something
to disguise the true nature of something

CLOCK to turn back the clock
to have another opportunity to do something which should have been done already or to undo something which cannot be undone

CLOSE to be a close shave
to be a narrow escape

CLOSE to be a closed book
to be a secret

CLOSE to be close to one's heart
to be a project on which one is very keen

CLOSE to be close to the abyss
to face imminent total destruction

CLOSE to be too close to home
to be too near the truth to be welcome

CLOSE to close ranks
to sink minor differences in order to present a unified front to a common enemy

CLOSE to close the book on something
to terminate an activity

CLOSE to close the gate
to deny an opportunity which was previously available

CLOSE to draw the nets closer
to intensify one's efforts

CLOSE to get close to the bone
to cause discomfort by being accurate

CLOSE to sail close to the wind
to act in a very dangerous manner

CLOSET to come out of the closet
to publicly admit one's homosexuality

CLOTH to cut one's coat according to the cloth
to accommodate oneself to limitations beyond one's control and to do the best in the circumstances

CLOTHING to steal someone's clothes
to plagiarize another person's ideas

CLOTHING to be a wolf in sheep's clothing
to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous although masquerading as something harmless (Matthew 7:15)

CLOUD every cloud has a silver lining
there are benefits even in seemingly adverse situations

CLOUD there are black clouds on the horizon
bad news is expected

CLOUD to be in cloud cuckoo land
to be mad or to have unrealistic expectations

CLOUD to be on cloud nine
to be very happy

CLOUD to be under a cloud
to be under suspicion or to be out of favor

CLOUD to cast a cloud over something
to spoil the pleasure of an occasion

CLOUD to cloud one's mind
to allow irrelevant or extraneous factors to affect one's impartiality or judgment
CLOUD to have a cloud hanging over one's head
there is doubt as to one's future
CLOUD to have one's head in the clouds
to be unrealistic
CLOVER to be in clover
to enjoy a life of ease and luxury
CLUB join the club!
you are only one of many people
with similar problems
COACH an opening wide enough to drive a coach and four through
an excellent opportunity
COACH to drive a coach and horses through something
to demonstrate major errors in something
COAL to be at the coal face
to be in the place where the real work is done
COAL to carry coals to Newcastle
to do something ridiculously unnecessary
COAL to haul someone over the coals
to reprimand a person
COAST the coast is clear
there are no observers to one's activity around
COASTER a roller coaster ride
a series of successes followed by failures
COAT to cut one's coat according to the cloth
to accommodate oneself to limitations beyond one's control and to do the best in the circumstances
COAT to hang onto someone's coat-tails
to excessively rely on another person's initiatives
COAT to trail one's coat-tails
to invite a quarrel

COBBLER a cobbler should stick to his last
every person should confine himself to activities for which he has been trained
COBWEB to blow the cobwebs away
to revive an old issue
COCK a cock and bull story
an explanation which is completely unbelievable and unacceptable
COCK cock-eyed
stupid
COCK to cock one's eye at someone
to glance knowingly at a person
COCK to go off half-cocked
to act without adequate thought or preparation (refers to a gun at the half-ready)
COCKED to knock something into a cocked hat
to twist something so that its original form is hardly recognizable
COCKLE to warm the cockles of someone's heart
to delight a person
COCOON in a cocoon
in a safe and isolated environment
COFFIN to be another nail in someone's coffin
to represent a further step toward someone's downfall
COG to be a small cog in a large wheel
to be a relatively unimportant person in a large organization
COIN the other side of the coin
the arguments for the opposite point of view
COIN to pay someone back in his own coin
to retaliate in kind
COLD a cold day in hell
never
cold-hearted
cruel or mean or unmoved

cold turkey
the sudden cessation of drugs to an addict

in the cold light of day
in an unemotional atmosphere at a later stage

that is cold comfort
that appears on the surface to be reassurance and consolation but really it is not

the cold war
the unfriendly relations between the communist nations and the rest of the world

the cold wind of change
the unpleasant realities of new circumstances

to be a cold fish
to be an unemotional person

to be in a cold sweat
to be afraid

to blow hot and cold
to vacillate

to come in out of the cold
to be welcomed into a group

to do something in cold blood
to be cruel without feeling any emotion about it

to get cold feet
to become scared

to give someone the cold shoulder
to ostentatiously ignore a person

to leave someone cold
to fail to impress a person

to leave someone out in the cold
to deny a desired objective to a person

to pour cold water on some idea
to be unenthusiastic about some proposal or scornful of its apparent weaknesses

to put something into cold storage
to put something aside for dealing with at some indeterminate future time

to send a cold shiver down someone's spine
to horrify a person

to be hot under the collar
to be very agitated

to be on a collision course
to be headed for a clash with an opponent

that is a horse of a very different color
that is a much more acceptable proposition

that takes on added color
there are now further facts which alter the appearance of a matter

to nail one's colors to the mast
to publicly declare one's position and to maintain it in the face of criticism

to pass with flying colors
to be very successful

to sail under false colors
to pretend that one's real character or beliefs are different from what they really are

to see the color of someone's eyes
to see how a person matches expectations or requirements

to see the color of someone's money
to get evidence of the sincerity of a person's proposal
COLOR to show one’s true colors
to disclose one’s real character or beliefs

COLUMNIST a fifth columnist
a person using his position of trust to work for a rival cause

COMB to go through something with a fine-tooth comb
to conduct an extremely thorough investigation

COME all his Christmases came at once
he was overjoyed

COME the chickens are coming home to roost
the consequences of past actions are becoming obvious

COME to argue till the cows come home
to argue for ever

COME to come adrift
(of a plan) not to work out as intended

COME to come apart at the seams
(of an arrangement) to break down

COME to come back to haunt someone
(of an unpleasant incident) to be a constant reminder to a person

COME to come down with a thud
to be suddenly disillusioned

COME to come in out of the cold
to be welcomed into a group

COME to come in thick and fast
to arrive quickly and in great volume

COME to come out into the open
to start being frank

COME to come out of one’s ears
to be plentiful

COME to come out of the blue
to be totally unexpected

COME to come out of the closet
to publicly admit one’s homosexuality

COME to come through loud and clear
to be well understood

COME to come to a full stop
to completely cease activity

COME to come to a head
to reach culmination

COME to come to grips with some problem
to be on the way to solving a problem

COME to come to someone’s ears
to come to someone’s attention

COME to come to the party
to agree to someone’s terms

COME to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one’s character

COME to cross a bridge only when one comes to it
to await the crystallization of a situation before sorting it out

COME to jump that hurdle when one comes to it
to deal with a particular problem only when it becomes necessary to do so

COME when one’s ship comes in
when one’s business venture is successfully completed or when luck arrives

COME when the crunch comes
when the inevitable conclusion is reached

COMEDY a comedy of errors
a series of separate mistakes in relation to some matter (name of a Shakespeare play)

COMFORT that is cold comfort
that appears on the surface to be reassurance and consolation but really it is not

COMMAND to be in a commanding position
to have a strategic advantage
COMMAND to be in command
to be on top of a situation
COMMANDMENT eleventh
commandment
unwritten rule
COMPANY to have shares in a
paper company
to institute unnecessary clerical pro-
cedures
COMPARE to compare notes
to exchange information about some
subject of mutual interest
COMPETE to compete on all fours
with someone
to strive on equal terms
COMPLETE the wheel has turned
the complete circle
things are now back to where they
were before
COMPLETE to turn a complete
somersault
to reverse one’s established policy
COMPLIMENT a left-handed
compliment
a thinly-disguised insult
COMPLIMENT to return the
compliment
to reciprocate or to extract revenge
COMPOUND to compound the
felony
having already acted improperly to
make matters worse (the misuse of a
legal term: compounding a felony is
the crime of agreeing for money not
to prosecute a person for felony; in
reality it is therefore an offense by a
different person—not a second and
worse offense by the original culprit)
CONCERT to be up to concert pitch
to be ready
CONCRETE to set something in
concrete
to make something virtually unalter-
able
CONFRONT to confront someone
head on
to confront a person
CONJURE to conjure up a picture
to use words to convey a vivid
impression
CONJURE to conjure up something
to produce something in circum-
stances where this seemed impossible
CONTEMPLATE to contemplate
one’s navel
to be introspective
CONVERT to preach to the
converted
to say something to those who al-
ready believe in it
COOK a Cook’s tour
a guided tour of inspection (refers to
Thomas Cook, the travel company)
COOK there are many ways to cook
eggs
there are many ways to achieve an
objective
COOK to be cooking with gas
to be fully operational
COOK to cook one’s goose
to do something which backfires on
one
COOK to cook the books
fraudulently to maintain false records
of financial transactions
COOK too many cooks spoil the
broth
one leader is all that is required
COOKIE that is the way the cookie
crumbles
that is the actual situation
COOL cool it!
calm down!
COOL to cool one’s heels
to be kept waiting
COOL to keep a cool head
to stay calm and rational in a crisis
COOL to play it cool
to take a low-key and rational approach

COOP to fly the coop
to grow up and become independent

COP to cop it in the neck
to suffer a severe disaster

COPYBOOK to blot one's copybook
to spoil one's previously good reputation or record

COPYCAT a copycat
a person who imitates another person's ideas

CORD to cut the cord
to sever a connection (refers to the umbilical cord)

CORE rotten to the core
completely corrupt

CORE to be the hard core
to be the central and most difficult problem

CORN to tread on someone's corns
to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility

CORNER cornerstone
key ingredient

CORNER from the four corners of the globe
from everywhere

CORNER to back someone into a corner
to drive a person into a position from which escape is difficult

CORNER to be around the corner
to be imminent

CORNER to be in a tight corner
to experience a crisis

CORNER to cut corners
to lower one's standards in order to complete something more quickly

CORNER to paint oneself into a corner
to foolishly put oneself into a position from which escape is impossible

CORNER to see something out of the corner of one's eye
to only just see something

CORNER to turn the corner
to commence being successful after initial failures

CORPS esprit de corps
a feeling of camaraderie and concern for the good name of some organization of which one is a member (French, "vital breath of a body")

CORPSE to breathe life into a corpse
to revive something moribund

CORPSE to chase a corpse
to harp on something long ago resolved or a lost cause

COTTON to be out of one's cotton-picking mind
to act irrationally

COTTON to keep one's cotton-picking fingers off something
not to interfere in something

COTTON to wrap someone in cotton wool
to be overprotective toward a person

COUNT the final countdown
the last stages of something (refers to the launch of space vehicles)

COUNT to count one's chickens before they are hatched
to treat as fact the expected results of a future proposal

COUNT to stand up and be counted
to publicly announce one's position on some issue

COUNTRY one looks for elephants in elephant country
one needs to search in the right place

COUP to receive the coup de grace
to be finished off by an opponent (French, "mercy stroke")

COURSE in the course of a day's march
while carrying out one's normal activities
COURSE *it is horses for courses*
  some combinations work particularly well

COURSE *to be on a collision course*
  to be headed for a clash with an opponent

COURSE *to be on course*
  to be progressing satisfactorily toward one’s goal

COURSE *to be par for the course*
  to be normal

COURSE *to plot a safe course through troubled waters*
  to make a plan which overcomes certain difficulties

COURSE *to run its course*
  to come to a natural end

COURT *the ball is in someone’s court*
  it is some other person’s responsibility

COURT *to have a friend at court*
  a person with influence who is willing to use it on one’s behalf

COURT *to laugh something out of court*
  to ridicule a proposition as having no basis whatsoever

COURT *to put oneself out of court*
  to disqualify oneself from being considered for something

CONVENTRY *to send someone to Coventry*
  to ostentatiously and collectively ignore a person by way of punishment

COVER *to cover one’s back*
  to take precautions

COVER *to cover one’s hide*
  to provide excuses or take other evasive action in an attempt to avoid the adverse consequences of one’s actions

COVER *to cover one’s tracks*
  to hide the evidence of one’s involvement

COVER *to cover oneself*
  to create evidence so that if one is criticized or accused later on one can clear one’s name

COVER *to cover the field*
  to be comprehensive

COVER *to duck for cover*
  to seek to avoid blame

COVER *to judge a book by its cover*
  foolishly to go only by superficial appearances

COW *a cash cow*
  a source of ready money

COW *a milch cow*
  an easy and plentiful source of some desired benefit

COW *a sacred cow*
  an institution so well established that it is virtually unalterable

COW *to argue till the cows come home*
  to argue forever

COX *Box and Cox*
  two persons who are never around at the same time (from the name of a play)

CRACK *someone is a hard nut to crack*
  it is very difficult to persuade a person to do something

CRACK *the crack of dawn*
  at the exact moment of sunrise

CRACK *to be a crack in the wall*
  to represent a small unintended opportunity which can be exploited

CRACK *to be a fair crack of the whip*
  to be just

CRACK *to be all that it is cracked up to be*
  to be as good as the claims made for something

CRACK *to crack*
  to have a mental break-down
| **CRACK** | to crack down on something | to seek to eradicate something |
| **CRACK** | to crack the whip | to exert one's authority |
| **CRACK** | to have a crack at something | to attempt something |
| **CRACK** | to paper over the cracks | to institute extremely superficial and basically ineffective remedies |
| **CRACK** | to use a sledgehammer to crack a nut | to devote vastly more resources to a project than is warranted by all the circumstances |
| **CRADLE** | to be the cradle of something | to be the place where some idea was first nurtured |
| **CRANNEY** | in every nook and cranny | everywhere |
| **CRASH** | to gatecrash a gathering | to attend a gathering without any right to be there |
| **CRAWL** | to crawl out of the woodwork | to turn up unexpectedly and in large numbers |
| **CREAM** | to be cream on top of the milk | to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario |
| **CREATE** | to create a Frankenstein | to create something wicked and out of control (a reference to the fictional creator of a monster, in mistake for a reference to the monster itself) |
| **CREATE** | to create a storm | to kick up a fuss |
| **CREEK** | to be up the creek | to be completely mistaken; to be in trouble |
| **CREEP** | to make someone's flesh creep | to frighten a person with something horrific |
| **CREME** | crème de la creme | something quite superlative (French, "the cream of the cream") |
| **CREST** | to be on the crest of a wave | to enjoy success which may not last |
| **CRESTFALLEN** | crestfallen | dejected |
| **CRICKET** | a cricket team | eleven people |
| **CRICKET** | not to be cricket | to be unfair |
| **CROCODILE** | to shed crocodile tears | to be a hypocrite |
| **CROOK** | by hook or by crook | by fair means or foul |
| **CROSS** | to be a cross which one has to bear | to be a difficulty which one has to endure |
| **CROSS** | to be at the crossroads | to need to choose between several mutually exclusive alternatives |
| **CROSS** | to cross a bridge only when one comes to it | to await the crystallization of a situation before sorting it out |
| **CROSS** | to cross one's mind | to occur to one |
| **CROSS** | to cross someone's path | to meet another person by chance |
| **CROSS** | to cross swords with someone | to have a disagreement with another person |
| **CROSS** | to cross the Rubicon | to make an irreversible decision in regard to some commitment |
| **CROSS** | to dot the i's and cross the t's | to be meticulous in completing the documentation for a transaction |
CROSS to have one's wires crossed
to be mistaken about key facts

CROSS to keep one's fingers crossed
to hope for a good outcome

CROW as the crow flies
by the shortest distance

CROW to eat crow
to accept a humiliating defeat

CROWD to stand out from the crowd
to be noticeably better than one's competitors

CROWN the crowning point
the height of a person's achievement

CROWN the jewel in someone's crown
the most significant component

CROWN to wear one's crown of thorns
to have one's own difficulties (John 19:5)

CROWN uneasy lies the head that wears a crown
responsibility involves some risks and some burdens (from Shakespeare's HENRY IV)

CRUCIFY to crucify someone
to unfairly do severe damage to a person's reputation or credibility

CRUEL to cruel someone's pitch
to spoil a person's chances

CRUMB to throw someone a few crumbs
to fob a person off with a few symbolic but unimportant concessions

CRUMBLE that is the way the cookie crumbles
that is the actual situation

CRUNCH when it comes to the crunch
when the matter comes up for decision

CRUNCH when the crunch comes
when the inevitable conclusion is reached

CRUSADE a crusade
an aggressive campaign to achieve some political or social objective

CRUSOE not to be Robinson Crusoe
to be one of a large number of people with a common problem (from Daniel Defoe's ROBINSON CRUSOE)

CRUTCH a crutch
an artificial non-permanent support

CRY a cry for help
a subconscious or indirect indication that a person is in need of psychological counselling

CRY a shoulder to cry on
sympathy

CRY it is no use crying over spilt milk
lamenting over a disaster achieves nothing

CRY to be a far cry from something
to be a long way from something

CRY to cry "wolf"
to repeatedly raise an unjustified concern with the result that one will be ignored when the circumstances change

CRY to cry in one's beer
to show remorse

CRY to cry one's eyes out
to express great sadness at a situation

CRY to laugh all the way to the bank
to appreciate one's good fortune

CRYSTAL a crystal ball
accurate knowledge of the future

CRYSTAL to be crystal clear
to have a very obvious meaning

CRYSTALLIZE to crystallize
to emerge in its final form

CUCKOO to be a cuckoo in the nest
to purport to be a member of a group of people although having no such right

CUCKOO to be in cloud cuckoo land
to be mad or to have unrealistic expectations
CUD to chew the cud
to reflect on something

CUDGEL to take up the cudgels for someone
to defend a person

CUFF off the cuff
impromptu

CUP a storm in a teacup
a controversy about a minor matter
but one which looms large in the minds of the parties

CUP not to be someone's cup of tea
to be outside a person's expertise or area of interest

CUPBOARD a skeleton in the cupboard
an unpleasant truth the knowledge of which has been deliberately suppressed

CUPBOARD the cupboard is bare
the wished-for resources are just not available

CURATE to be a curate's egg
to be good only in parts (refers to an 1895 cartoon in PUNCH)

CURDLE to curdle one's blood
to be horrific

CURE the cure is worse than the disease
the remedy involves more disadvantages than if it were not applied

CURL to make someone's hair curl
(of news) to give someone a shock

CURLY to get someone by the short and curly hairs
to have domination over a person

CURRENT an undercurrent
a barely noticeable feeling of dissent in the community which is not being vocalized

CURSE not worth a tinker's curse
worthless

CURTAIN curtain raiser
introduction

CURTAIN it's curtains!
this is the end!

CURTAIN the curtain rises on something
something is about to start

CURTAIN the iron curtain
the border between the communist nations and the rest of the world
(from a speech by Sir Winston Churchill in 1946)

CURTAIN to ring down the curtain on something
to treat something as concluded

CUSTOMER a slippery customer
a shifty person

CUT clear cut
not borderline

CUT cut it out!
stop doing that!

CUT cut-throat
highly competitive

CUT one could have cut the atmosphere with a knife
those present were very tense

CUT the cut of someone's jib
someone's personal appearance

CUT to be a cut above the rest
to be plainly superior

CUT to be at the cutting edge of something
to be in a position where important decisions need to be made

CUT to be cut and dried
to be well settled or long established

CUT to be cut off at the knees
to have a pet project aborted

CUT to be cut to pieces
to be very upset

CUT to be cut up
to be distressed

CUT to cut both ways
to involve both advantages and disadvantages of similar significance
CUT to cut corners
to lower one’s standards in order to complete something more quickly

CUT to cut no ice with someone
to have little effect on a person

CUT to cut one’s coat according to the cloth
to accommodate oneself to limitations beyond one’s control and to do the best in the circumstances

CUT to cut one’s nose off to spite one’s face
to act in pique in a way which harms only oneself

CUT to cut one’s own throat
to act in a way which damages one’s own interests

CUT to cut one’s teeth on something
to get one’s first experience by doing something

CUT to cut someone dead
to snub a person

CUT to cut tall poppies down to size
to humiliate haughty persons

CUT to cut the Gordian knot
to solve, especially by force, a virtually insoluble problem (refers to a complicated knot tied by Gordius and eventually cut by Alexander the Great)

CUT to cut the cord
to sever a connection (refers to the umbilical cord)

CUT to cut the ground from under someone’s feet
to unexpectedly withdraw support and in the process cause embarrassment or to demolish a person’s case

CUT to cut the painter
to become separated

CUT to have one’s work cut out to do something
it will be difficult to achieve something

CUT to take shortcuts
to do something by a faster but less thorough method

CYLINDER to spark on all cylinders
to work extremely well

D

DADDY the daddy of them all
the progenitor

DAGGER cloak and dagger activity
secret activity

DAGGER to look daggers at someone
to look at a person in a way which indicates great animosity

DAM the dam burst
the cumulative effect of many things caused a disaster

DAMASCUS to be on the road to Damascus
to see the error of one’s ways (Acts 9:3)

DAMOCLES to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one
to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one

DAMP a damp squib
disappointingly ineffective action (refers to fireworks which fail to go off)

DANCE nothing to make a song or dance about
unexciting or unimportant

DANCE to lead someone a merry dance
to mislead a person

DANCE to make a song and dance about something
to create a fuss

DANSE danse macabre
gruesome final step (French, ‘‘ghastly dance’’)

DARK a dark horse
a person with unsuspected talents

DARK a leap into the dark
a rash move

DARK a shot in the dark
an intelligent or lucky guess
DARK  a stab in the dark
da sheer guess
DARK  to be in the dark
to be uninformed
DARK  to keep someone in the dark
to deliberately keep a person uninformed
DARK  to keep something dark
to keep something secret
DARK  to look on the dark side
to be pessimistic
DARK  to whistle in the dark
to feign greater confidence than one really has
DARKEN  never darken my door again
do not ever return
DAWN  a false dawn
an incident giving rise to unjustified hope
DAWN  light dawns
the point is grasped
DAWN  the crack of dawn
at the exact moment of sunrise
DAWN  to be the dawn of a new day
to be the start of a different regime
DAY  a cold day in hell
never
DAY  a field day
a very enjoyable and successful occasion
DAY  a nine-day wonder
an exciting event, but one which will cease to arouse interest when the novelty has worn off
DAY  a red-letter day
an important occasion (refers to the color used to print saints’ days on some calendars)
DAY  at the end of the day
in due course or at the conclusion of a project

DAY  every dog has his day
good luck comes sooner or later
DAY  he would not give one the time of day
he is unwilling to help anybody
DAY  in Halcyon days
in past happier times (refers to the 14 days about the winter solstice when winds were calm and to the mythical bird said to breed in a floating nest at that time)
DAY  in the cold light of day
in an unemotional atmosphere at a later stage
DAY  in the course of a day’s march
while carrying out one’s normal activities
DAY  late in the day
only when a project is well advanced
DAY  one’s days are numbered
one is about to be abolished
DAY  the order of the day
the customary behavior
DAY  to be the dawn of a new day
to be the start of a different regime
DAY  to call it a day
to cease involvement with some activity
DAY  to keep something for a rainy day
to keep something in reserve
DAY  to see the light of day
to be made public
DAYLIGHT  daylight robbery
the charging of grossly excessive prices
DAYLIGHT  to see daylight
to get the right answer
DEAD  I wouldn’t be caught dead without some object
I regard some object as very important
DEAD  a dead-end position
a job with no prospects of advancement
DEAD a dead letter
a rule still in existence but no longer observed in practice
DEAD dead and buried
(of some issue) definitely concluded, especially so long ago as to be nearly forgotten
DEAD drop dead!
go away, I want no dealings with you
DEAD over my dead body
never
DEAD to be a dead duck
to have failed
DEAD to cut someone dead
to snub a person
DEAD to get rid of the dead wood
to terminate the services of unsatisfactory personnel
DEAD to kill some proposal stone
to abandon some proposal completely
DEAD to leave others for dead
to be vastly superior
DEAD to make noise enough to wake the dead
to be excessively noisy
DEAD to run into a dead end
to get nowhere in an investigation
DEADLINE deadline
time by which something must be completed
DEAF to fall on deaf ears
to be totally disregarded
DEAFENING deafening silence
great apathy and lack of enthusiasm
DEAL a raw deal
unfair treatment
DEAL a sweetheart deal
an agreement negotiated in private without full regard to the interests of those affected
DEAL to deal the final hand
to take steps which conclude a matter
DEAL to wheel and deal
to energetically enter into commercial transactions of dubious propriety
DEALER sharp dealer
person engaging in barely honest or mildly unethical practices
DEATH a death wish
the contemplation of action so foolish that it is likely to lead to utter disaster
DEATH death blow
incident which results in the destruction of something
DEATH sudden death
instantaneously or without phasing in
DEATH to be in at the death
to be present at the conclusion of something
DEATH to be on one’s death bed
(of an organization or a piece of equipment) to be about to cease functioning
DEATH to be the kiss of death
to be something intended to be helpful but resulting in total destruction
DEATH to bore someone to death
to greatly weary a person by dull and uninteresting conversation or by lack of action
DEATH to die a natural death
by virtue of changed circumstances or the effluxion of time to be no longer relevant
DEATH to sign one’s own death warrant
to foolishly do something which is inevitably bound to lead to utter disaster
DEATH to slowly bleed to death
to be heading in gradual steps toward total ruin
DEATH to sound the death knell of something
to indicate the impending end of something
DEATHKNOCK on the deathknock
at the last possible moment
DECIMATE to decimate
to greatly reduce in size (often used in the sense of “to reduce to one tenth,” although the original meaning was “to reduce by one tenth”)

DECIPHER to decipher something
to understand the significance of something

DECK a loose cannon on the deck
a mistake likely to cause trouble

DECK all hands on deck
everybody is requested to help out

DECK to be back on deck
to have returned after an absence

DECK to clear the decks
to get ready for action

DECKCHAIR to rearrange the deckchairs on the Titanic
to take some initiative which is quite useless because it does not take much greater change into account

DEEP deep-rooted
strongly felt

DEEP still waters run deep
a person with a quiet manner may have a surprisingly great knowledge of a subject

DEEP to be in deep water
to be in great difficulty

DEEP to go off the deep end
to lose one’s temper

DEEP to have deep pockets
to have large financial resources

DEEP to jump straight in at the deep end
to do something without a proper lead-in

DEEP to play a deep game
to show cunning

DEEP to sink deeper into the mire
to get into further difficulties

DEEP to sink deeper into the mud
to get into even greater difficulty

DEFLOWER to deflower
to deprive of virginity

DEFY to defy gravity
to go up when the expectation is to go down

DEGREE to give someone the third degree
to apply pressure while questioning closely a person under suspicion

DEGREE to the nth degree
with great precision

DEGREE to turn around 180 degrees
to completely reverse a stance

DELIVER to deliver the goods
to achieve the objective

DELPHIC Delphic
deliberately obscure (refers to the oracle at Delphi)

DEN to beard the lion in his den
to visit someone important at his headquarters

DENMARK something is rotten in the state of Denmark
the situation is not correct (from Shakespeare’s HAMLET)

DENOMINATOR the lowest common denominator
the highest level of taste found among all the members of some target audience

DEPTH to be out of one’s depth
to find that some issue is too complicated or too difficult

DERAIL to derail some strategy
to cause a strategy to fail

RESPOND a slough of despond
a feeling of hopelessness

DESTROY soul-destroying
extremely boring and demotivating

DEVASTATE to be devastated
to be extremely disappointed
DEVELOP to develop a head of steam
to gain momentum

DEVIL a devil-may-care attitude
a reckless attitude

DEVIL be a devil!
take a chance!

DEVIL between the devil and the deep blue sea
to be faced with two equally unpalatable alternatives which cannot both be avoided

DEVIL he must have a long spoon that sups with the devil
great care is needed when negotiating deals with disreputable parties

DEVIL poor devil
person to be pitied

DEVIL talk of the devil
here is the person we were just discussing

DEVIL the devil can cite scripture for his purpose
a person can quote a respectable or hostile authority while advocating a disreputable cause of his own (from Shakespeare’s MERCHANT OF VENICE)

DEVIL the devil one knows is better than the devil one does not know
the status quo is more comfortable than change

DEVIL to act as a devil’s advocate
to put a point of view which one does not hold in order to draw out the best arguments regarding a proposition (refers to a church official vetting a candidate for sainthood)

DEVIL to give the devil his due
to be fair (a phrase used in parenthesis, and only in the infinitive)

DEVIL to grab the devil by the tail
to face up to difficulties

DIAMOND to be a rough diamond
to have many attributes but a gruff manner

DICK every Tom, Dick and Harry
just about everybody

DICTIONARY someone has swallowed a dictionary
a person uses excessively long words

DIE no dice
the proposal is totally unacceptable

DIE the die is cast
the course of action in train is irreversible

DIE the whole box and dice
all relevant components

DIE to be dying to do something
to be extremely keen to do something

DIE to be the throw of a loaded die
to be an act of deceit

DIE to die a natural death
by virtue of changed circumstances or the effluxion of time to be no longer relevant

DIE to die hard
not to give up easily

DIFFERENT that is a horse of a very different color
that is a much more acceptable proposition

DIFFERENT to march to a different drum
to show an independent approach

DIG to dig one’s heels in
to become even more stubborn than at first

DIG to dig one’s own grave
to take action which results in an unintended disaster for oneself

DIG to dig one’s toes in
to become even more stubborn than at first

DIM to take a dim view of something
not to regard something favorably

DINNER to be done like a dinner
to be defeated and humiliated
DINOSAUR a dinosaur
a person with incredibly outmoded ideas

DIP to dip one's toes in the water
to gently explore an opportunity

DIRE in dire straits
in great need

DIRECTION a step in the right direction
the first in a series of measures designed to correct some problem

DIRECTION it is pointing in the right direction
success looks likely

DIRECTION to head someone in the right direction
to assist a person to achieve something

DIRT to strike pay dirt
to become successful

DIRTY dirty
unfair

DIRTY to do someone's dirty work
to do something unethical on behalf of another person

DIRTY to get one's hands dirty
to do the necessary but unpleasant or menial parts of a task

DIRTY to wash one's dirty linen in public
to expose one's domestic differences to the world at large

DISASTER a pit of disaster
great and unexpected misfortune

DISCLOSE to disclose one's hand
to give away information regarding one's intention

DISEASE the cure is worse than the disease
the remedy involves more disadvantages than if it were not applied

DISGUISE a blessing in disguise
an unwelcome but salutary experience

DISPATCH to be mentioned in dispatches
to be favorably mentioned (refers to military recognition for bravery)

DISSEMINATE to disseminate ideas
to spread ideas to a wide audience (lit., "to scatter seeds in various places")

DISTANCE to keep one's distance
to avoid familiarity

DISTANT distant fields look greener
activities of which one has no experience seem much easier than is really the case

DITCH to make a last-ditch stand
to make a brave effort to stave off final defeat

DIVE to take a nosedive
to suddenly and unexpectedly fall steeply

DIVIDENDS to show dividends
to be successful

DO the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing
one section of a large bureaucracy does not realize that another section is simultaneously doing something inconsistent

DOCK to be in the dock
to need to defend one's stance

DOCTOR just what the doctor ordered
exactly right

DOG a cat and dog existence
a life full of frequent squabbles

DOG a dogfight
a small side-skirmish, especially between airplanes

DOG a lame dog
a person under some disadvantage needing attention and assistance

DOG a shaggy-dog story
an amusing anecdote with an unexpected ending, often involving talking animals given certain human skills
DOG  a sly dog
a person who is discreet about his weaknesses

DOG  a watchdog
a person or organization monitoring behavior

DOG all the dogs are barking
this news is being widely disseminated

DOG any stick to beat a dog
any excuse will do if it serves one's purpose

DOG dog-eared
(of pages) well-thumbed

DOG dog-tired
tired out

DOG every dog has his day
good luck comes sooner or later

DOG every man and his dog
everybody

DOG love me—love my dog
if you accept me then you must also accept my associates

DOG not a dog's chance
no hope at all

DOG one cannot teach an old dog new tricks
people get irreversibly set in their ways

DOG the tail wagging the dog
a minor aspect with disproportionate effect on a major aspect

DOG the top dog
the person in the most powerful position

DOG to be a dog in the manger
to spitefully deny something to others, notwithstanding its uselessness to oneself

DOG to be a dog's breakfast
to be a very messy arrangement

DOG to be a gay dog
to lead an idle life while flaunting the symbols of wealth

DOG to be in the doghouse
to be in disgrace

DOG to call off the dogs
to abandon an audit or other inquiry

DOG to give a dog a bad name
to malign a person

DOG to go to the dogs
to be ruined

DOG to have a hair of the dog that bit one
to drink more in an attempt to overcome the effects of alcohol already consumed

DOG to lead a dog's life
to be ill-treated

DOG to let sleeping dogs lie
to refrain from raising an issue which is not obviously requiring attention

DOG to rain cats and dogs
to rain heavily

DOG to throw something to the dogs
to sacrifice something

DOG two men and a dog
very few people

DOG underdog
object of sympathy (the antonym of "underdog effect" is "bandwagon effect")

DOG why keep a dog and bark oneself?
it is silly to pay for assistance and then do things personally

DOLDRUMS to be in the doldrums
to be depressed or to show no activity (refers to a region of little wind near the equator, becalming sailing ships)

DOLLAR a sixty-four thousand dollar question
a pertinent but very difficult question (refers to a television quiz show in which an initial prize doubles with the successful answering of progressively more difficult questions)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **DOMINO** | *a domino effect*  
a series of disasters each of which after the first is precipitated by the one before |
| **DONKEY** | *donkey work*  
necessary but uninspiring routine work  
*for donkey's years*  
for a long time  
*to talk the hind leg off a donkey*  
to talk excessively |
| **DONNA** | *a prima donna*  
a person with an exaggerated opinion of his own importance which makes relations with others needlessly difficult (Italian, ‘first lady’) |
| **DOOR** | *a foot in the door*  
the opportunity to do business  
*never darken my door again*  
do not ever return  
*not to break someone's door down*  
to be quite unenthusiastic about someone’s goods or services  
*one's door is always open*  
people can take their problems to one at any time  
*through the back door*  
unofficially or surreptitiously  
*to be out the door*  
to have one’s position terminated  
*to beat a path to someone's door*  
to seek a person out in great numbers  
*to keep the wolf from the door*  
to avoid imminent trouble  
*to knock on doors*  
to seek out opportunities to do business  
*to leave the door open*  
to issue a standing invitation for the resumption of some negotiations  
*to open up doors*  
to create opportunities  
*to put something at someone's door*  
to blame a person  
*to show someone the door*  
to ask a person to leave  
*to shut the door on someone*  
to deny another person a desired opportunity  
*to shut the stable door after the horse has bolted*  
to take preventive action only after the relevant event  
*to slam the door in someone's face*  
ostentatiously to refuse to have any dealings with a person  
*on one's own doorstep*  
in one's own domain  
*from the year dot*  
from time immemorial  
*to arrive on the dot*  
to turn up at the exact scheduled time  
*to dot the i's and cross the t's*  
to be meticulous in completing the documentation for a transaction  
*to sign on the dotted line*  
to confirm one’s agreement  
*a doubting Thomas*  
a person who refuses to believe claims in the absence of proof (John 20:25)  
*watch the doughnut—not the hole*  
look for the positive aspects  
*a down-to-earth solution*  
a realistic solution  
*low-down*  
confidential information relevant to something  
*that is money down the drain*  
money has been wastefully lost on a failed project |
DOWN to be down in the mouth
to be depressed

DOWN to be down the track
to be making progress

DOWN to be further down the line
to have a low priority

DOWN to be on the downgrade
to be of deteriorating quality

DOWN to catch someone with his trousers down
to act when another person least expects it

DOWN to keep one's head down
to work very diligently

DOWN to kick a man when he is down
to take unfair advantage of a person already in difficulty

DOWN to put one's foot down
to exert one's authority and insist on something

DOWNFALL downfall
ruination

DOWNHILL to go downhill
to deteriorate

DOZEN it is six of one and half a dozen of the other
it does not matter

DOZEN to talk nineteen to the dozen
to engage in much idle chatter

DRAFT to feel the draft
to experience unfavorable conditions

DRAG to drag one's feet
to perform unduly slowly

DRAG to drag one's heels
to perform unduly slowly

DRAG to drag someone by the head and ears
to force a person to reveal the true facts

DRAG to drag the chain
to perform unduly slowly

DRAIN that is money down the drain
money has been wastefully lost on a failed project

DRAIN to drain every ounce out of something
to get the maximum use or pleasure out of something

DRAKE to play ducks and drakes
not to treat the matter seriously

DRAW back to the drawing board
the details need to be reconsidered

DRAW to be on the drawing board
to be being planned in detail

DRAW to be quick on the draw
to act precipitately

DRAW to be the luck of the draw
to be a chance result

DRAW to draw a blank
to be unsuccessful

DRAW to draw a deep breath
to get ready for exertion or for emotional news

DRAW to draw a long bow
to state a conclusion which while possible is unlikely on the known facts

DRAW to draw a veil over something
pointedly to avoid discussing something

DRAW to draw blood from a stone
to do the impossible

DRAW to draw fire
to encounter criticism

DRAW to draw first blood
to get an advantage

DRAW to draw the line at that
to refuse to go any further

DRAW to draw the nets closer
to intensify one's efforts

DRAW to draw the short straw
to be the one appointed to do something

DRAW until stumps are drawn
until the project ends (refers to cricket)
DRAWBRIDGE to pull up the drawbridge
to refuse to cooperate

DRAWCARD drawcard
feature expected to attract a crowd

DRAWER to tuck something away in a drawer
to put something aside for the time being

DRAWER top drawer
first class

DREAM a pipedream
a fanciful notion, wished for but unlikely

DREAM to be successful beyond one's wildest dreams
to be far more successful than one could have expected

DREAM to dream up some story
to concoct a false story naively or maliciously

DREAM to have a dream run
to encounter no difficulties

DRESS dress rehearsal
preliminary skirmish

DRESS first in best dressed
persons acting early will do better than latecomers

DRESS to be dressed up to the nines
to be attired in excessively elaborate garments

DRESS to dress someone down
to scold a person

DRESS to engage in window dressing
to present figures in an artificially favorable light

DRIFT to drift apart
to lose contact or to change feelings once held in common

DRINK it is a long time between drinks
activity is occurring only very spasmodically

DRINK to be meat and drink
to be very pleasurable

DRIVE an opening wide enough to drive a coach and four through an excellent opportunity

DRIVE to almost drive someone to tears
to present information designed to make another person express sympathy not warranted by the facts

DRIVE to drive a coach and horses through something
to demonstrate major errors in something

DRIVE to drive a wedge between two persons
to set out to cause two persons to confront each other

DRIVE to drive someone from pillar to post
to send a person to a series of places in a vain attempt to achieve something

DRIVE to drive someone out of his mind
to cause great worry to a person

DRIVE to drive someone to the wall
to ruin a person

DRIVE to drive someone up the wall
to annoy another person by one's actions

DRIVE to drive the lesson home
to take certain action which is unpleasant but which has the effect of registering a message

DRIVER a backseat driver
a person seeking to exercise control

DRIVER to be in the driver's seat
to be in charge

DRONE a drone
an idle person

DROP at the drop of a hat
very readily

DROP drop dead!
go away, I want no dealings with you
DROP someone’s jaw dropped
someone registered obvious disappointment, incredulity or shock

DROP the penny dropped
a person has just realized a fact which should have been obvious (refers to old-fashioned pay toilets)

DROP to be only a drop in the bucket
to be quite insignificant in the total scene

DROP to be only a drop in the ocean
to be quite insignificant in the total scene

DROP to drop a brick
to make a sudden shattering and unexpected announcement

DROP to drop a clanger
to do something indiscreet or which offends social conventions

DROP to drop into one’s lap
to turn up fortuitously

DROP to drop names
to slip names of celebrities allegedly known to the speaker into a conversation in an attempt to impress

DROP to drop one’s bundle
to become despondent

DROP to squeeze the last drop out of something
to get the maximum advantage out of some favorable situation

DROP to wait for the other shoe to drop
to await the seemingly imminent and inevitable (refers to a man undressing, disturbing a neighbor by dropping one shoe, then frustrating his expectation by putting the other shoe down gently)

DROUGHT to break a drought
to resume supplies after an interval

DROVE people stayed away in droves
few people came

DROWN to drown one’s sorrows
to drink by way of solace and in an attempt to forget some misfortune

DRUG to be a drug on the market
to be in overplentiful supply

DRUM to beat a drum for someone
to propagate another person’s cause

DRUM to beat one’s drum
to immodestly publicize one’s own attributes

DRUM to drum someone out of some organization
to terminate in ignominy a person’s employment or membership (refers to the ceremonial cashiering in the army to the beating of parade drums)

DRUM to drum up support
to actively seek out support

DRUM to march to a different drum
to show an independent approach

DRUNK to be punch drunk
to be stupefied by some news

DRY a dry hole
an exercise which after much effort proves fruitless

DRY a dry run
a trial exercise

DRY the ink is hardly dry
something intended to last a long time is to be changed shortly after its establishment

DRY to be cut and dried
to be well settled or long established

DRY to dry up
to cease

DRY to keep one’s powder dry
to retain key arguments or resources in reserve for use later

DRY to leave someone high and dry
to withdraw all support from a person or to isolate a person from a desired involvement
**DRY** to suck the lemon dry
to get the maximum advantage out of some favorable situation

**DUCK** a lame duck
a person unable to fend for himself (a lame duck president - a president still in office but without influence because the commencement of his successor's term is imminent)

**DUCK** in two shakes of a duck's tail
in an instant

**DUCK** to be a dead duck
to have failed

**DUCK** to be a sitting duck
be readily exploited

**DUCK** to be like water off a duck's back
(of advice or criticism) to be completely rejected

**DUCK** to break one's duck
to end a spell without results (refers to cricket)

**DUCK** to duck for cover
to seek to avoid blame

**DUCK** to play ducks and drakes
not to treat the matter seriously

**DUCKLING** an ugly duckling
a person initially thought unintelligent who develops and becomes brilliant (refers to a cygnet in a brood of ducks in a children's story of that name by Hans Christian Andersen)

**DUE** to give the devil his due
to be fair (a phrase used in parenthesis, and only in the infinitive)

**DUMP** to be in the dumps
to feel depressed

**DUMP** to dump something in someone's lap
to impose some responsibility on another person

**DUNCE** to earn a dunce's cap
to do something stupid

**DUST** to bite the dust
to die

**DUST** to dust some idea off
to revive some proposal

**DUST** to gather dust
not to be acted upon without being formally rejected

**DUST** to throw dust into someone's eyes
to deceive a person by presenting inaccurate or misleading information

**DUST** when the dust settles
when sufficient time has passed

**DYED** dyed in the wool
very loyal and partisan

**DYNAMITE** to be dynamite
to cause outrage

**DYNAMITE** to play with dynamite
to invite trouble by virtue of one's risky conduct

**E**

**EAGER** an eager beaver
a person with great drive and enthusiasm even if this causes annoyance to others

**EAGLE** to have an eagle eye
to be able to notice small mistakes very readily

**EAR** a word in someone's ear
a confidential discussion

**EAR** dog-eared
(of pages) well-thumbed

**EAR** little pitchers have long ears
children have a tendency to overhear things

**EAR** one can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear
it is impossible to manufacture something of a high standard without appropriate raw materials

**EAR** to be all ears
to be very attentive
EAR to be music to one's ears
to be comments which one is very pleased to hear

EAR to be out on one's ear
to have one's services abruptly terminated

EAR to be up to one's ears in something
to be very deeply involved in something

EAR to be wet behind the ears
to be excessively naive and inexperienced

EAR to chew someone's ear
to force one's conversation on an unwilling listener

EAR to come out of one's ears
to be plentiful

EAR to come to someone's ears
to come to someone's attention

EAR to drag someone by the head and ears
to force a person to reveal the true facts

EAR to fall around one's ears
to collapse utterly

EAR to fall on deaf ears
to be totally disregarded

EAR to get the wrong sow by the ear
to reach an incorrect conclusion

EAR to go in one ear and out the other
to leave no impression

EAR to have money flowing out of one's ears
to be very rich

EAR to have someone's ear
to have a person's attention

EAR to keep an ear to the ground
to be well informed as to current developments

EAR to keep one's ears open
to be on the lookout for useful information

EAR to lend someone an ear
to pay attention to a person

EAR to play it by ear
to develop one's strategy to always fit in with circumstances as they change from time to time

EAR to prick up one's ears
to suddenly start paying attention to a conversation in progress as a result of a half-heard phrase

EAR to send someone away with a flea in his ear
to give a person frank but unwelcome facts (refers to fleas trapped in the armor of ancient knights)

EAR to turn something on its ear
to reverse something

EAR walls have ears
someone may be overhearing (words on wartime posters, reminding people of the existence of spies; may also refer to certain rooms in the Louvre, constructed so that conversations could be heard in other rooms)

EAR were your ears burning?
we were discussing you

EAR with one's ears pinned back
chastened

EARLY the early bird gets the worm
a person who acts ahead of others gets an advantage over them

EARMARK to earmark
to allocate to a specific purpose

EARN to earn a dunce's cap
to do something stupid

EARN to earn one's stripes
to deserve promotion

EARN to earn peanuts
to get a reward which is far too small in relation to the value of the services rendered

EARTH a down-to-earth solution
a realistic solution
EARTH  earth-shattering  very significant
EARTH  how on earth?  just how?
EARTH  to be the salt of the earth  to be a person whose ordinary efforts benefit the community (Matthew 5:13)
EARTH  to bring someone down to earth  to disillusion a person
EARTH  to charge the earth  to impose very high prices
EARTH  to move heaven and earth  to do everything possible
EARTH  to promise the earth  to give extravagant assurances
EARTH  to run someone to earth  to locate a person
EASY  to be easy meat  to be an opponent who is readily outwitted
EASY  to be easy on the eye  to be visually attractive
EASY  to breathe easy  (following some crisis) to relax
EAT  I'll eat my hat if so-and-so happens  I do not believe that so-and-so will happen
EAT  moth-eaten  (of ideas, etc.) antiquated
EAT  the proof of the pudding is in the eating  the success of a venture will be measured by its results
EAT  to be able to eat someone for breakfast  to be able to outwit a person very easily
EAT  to eat crow  to accept a humiliating defeat
EAT  to eat humble pie  to apologize
EAT  to eat one's heart out  to suffer bitterly

EAT  to eat one's words  to retract
EAT  to eat out of someone's hands  to be unduly compliant
EAT  to eat someone alive  to soundly defeat a person
EAT  to eat someone out of house and home  to ruin a person by eating all he has
EAT  to want to have one's cake and eat it too  to want two mutually exclusive alternatives
EAT  you can eat your heart out  you are entitled to feel sad or jealous
EAVESDROP  to eavesdrop  to deliberately listen to conversations to which one is not a party
EBB  ebb and flow  fluctuations
EBB  to ebb away  to decline gradually
ECHO  to echo someone's words  to repeat another person's views as though they were one's own
ECLIPSE  to eclipse someone  to outshine a person
EDGE  gilt-edged  very safe
EDGE  to be a two-edged sword  to involve both advantages and disadvantages of similar significance
EDGE  to be at the cutting edge of something  to be in a position where important decisions need to be made
EDGE  to be on a knife edge  to be in danger
EDGE  to be on edge  to be nervous
EDGE  to be on the edge of one's seat  to be very excited at what is currently happening
EDGE to be on the razor's edge
to be in great danger

EDGE to become frayed at the edges
no longer to be quite appropriate

EDGE to fiddle at the edges
to do some relatively minor things which do not deal with the substance of a problem

EDGE to give someone the edge
to give a person an advantage over others

EDGE to have a leading edge
to have an advantage

EDGE to push someone over the brink
by a small action to cause the absolute ruin (financially or emotionally) of someone already in peril

EDGE to set someone's teeth on edge
to cause a person to feel unhappy at a situation

EDGE to take the edge off something
to weaken the force or impact of something

EDGE to tinker at the edges
to make minor or cosmetic changes without affecting the substance

EDGE to tip someone over the edge
to cause a person to become mentally ill

EDGeways to get words in edgeways
to manage to interrupt a conversation in order to put a separate point of view

EGG a nest egg
life savings

EGG as sure as eggs are eggs
with great certainty

EGG chicken and egg
two factors each of which results in the other

EGG not to put all one's eggs in one basket
to spread one's risks

EGG one cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs
the desired end dictates the means even if they cause harm to others

EGG there are many ways to cook eggs
there are many ways to achieve an objective

EGG to be a bad egg
to engage in dishonest behavior

EGG to be a curate's egg
to be good only in parts (refers to an 1895 cartoon in PUNCH)

EGG to have egg on one's face
to be embarrassed by the results of one's own stupidity

EGG to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs
through excessive greed to destroy a very profitable enterprise

EGG to teach one's grandmother how to suck eggs
to try to tell a much more experienced person something very obvious to him

EIGHT to be right behind the eight ball
to be in a position of extreme disadvantage

ELBOW elbow grease
hard manual work

ELBOW more power to your elbow
may your praiseworthy efforts lead to success

ELBOW to be up to one's elbow in something
to be deeply involved in something

ELBOW to elbow someone out
to force a person out of some office and oneself into it
ELEMENT to be in one’s element
to be very comfortable in familiar surroundings or in an environment in which one can cope very readily

ELEPHANT a rogue elephant
a person of vicious temper who acts in an undisciplined way

ELEPHANT a white elephant
an expensive and useless luxury (refers to gifts of sacred elephants by the King of Siam to persons then ruined by the expense of their upkeep)

ELEPHANT one looks for elephants in elephant country
one needs to search in the right place

ELEVEN at the eleventh hour
at the last moment (actually “at the twenty-fourth hour” would be more logical) (Matthew 20:9)

ELEVEN the second eleven
persons performing an important function but one which is less important than that performed by others (refers to cricket)

ELEVENTH eleventh commandment
unwritten rule

EMASCULATE to emasculate something
to delete the essential features of something

EMOLLIENT to be an emollient
to be a measure designed to make people more favorably disposed to one’s wishes

EMPIRE to engage in empire building
to set out to expand the size of the business or bureaucratic unit for which one is responsible, especially as a means of increasing one’s own importance

ENCAPSULATE to encapsulate some idea
to reduce the essential points of a complicated proposal to a small number of words

END a dead-end position
a job with no prospects of advancement

END at the end of the day
in due course or at the conclusion of a project

END the tail end of something
the very end of something

END this is the end of the road for someone
a person will have no further opportunity to do something

END to be at the end of one’s tether
to be frustrated by a lack of knowledge, authority or patience

END to be on the losing end of the stick
to be worse off while the other party to a transaction becomes correspondingly better off

END to be the thin end of the wedge
by conceding a small point to create an undesirable precedent for much larger issues

END to burn the candle at both ends
to work excessively long hours

END to go off the deep end
to lose one’s temper

END to have hold of the wrong end of the pineapple
to be utterly mistaken

END to hold the wrong end of the stick
to be completely mistaken about something

END to jump straight in at the deep end
to do something without a proper lead-in

END to make ends meet
to live within one’s income
to run into a dead end
to get nowhere in an investigation

to see the light at the end of the tunnel
to be close to finalizing a long exercise

to seek the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow
to have naive expectations

to tie up the loose ends
to complete the minor outstanding items of some substantially finished project

an enfant terrible
a person who raises pertinent but unpalatable issues (French, "terrible child," "a little terror")

enough to sink a battleship
more than sufficient

to enshrine
to incorporate as an important part of something

to enter the home stretch
to commence the last stage

escape by the skin of one's nose
to only just avoid some disaster

escape by the skin of one's teeth
to only just avoid some disaster

be a blot on someone's escutcheon
to be a blemish on a person's character

esprit de corps
a feeling of camaraderie and concern for the good name of some organization of which one is a member (French, "vital breath of a body")

the fourth estate
the press

to be on the eve of something
to occur just before some event

even the score
to get one's own back for some past action

to keep something on an even keel
to ensure that something is not harmed

as every schoolboy knows
as is recognized by everyone

every Pancake Tuesday
only on rare occasions (refers to Shrove Tuesday, when pancakes are traditionally eaten)

every Tom, Dick and Harry
just about everybody

every cloud has a silver lining
there are benefits even in seemingly adverse situations

every dog has his day
good luck comes sooner or later

every man and his dog
everybody

in every nook and cranny
everywhere

to chase every hare
to be easily sidetracked

to drain every ounce out of something
to get the maximum use or pleasure out of something

to play every card in the pack
to try very hard and use every conceivable argument

to resist something every inch of the way
to utterly resist something

to use every trick in the book
to try very hard and use every conceivable argument

everything but the kitchen sink
a lot of things
EVERYTHING everything under the sun
everything
EVERYTHING to do everything by halves
to do everything imperfectly or incompletely
EXHAUST to exhaust the field
to use up all the possibilities
EXHIBITION to make an exhibition of oneself
to behave in a way which invites ridicule
EXISTENCE a cat and dog existence
a life full of frequent squabbles
EXPEDITION a fishing expedition
an exercise designed to get information to which one is not strictly entitled
EXPLODE to explode
(of a person) to express rage
EXPOSE to expose one's flank
to allow others to take advantage of one
EXTRA to go the extra mile
to work beyond the call of duty
EYE a bird's-eye view
a general overview or summary of a subject, emphasizing the major features
EYE a mote in someone's eye
a fault in another person which is trifling in comparison to an unrecognizable major fault in oneself (Matthew 7:3)
EYE a smack in the eye
a rebuff
EYE all eyes are on something
everyone's attention is focused on something
EYE an eye for an eye
retaliation (Exodus 21:24)
EYE beauty is in the eye of the beholder
some things are matters for subjective judgments
EYE blue-eyed boy
person shown unjustified favoritism
EYE bright-eyed and bushy-tailed
naive but enthusiastic
EYE cock-eyed
stupid
EYE in one's mind's eye
using a vivid imagination
EYE in someone's eyes
in a person's judgment
EYE lynx-eyed
having acute vision
EYE one would give one's eye teeth for something
a person would very much like to achieve some objective
EYE one-eyed
biased
EYE someone's eyes are bigger than his stomach
a person is unrealistic
EYE someone's eyes popped
a person expressed great surprise
EYE to be a sight for sore eyes
be something welcome
EYE to be all eyes
be to observe very closely
EYE to be an eye opener
be a surprise
EYE to be better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick
be particularly welcome
EYE to be easy on the eye
be visually attractive
EYE to be eye wash
be nonsense
EYE to be in the eye of the storm
be at the center of a controversy
EYE to be in the public eye
be to have one's every action subject to scrutiny by the community
**EYE** to be one in the eye for someone to represent an unexpected and unwelcome defeat

**EYE** to be only a gleam in someone's eyes to be a long way from final achievement

**EYE** to be the apple of someone's eye to be a person of whom another person is proud

**EYE** to cast an eye over something to look at something critically

**EYE** to cast sheep's eyes at someone to look at a person amorously

**EYE** to catch someone's eye to attract the attention of another person or to seek permission to address that person

**EYE** to clap eyes on something to catch sight of something

**EYE** to cock one's eye at someone to glance knowingly at a person

**EYE** to cry one's eyes out to express great sadness at a situation

**EYE** to do someone in the eye to cheat a person

**EYE** to have an eagle eye to be able to notice small mistakes very readily

**EYE** to have an eye for something to appreciate the appearance of something

**EYE** to have eyes at the back of one's head to know more of what is going on than is generally realized

**EYE** to have one's beady eyes on something to await the chance to acquire something to which one is not properly entitled

**EYE** to have one's eyes glued to something to concentrate on looking at something to the exclusion of other competing calls for attention

**EYE** to have stars in one's eyes (for emotional rather than rational reasons) to be ecstatic

**EYE** to hit someone right between the eyes to be brutally frank

**EYE** to hit the bull's eye to make the correct decision

**EYE** to keep a weather eye out for something to look out with particular care

**EYE** to keep an eye on the ball to monitor a fast-changing situation

**EYE** to keep one's eye on someone to supervise a person or to monitor a person's activities and behavior

**EYE** to keep one's eye on something to monitor a situation

**EYE** to keep one's eyes open to be on the lookout for useful information

**EYE** to keep one's eyes open for something to be on the lookout for an opportunity to do something

**EYE** to keep one's eyes peeled for something to be on the constant lookout for something

**EYE** to make eyes at someone to look at a person amorously

**EYE** to open someone's eyes to something to alert another person to the truth of something

**EYE** to pick the eyes out of something to choose the most valuable items from among a large number

114
EYE to pull the wool over someone’s eyes
to deceive or deliberately mislead another person

EYE to rub one’s eyes
to express astonishment

EYE to see eye to eye with someone
to agree

EYE to see something with half an eye
to sum up a matter instantly

EYE to see the color of someone’s eyes
to see how a person matches expectations or requirements

EYE to shut one’s eyes to something
to deliberately take no notice of something, especially in dereliction of one’s duty

EYE to throw dust into someone’s eyes
to deceive a person by presenting inaccurate or misleading information

EYE to turn a blind eye to something
to pretend something obvious does not exist (refers to action by Nelson when disregarding Admiralty signals)

EYE with an eye toward doing something
with the intention that something particular be done

EYE with one’s eyes wide open
fully conscious of the ramifications

EYEBALL eyeball to eyeball
confronting each other and taking account of each other’s reactions

EYEBALL to be up to the eyeballs in something
to be very deeply involved in something

EYEBROW to raise one’s eyebrows
to express one’s utter astonishment

EYEFUL to get an eyeful of something
to see something impressive

EYELASH not to bat an eyelash
to fail to express any surprise

EYELID to hang on by the eyelids
to have only a slender hold

EYESORE eyesore
extremely ugly object

FACE a poker face
a facial expression which does not reveal one’s thoughts during negotiations

FACE a slap in the face
a calculated insult or action amounting to a rebuke

FACE a straight face
a facial expression which does not reveal one’s thoughts in a humorous situation

FACE someone’s face fell
someone registered obvious disappointment

FACE to be at the coal face
to be in the place where the real work is done

FACE to be left red-faced
to be embarrassed

FACE to blow up in someone’s face
to rebound on a person

FACE to cut one’s nose off to spite one’s face
to act in pique in a way which harms only oneself

FACE to do an about-face
to reverse a previously enunciated policy

FACE to face a rocky road ahead
to be likely to encounter difficulties

FACE to face the music
to accept responsibility when confronted by one’s critics

FACE to fall flat on one’s face
to make a bad error of judgment
FACE to fly in the face of some rule
to blatantly disregard some rule

FACE to go on till one is blue in
the face
to argue for a long time

FACE to have a long face
to look miserable

FACE to have egg on one's face
to be embarrassed by the results of
one's own stupidity

FACE to hurl something in
someone's face
to reproach a person in regard to
something

FACE to lose face
to endure embarrassment by virtue of
being defeated or having one's errors
found out

FACE to present a happy face to the
world
bravely to gloss over one's problems

FACE to put a brave face on it
to face adversity cheerfully

FACE to put a new face on
something
to alter the way something should be
regarded

FACE to put one's best face on
something
to focus on the positive features sur-
rounding a basically disastrous situation

FACE to save face
to be allowed to keep one's dignity
despite having suffered a defeat or
made an error

FACE to set one's face against
something
to oppose some matter

FACE to show one's face
to put in an appearance

FACE to slam the door in someone's
face
ostentatiously to refuse to have any
dealings with a person

FACE to stare someone in the face
(of a solution, etc.) to become obvious

FACE to take something at face
value
(of alleged facts) to accept something
without question or challenge

FACE to wipe the smile off
someone's face
to destroy a person's complacency

FACE two-faced
insincere

FACE volte face
a reversal of previously-held beliefs
(French, "a turning around")

FACE wipe that smile off your face!
treat this matter more seriously!

FACE you will laugh on the other
side of your face
you will regret this

FAILURE heart failure
a shock

FAIR a fair-weather friend
a person purporting to be a friend
who offers no support in difficult times

FAIR to be a fair crack of the whip
to be just

FAIR to be fair game
to be someone who can legitimately
be attacked

FAIRY a fairy godmother
a person showing great kindness

FAIRY to believe in the tooth fairy
to be particularly gullible

FAITH an article of faith
a fundamental belief on which certain
behavior is based

FAITHFUL the old faithful
a greatly loved article

FALL a fallen angel
a previously trusted person who has
transgressed

FALL crestfallen
delected
FALL downfall
ruination
FALL it fell off the back of a truck
(of goods) they were stolen; (of a politically sensitive document) it was leaked to me
FALL let the cards fall where they may
irrespective of what happens
FALL someone's face fell
someone registered obvious disappointment
FALL that is the way the chips fall
that is the actual situation
FALL the ax has fallen
it is now too late
FALL the roof has fallen in
an enterprise has collapsed
FALL the sky fell in
a very serious problem arose
FALL the wheels fell off
the plan failed
FALL they fell over themselves to do something
they showed great keenness while doing something
FALL to be riding for a fall
to act in a reckless manner
FALL to fall around one's ears
to collapse utterly
FALL to fall between two stools
not to fit neatly into either of two available alternatives and waver between them
FALL to fall by the wayside
to abandon and not complete what one set out to do
FALL to fall flat
(of a joke) to be unappreciated by the audience
FALL to fall flat on one's face
to make a bad error of judgment
FALL to fall head over heels in love
to fall very much in love
FALL to fall in a heap
(of a proposal) to collapse utterly
FALL to fall into line
to conform with others
FALL to fall on deaf ears
to be totally disregarded
FALL to fall on one's feet
surprisingly to succeed despite difficulties
FALL to fall over one's own feet
to be very clumsy
FALL to fall through
not to eventuate as expected
FALL to fall to pieces
(of a plan) to collapse
FALL to fall to the ground
to fail
FALL to play the cards as they fall
to deal with problems as they arise
FALL where the ax falls
who gets terminated
FALL windfall
unexpected good fortune
FALSE a false dawn
an incident giving rise to unjustified hope
FALSE to sail under false colors
to pretend that one's real character or beliefs are different from what they really are
FAMILY to sell off the family silver
to sell off one's prized possessions
FAMINE to be either feast or famine
to go from one extreme to the other
FAN to fan the flames
to increase unrest
FANCYFREE footloose and fancyfree
unmarried and without any romantic attachments
FANFARE with much fanfare
with great enthusiasm and public acclaim
FAR to be a far cry from something
to be a long way from something

FAST fast and furious
in an exciting way, in quick succession

FAST life in the fast lane
existence full of exciting but worthless activity

FAST to come in thick and fast
to arrive quickly and in great volume

FAST to play fast and loose
to disregard one’s obligations

FAST to pull a fast one
to engage in a dirty trick

FAT a fat chance
little hope

FAT it’s not over till the fat lady sings
it is not finished yet

FAT the fat is in the fire
action with certain unstoppable consequences has now been initiated

FAT to chew fat
to eat and talk together

FAT to trim the fat
to increase efficiency by reducing outlays

FATAL to be fatal
to be sufficient to destroy some proposal

FATE to seal someone’s fate
to cause a certain outcome adversely affecting a person

FATHER father knows best
as an expert I know better than you do just what is most suitable for you

FATTEN to kill the fatted calf
to demonstrate welcome and forgiveness on a person’s return (Luke 15:23)

FAUX faux pas
something indiscreet or offending social conventions (French, “false step”)

FAVORITE favorite son
person preferred by many people for some office

FEAR I fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts
I am suspicious of generous behavior from traditional opponents (from Virgil’s AENEID, in reference to the Trojan horse)

FEAR fools rush in where angels fear to tread
unsophisticated persons take unwise risks in circumstances where more knowledgeable persons would exercise caution

FEAR in fear and trembling
in a state of apprehension

FEAST a movable feast
an event not customarily held on a set date

FEAST to be either feast or famine
to go from one extreme to the other

FEATHER a feather in one’s cap
a meritorious personal achievement

FEATHER birds of a feather flock together
persons of like interests gather in the same place

FEATHER feather bedding
(in industrial relations) creating unnecessary jobs solely to increase employment; (in economics) assisting an inefficient industry by government grants or excessive tariff protection

FEATHER to feather one’s own nest
to improperly arrange a transaction on behalf of others to one’s own financial advantage

FEATHER to make feathers fly
to cause trouble to those misbehaving

FEATHER to ruffle someone’s feathers
to engage in behavior which irritates another person
**FEATHER** to show the white feather
to indicate cowardice (refers to cross-bred birds, not regarded as useful in cock fighting)

**FEATHER** to thrash with a feather
to award only a minor punishment for a very serious offense

**FEDERAL** to make a Federal case out of something
to attach far too much significance to a trivial issue

**FEED** to be chicken feed
to be small and unimportant

**FEED** to be fed up to the back teeth
to be disgusted

**FEED** to bite the hand that feeds one
to show ingratitude

**FEED** to feed the fire
to exacerbate a situation

**FEEDBACK feedback**
response from a target audience to those seeking to influence it

**FEEL a gut feeling**
a belief based purely on intuition and unsupported by facts or evidence

**FEEL to feel one’s oats**
to display self-importance

**FEEL to feel the draft**
to experience unfavorable conditions

**FEEL to feel the pinch**
to be adversely affected by financial stringency

**FEEL to feel the rough side of someone’s tongue**
to be verbally abused by a person

**FELL in one fell swoop**
all at the same time

**FELONY to compound the felony**
having already acted improperly to make matters worse (the misuse of a legal term: compounding a felony is the crime of agreeing for money not to prosecute a person for felony; in reality it is therefore an offense by a different person—not a second and worse offense by the original culprit)

**FENCE on our side of the fence**
in the group representing our vested interest

**FENCE to be on the other side of the fence**
to have an opposing point of view or position

**FENCE to be over the fence**
to be unreasonable

**FENCE to mend fences**
to achieve a reconciliation

**FENCE to rush one’s fences**
to act precipitately

**FENCE to sit on the fence**
to refuse to choose between two alternatives

**FENCE to want to jump all one’s fences at once**
to be unrealistic

**FERRET to ferret something out**
by diligent research to discover some secret

**FESTER to open up a festering sore**
to upset a person by drawing attention to a long-standing grievance

**FETTER to fetter someone**
to stop a person acting on his own initiative

**FEVER to be at fever pitch**
to be in a state of excited activity

**FIDDLE to fiddle at the edges**
to do some relatively minor things which do not deal with the substance of a problem

**FIDDLE to fiddle while Rome burns**
to neglect important considerations while concentrating on trivial side-issues

**FIDDLE to play second fiddle**
to fulfill a subordinate role

**FIELD a field day**
a very enjoyable and successful occasion
FIELD a level playing field
competition on equal terms

FIELD distant fields look greener
activities of which one has no experience seem much easier than is really the case

FIELD to be ahead of the field
to be better than one’s competitors

FIELD to cover the field
to be comprehensive

FIELD to exhaust the field
to use up all the possibilities

FIELD to have a field marshal’s baton in one’s kit
to be ambitious

FIFTH a fifth columnist
a person using his position of trust to work for a rival cause

FIFTH to be a fifth wheel
to be superfluous

FIFTH to plead the Fifth Amendment
to refuse to answer an unwelcome question (refers to the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution, which provides protection against self-incrimination)

FIFTY to have fifty cents each way
to equivocate

FIG one would not give a fig for
something
one regards something as worthless

FIGHT a bunfight
a minor and relatively friendly skirmish

FIGHT a dogfight
a small side-skirmish, especially between airplanes

FIGHT to fight an uphill battle
to face difficulties or to have formidable opposition

FIGHT to fight bushfires
to deal with crises as they arise rather than take preventive action

FIGHT to fight fire with fire
to counter a dangerous situation by making an equally dangerous move

FIGHT to fight tooth and nail
to strive very hard to win

FIGHT to have a fight on one’s hands
to encounter resistance or opposition to a proposal

FIGUREHEAD a figurehead
the ceremonial chief officer of some organization without any real power (refers to the carving at the front of a ship)

FILL to fill a vacuum
to take advantage of an opportunity not acted on by others

FILL to fill in the fine print
to provide the precise details in respect of something presently existing in broad outline only

FILL to fill someone’s shoes
to be a good successor

FILTER to filter through to someone
(of information) to eventually reach a person

FINAL the final straw
the latest step, which, when added to a large number of seemingly harmless previous steps, sets off a disaster resulting from the cumulative effect

FINAL to deal the final hand
to take steps which conclude a matter

FIND the river found its mark
equilibrium between two pressures has been achieved

FIND to find one’s feet
to develop one’s skills

FIND to find out the state of play
to ascertain the current position of some project
FIND water will find its own level
people will reach an appropriate position relative to others
FINE not to put too fine a point on it speaking bluntly
FINE to fill in the fine print
to provide the precise details in respect of something presently existing in broad outline only
FINE to fine-tune something
to adjust something in order to bring it to perfection or to make it fit the circumstances in a much more appropriate fashion
FINE to go through something with a fine-tooth comb
to conduct an extremely thorough investigation
FINE to raise something to a fine art form
to become very clever at doing something
FINE to tread a fine line
cautiously to take action in circumstances where either too much or too little will cause difficulties
FINGER light-fingered
good at stealing
FINGER not to lay a finger on someone
to refrain from hurting a person
FINGER not to lift a finger to help someone
to refuse to assist
FINGER someone’s fingers are all thumbs
a person is clumsy with his hands
FINGER to burn one’s fingers
to lose money through foolishness
FINGER to gnaw one’s fingers to the bone
to fret
FINGER to have a finger in something
to be involved in something
FINGER to have a finger in the pie
to have an interest in a project
FINGER to have green fingers
to be good at gardening
FINGER to have itchy fingers
to be impatient
FINGER to have one’s fingers in many different pies
to be engaged in a variety of separate activities
FINGER to have one’s fingers in the till
to steal from one’s employer
FINGER to have one’s fingers on the pulse
to know what is going on
FINGER to have sticky fingers
to be dishonest
FINGER to keep one’s cotton-picking fingers off something
not to interfere in something
FINGER to keep one’s fingers crossed
to hope for a good outcome
FINGER to let something slip through one’s fingers
to allow something to escape from one’s ownership or control
FINGER to point the finger at someone
to accuse a person or allege some indiscretion on his part
FINGER to pull one’s fingers out
to get on with a job with alacrity
FINGER to put one’s finger on something
to identify the essential features of something
FINGER to stir a finger
to make some minimum effort
FINGER to twist someone around one’s little finger
by charm to get one’s way
FINGER to wave a finger at someone
to indicate mild displeasure at another person's actions

FINGER to work one's fingers to the bone
to work very hard

FINGERNAIL to bite one's fingernails
to anxiously await a decision

FINGERNAIL to hang on by one's fingernails
to have only a slender hold

FINGERTIP to cling on by one's fingertips
to have only a slender hold

FINGERTIP to have some subject at one's fingertips
to be very familiar with a subject

FINISH a photo finish
a close result in a contest

FIRE a baptism of fire
the commencement of an operation which presented great difficulty

FIRE a fire in someone's belly
great enthusiasm

FIRE fire sale
a forced sale, realizing bargain prices

FIRE out of the frying pan into the fire
from one bad situation to an even worse one

FIRE sure-fire
guaranteed

FIRE the fat is in the fire
action with certain unstoppable consequences has now been initiated

FIRE to add fuel to the fire
to make a bad situation worse

FIRE to be in the firing line
to be among the first to be under attack

FIRE to draw fire
to encounter criticism

FIRE to feed the fire
to exacerbate a situation

FIRE to fight fire with fire
to counter a dangerous situation by making an equally dangerous move

FIRE to fire a parting shot
to make a defiant gesture on leaving

FIRE to fire a salvo at someone
to present a series of criticisms to a person

FIRE to fire a volley at someone
to send a series of angry messages to someone

FIRE to go through fire and water
to undertake all attendant risks

FIRE to hang fire
to take no immediate action

FIRE to have a bullet which can be fired
to have available an effective response which can be used at will

FIRE to have other irons in the fire
to have the opportunity to do something else as an alternative

FIRE to hold fire
to defer criticizing

FIRE to hold one's fire
to delay proposed action

FIRE to keep the home fires burning
to maintain normal domestic activity during the temporary absence of the breadwinner

FIRE to play with fire
to invite trouble through one's foolish conduct

FIRE to pull someone's chestnuts out of the fire
to retrieve a situation

FIRE to pull something out of the fire
to salvage something in a seemingly hopeless situation
FIRE to set the Thames on fire
to do something noteworthy
FIRE to set the world on fire
to do something particularly brilliant
FIRE to stoke the fires
to provoke a violent reaction
FIRE where there is smoke there is fire
if there is a hint of trouble, then it is highly likely that there really is trouble
FIREMAN a visiting fireman
an important person calling on business to whom certain courtesies need to be paid
FIRESTORM to run into a firestorm
to be faced with many protests
FIREWORKS fireworks
aggressive behavior because of anger
FIRST at first blush
prima facie
FIRST at first hand
personally
FIRST first catch your hare
do things in logical order and after proper preparation (advice on how to cook a hare in Mrs. Beeton’s celebrated COOK BOOK)
FIRST first in best dressed
persons acting early will do better than latecomers
FIRST head first
precipitately
FIRST to be first class
to be very satisfactory
FIRST to be first off the mark
to start ahead of all others
FIRST to be the first cab off the rank
to start ahead of all others
FIRST to draw first blood
to get an advantage
FIRST to get to first base
to succeed in getting others to start comprehending a problem
FIRST to jump in feet first
to take a calculated risk
FISH a fishing expedition
an exercise designed to get information to which one is not strictly entitled
FISH a queer fish
an unusual type of person
FISH an ocean full of fish
plenty of opportunity
FISH neither fish, flesh nor good red herring
unclassifiable by virtue of being neither one thing nor another (from Cervantes’ Don Quixote)
FISH that has nothing to do with the price of fish
that is quite irrelevant
FISH to be a big fish in a little pond
to be a person holding an important office but in an unimportant organization
FISH to be a cold fish
to be an unemotional person
FISH to be a different kettle of fish
to be something very dissimilar
FISH to be a fine kettle of fish
to be a terrible muddle
FISH to be a fish out of water
to be in difficulty by virtue of being in a strange environment
FISH to be in a goldfish bowl
to be very open to view
FISH to fish for compliments
to drop hints in the hope that one will receive praise or recognition
FISH to fish in troubled waters
to profit from a disturbed situation
FISH to have more important fish to fry
to have more important things to do
FISHY to be fishy
to be suspicious
FIST  ham-fisted
undiplomatic and clumsy

FIST  hand over fist
rapidly overtaking each other during progress toward a common goal

FIST  hard-fisted
stingy

FIST  tight-fisted
stingy

FIST  to lose money hand over fist
to lose money very fast and convincingly

FIST  to make a good fist of something
to be successful in a difficult task

FIST  to rule with an iron fist
to keep strict discipline

FISTFUL  to hold out a fistful of dollars
to offer by way of inducement

FIT  if the cap fits then wear it
if your circumstances correspond with those described then you must endure the consequences

FIT  not fit to hold a candle to someone
greatly inferior to another person

FIT  not to get along with someone in a fit
not to get along with a person

FIT  to fit the bill
to meet all the requirements

FIT  to have a blue fit
to be very agitated

FIT  to have a fit
to be in a state of great agitation

FIT  to have a fit of the vapors
to be horrified

FIVE  to know how many beans make five
to have common sense

FLAG  to rally to the flag
to show support for a cause

FLAG  to show the flag
to visit a place in order to boost morale there

FLAG  to wave a flag for someone
to promote a person’s cause

FLAGSHIP  flagship
most important member of a group of related entities

FLAME  an old flame
a former lover

FLAME  keepers of the flame
persons keen to maintain old traditions

FLAME  to fan the flames
to increase unrest

FLAME  to inflame a situation
to aggravate a situation

FLAME  to pour gasoline on the flames
to make a bad situation worse

FLAME  to rekindle an old flame
to inspire the reinstatement of a former loving relationship

FLAME  to shoot someone down in flames
to utterly destroy another person’s arguments

FLANK  to expose one’s flank
to allow others to take advantage of one

FLASH  a flash in the pan
something which begins promisingly but does not last (refers to the priming of old guns)

FLASH  in a flash
in an instant

FLASH  to see red lights flashing
to be conscious of the danger

FLAT  flat out like a lizard
to be hard at work (a play on words, not a simile)

FLAT  to be in a flat spin
to be in a state of high excitement
FLAT to catch someone flat-footed
  to embarrass a person in the course of his making mistakes or being unprepared
FLAT to fall flat
  (of a joke) to be unappreciated by the audience
FLAT to fall flat on one's face
  to make a bad error of judgment
FLAVOR to be the flavor of the month
  to be a commodity temporarily popular without a logical reason
FLEA to send someone away with a flea in his ear
  to give a person frank but unwelcome facts (refers to fleas trapped in the armor of ancient knights)
FLEECE to fleece someone
  to cheat a person out of some asset
FLESH neither fish flesh nor good red herring
  unclassifiable by virtue of being neither one thing not another (from Cervantes' DON QUIXOTE)
FLESH one's own flesh and blood
  one's offspring
FLESH one's pound of flesh
  that which is due to one (from Shakespeare's MERCHANT OF VENICE)
FLESH the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak
  the body is not up to the demands made on it
FLESH to be a thorn in someone's flesh
  to be a person whose persistent presence and righteous views annoy
FLESH to be more than flesh can stand
  to be more than a person can reasonably be expected to endure
FLESH to flesh out the skeleton
  to supply the missing pertinent details
FLESH to go the way of all flesh
  to die
FLESH to make someone's flesh creep
  to frighten a person with something horrific
FLESH to put flesh and bone on something
  to supply details of a proposal previously revealed only in outline
FLESH to see someone in the flesh
  to see someone in person
FLESHPOT fleshpots
  sumptuous living (Exodus 16:3)
FLEX to flex one's muscles
  to exert one's personality or powers
FLOCK birds of a feather flock together
  persons of like interests gather in the same place
FLOCK flock
  congregation in the charge of a religious official
FLOG to flog a dead horse
  to misguidedly do something patently useless
FLOODGATE to open up the floodgates
  to take action which will have massive consequences
FLOOR there is blood on the floor
  this has caused great anguish
FLOOR to get in on the ground floor
  to invest on very favorable terms
FLOOR to hold the floor
  to dominate a conversation
FLOOR to wipe the floor with someone
  to inflict a humiliating defeat on a person
FLOTSAM flotsam and jetsam
  derelict persons, without a fixed abode or stable life (refers to goods found floating and to goods thrown overboard deliberately, respectively)
**FLOURISH** with a flourish of trumpets triumphantly

**FLOW** a lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then much has happened since then

**FLOW** ebb and flow fluctuations

**FLOW** to have money flowing out of one's ears to be very rich

**FLUSH** to flush out the facts to ascertain, after some effort, the truth of some matter

**FLUX** to be in a state of flux to be subject to continuous change

**FLY** I would love to be a fly on the wall I would love to hear what goes on

**FLY** a fly in the ointment a flaw (refers to dead flies turning perfumes rancid) (Ecclesiastes 10:1)

**FLY** a fly-by-night operator a confidence trickster

**FLY** a highflyer an ambitious and/or successful person

**FLY** as the crow flies by the shortest distance

**FLY** someone can't hurt a fly someone is very gentle and kindhearted

**FLY** the bird has flown the person sought is no longer about

**FLY** there are no flies on someone a person is alert

**FLY** time flies time passes very quickly, but if wasted can never be recovered (from Virgil's *GEORGICS*)

**FLY** to fly a kite to issue uncovered checks in the hope that they will be covered before clearance or to test public reaction to legislation in contemplation by leaking broad details of it to the media

**FLY** to fly by the seat of one's pants to act unprofessionally

**FLY** to fly high to be ambitious

**FLY** to fly in the face of some rule to blatantly disregard some rule

**FLY** to fly off the handle to show irrational anger

**FLY** to fly out the window to be lost

**FLY** to fly the coop to grow up and become independent

**FLY** to have to fly to need to leave in order to reach the next destination quickly

**FLY** to let fly at someone to attack a person with strong words

**FLY** to make feathers fly to cause trouble to those misbehaving

**FLY** to make sparks fly to cause rapid activity to take place

**FLY** to make the fur fly to create a disturbance

**FLY** to achieve a flying start to get operational very quickly

**FLYING** to pass with flying colors to be very successful

**FOAM** to foam at the mouth to show anger

**FOCUS** to bring something into focus to put some matter into its proper content and explain its true significance

**FOCUS** to focus on something to concentrate attention on something

**FOG** to be in a fog to be in a state of confusion

**FOGGY** not to have the foggiest notion to know nothing at all about the subject
FOLD the fold
the body of believers (refers to an enclosure for sheep)

FOLD to quietly fold up one's tent
to surreptitiously abandon a previously-cherished stance

FOLLOW to be a hard act to follow
to be an impressive performance, not easily matched by the next person

FOLLOW to follow in someone's footsteps
to do as another person did

FOLLOW to follow one's nose
to act intuitively

FOLLOW to follow the herd
to do what most other people are doing

FOOD food for thought
material for examination in one's mind

FOOD to take food out of the mouths of children
cruelly to deprive the needy

FOOL fools rush in where angels fear to tread
unsophisticated persons take unwise risks in circumstances where more knowledgeable persons would exercise caution

FOOL to live in a fool's paradise
to delude oneself

FOOT a foot in the door
the opportunity to do business

FOOT itchy feet
a desire to travel

FOOT nimble-footed
quick to change the direction of one's activities when circumstances warrant

FOOT not to let grass grow under one's feet
not to let inertia or delay spoil something

FOOT not to put a foot wrong
to behave impeccably

FOOT the boot is on the other foot
the real facts are the other way round

FOOT to be at one's feet
to be in the immediate vicinity

FOOT to be quick on one's feet
to cleverly take advantage of a situation

FOOT to be rushed off one's feet
to be rushed

FOOT to be six feet under
to be dead

FOOT to bind someone hand and foot
to completely limit a person's freedom to act

FOOT to catch someone flat-footed
to embarrass a person in the course of his making mistakes or being unprepared

FOOT to cut the ground from under someone's feet
to unexpectedly withdraw support and in the process cause embarrassment or to demolish a person's case

FOOT to drag one's feet
to perform unduly slowly

FOOT to fall on one's feet
surprisingly to succeed despite difficulties

FOOT to fall over one's feet
to be very clumsy

FOOT to find one's feet
to develop one's skills

FOOT to get back on one's feet
to recover from an illness or some other setback

FOOT to get cold feet
to become scared

FOOT to get off on the wrong foot with someone
to make an unfavorable initial impression on a person

FOOT to get one's feet wet
to do the necessary but unpleasant or menial parts of a task
FOOT to go hot foot
to do something fast

FOOT to have feet of clay
to be vulnerable (Daniel 2:33)

FOOT to have one foot in the grave
to be dying

FOOT to have one's feet firmly on the ground
to know what one is doing

FOOT to have one's feet in both camps
to have good relations with two opponents

FOOT to have one's foot on something
to be about to acquire something or to be able to acquire something

FOOT to have the ball at one's feet
to have unlimited opportunity

FOOT to have two left feet
to be clumsy

FOOT to jump in feet first
to take a calculated risk

FOOT to put one's best foot forward
to make a special effort

FOOT to put one's feet up
to relax

FOOT to put one's foot down
to exert one's authority and insist on something

FOOT to put one's foot in it
to make a foolish mistake

FOOT to put one's foot in one's mouth
to say something foolish

FOOT to put someone on the back foot
to cause a person to adopt a lower profile

FOOT to put something back on its feet
to repair something

FOOT to run someone off his feet
to keep a person very busy on some physical task

FOOT to shoot oneself in the foot
to act in a foolish way and thus harm one's own cause

FOOT to stand on one's own two feet
not to require the help of others

FOOT to start off on the right foot
to commence an operation with great care to do it correctly

FOOT to sweep someone off her feet
to cause a person to lose all discernment

FOOT to tread someone under foot
to oppress a person

FOOT to vote with one's feet
to show one's displeasure by terminating an association

FOOT to wait hand and foot on someone
to accommodate a person's every real or imagined whim

FOOTBALL a political football
a political issue which is not being debated on its merits

FOOTHOLD to gain a foothold
to achieve a position from which further advances can readily be made

FOOTLOOSE footloose and fancyfree
unmarried and without any romantic attachments

FOOTNOTE a footnote
a passing comment by way of elaboration

FOOTPRINT without leaving any footprints
without making any impression

FOOTSTEP to follow in someone's footsteps
to do as another person did

FOR a tooth for a tooth
retaliation (Exodus 21:24)

FOR an eye for an eye
retaliation (Exodus 21:24)
FORBID forbidden fruit
something particularly desired just because it is not allowed (Genesis 2:17)

FORCE to force someone onto his knees
to inflict a humiliating defeat on a person

FORCE to force someone’s hand
to take action causing another person to react

FORCE to join forces
to cooperate with one another in order to achieve a common objective

FORCE tour de force
feat of skill or strength (French, “feat of strength”)

FORGIVE anyone could be forgiven for believing that it is understandable that people would believe that

FORK fork in the road
turning point for decisions

FORKED to speak with forked tongues
to utter half-truths with the intention of misleading the listener

FORM not to do something in any way, shape or form
not to do something

FORM to raise something to a fine art form
to become very clever at doing something

FORT to hold the fort
to be in charge during the temporary absence of a superior

FORWARD to give something a nudge forward
to give modest encouragement to something

FORWARD to inch forward
to make slow but steady progress

FORWARD to put one’s best foot forward
to make a special effort

FORWARD to take a giant step forward
to make a significant advance

FOUL foul play
treachery or murder

FOUL to foul one’s own nest
to disparage one’s home or workplace

FOUNDER to founder on the shoals of something
to come to grief because of unexpected dangers

FOUNTAINHEAD fountainhead
source of all wisdom

FOUR an opening wide enough to drive a coach and four through
an excellent opportunity

FOUR four square
honest and reliable

FOUR from the four corners of the globe
from everywhere

FOUR to compete on all fours with someone
to strive on equal terms

FOURTH the fourth estate
the press

FOX a fox hole
space which is really too small for a person’s needs or comfort

FRAMEWORK framework
outline of a proposal, on which further details can be developed

FRANKENSTEIN to create a Frankenstein
to create something wicked and out of control (a reference to the fictional creator of a monster, in mistake for a reference to the monster itself)

FRAY to become frayed at the edges
no longer to be quite appropriate

FREDDY blind Freddy could see that something is such-and-such
it is very obvious that something is such-and-such
**FREE**

to get off scot free
to go unpunished (refers to an exemption from tax)

to give someone a free hand
to authorize a person to act as he sees fit

to give someone free rein
to confer complete direction on another person

to freeze someone out
to deliberately exclude a person

**FRESH**

fresh blood
newly joined members of some organization

to be a breath of fresh air
to be a pleasant change from the past

to have a friend at court
a person with influence who is willing to use it on one’s behalf

to frighten hell out of someone
to alarm a person

to frighten the horses
to scare people off by one’s ill-considered tactics

to have a frog in one’s throat
to be hoarse

to leap frog something
to overtake something, with the likelihood of in turn being overtaken (refers to a game in which participants jump over each other in turn)

to have a job in front of one
to face difficulties

to frown on something
to disapprove of some matter

**FRUIT**

by their fruits ye shall know them
their reputation will be based on their results (Matthew 7:20)

forbidden fruit
something particularly desired just because it is not allowed (Genesis 2:17)

**FRUITLESS**

fruitless
yielding no benefit

out of the frying pan into the fire
from one bad situation to an even worse one

to have more important fish to fry
to have more important things to do

**FUEL**

to add fuel to the fire
to make a bad situation worse

I’ve had a belly full
I have had enough of this

an ocean full of fish
plenty of opportunity

full-blooded
vigorous

full bore ahead!
proceed forward!

full steam ahead!
get going as fast as possible!

to be a full bottle on something
to be very knowledgeable

to be full of beans
to be very cheerful

to be full of hot air
to have an exaggerated opinion of one’s own importance and to boast about it

to be in full swing
to be very active

to come to a full stop
to completely cease activity

to get full marks for something
to deserve praise for something

to have one’s hands full
to be fully occupied
FULL yes sir—yes sir—three bags full!
(in servile response to some request)
yes, very willingly!

FUN fun and games
amusement derived in the course of a serious activity

FUN to be no fun
to be difficult

FUNERAL that is your funeral!
that is the fate which you will have to suffer

FUNK to be in a blue funk
to be terrified

FUR to make the fur fly
to create a disturbance

FURIOUS fast and furious
in an exciting way, in quick succession

FURNITURE to be part of the furniture
to be so familiar that one's presence goes completely unnoticed

FURTHER to be further down the line
to have a low priority

FUSE to have a short fuse
to lose one's temper very readily

FUSE to light a fuse
to cause serious reactions

G

GAIN to gain a foothold
to achieve a position from which further advances can readily be made

GAIN to gain ground
to advance one's position relative to others

GAIN to gain the upper hand
to attain, after some effort, an advantage over another person

GAIN what one loses on the swings one gains on the roundabouts
there are advantages and disadvantages which offset each other

GALL gall
impudence

GALLERY to play to the gallery
to do something which appeals to the general public rather than something which is right

GALVANIZE to galvanize someone into action
to enthuse a person into doing something

GAMBIT a gambit
an opening move in a competitive situation which involves short-term losses in the expectation of long-term gains

GAMBIT opening gambit
the first in a series of strategic moves (a tautological expression which also involves a misunderstanding of a technical chess term)

GAME I'll soon stop his little game
his activities are not tolerated and I will ensure that they cease

GAME a game of cat and mouse
negotiations between two parties of unequal bargaining power during which the stronger makes some temporary concessions to the weaker without, however, affecting the latter's eventual total defeat

GAME a game of poker
negotiations in which the parties try to bluff each other

GAME a game of snakes and ladders
a series of ups and downs

GAME a mug's game
activity which wise persons would eschew

GAME don't play games with me!
do not insult my intelligence by that line of conduct

GAME fun and games
amusement derived in the course of a serious activity
GAME  game, set and match
completiom
GAME  it is just a game to someone
it is an exercise which a person does
not take seriously
GAME  so-and-so is the name of
the game
so-and-so is the essential element of
the exercise
GAME  the game is up
escape is now impossible
GAME  the only game in town
the only event worthy of attention
GAME  to be a chess game
to be a complex exercise, requiring
great skill
GAME  to be a new ball game
to be subject to completely revised
rules or very different conditions
GAME  to be fair game
to be someone who can legitimately
be attacked
GAME  to beat someone at his own
game
to outwit a person in his own special-
ization
GAME  to give the game away
to cease involvement with some activity
GAME  to lift one's game
to raise the standard of one's perfor-
manoe
GAME  to play a deep game
to show cunning
GAME  to play the game
to observe the letter and the spirit of
the rules or to act honorably
GAME  to stick to one's game
to confine oneself to activities in areas
in which one has knowledge and
expertise
GAME  two can play at that game
it is possible to retaliate
GAME  what is his game?
what is the significance of his actions?

GAMUT  the whole gamut
the whole range of some activity
GANDER  what is sauce for the
goose is sauce for the gander
arguments which apply in one case
also apply in another
GAP  to bridge a gap
to fill a need or make up a shortfall
GARAGE  garage sale
sale of miscellaneous assets at cheap
prices
GARDEN  everything in the garden
is lovely
everything is fine
GARDEN  to lead someone up the
garden path
to mislead a person by deliberately
fallacious arguments
GARTER  I will have his guts for
garters
I am extremely angry and dissatisfied
with him
GAS  to be cooking with gas
to be fully operational
GASOLINE  to pour gasoline on the
flames
to make a bad situation worse
GASOLINE  to put a match to gasoline
make a bad situation worse
GATE  to close the gate
to deny an opportunity which was
previously available
GATE  to gatecrash a gathering
to attend a gathering without any right
to be there
GATEPOST  between you and me
and the gatepost
confidentially
GATEWAY  gateway to something
method of achieving something
GATHER  to gather dust
not to be acted upon without being
formally rejected
GAUNTLET to run the gauntlet
  to be subjected to criticism (from the Spanish word for “passage,” in reference to punishment inflicted on delinquents made to run between two files of soldiers)

GAUNTLET to throw down the gauntlet
  to issue a challenge (refers to the glove worn by a knight)

GAY to be a gay dog
  to lead an idle life while flaunting the symbols of wealth

GEAR to be geared up to do something
  to have equipment, labor and know-how in place adequate for some task

GEAR to be in top gear
  to be making excellent progress

GEL to gel
  to make sense

GENIE to let the genie out of the bottle
  to cause something irreversible to take place

GENIE to put the genie back in the bottle
  to undo something which cannot be undone

GET it is getting to me
  it is affecting me psychologically

GHOST not the ghost of a chance
  no hope at all

GHOST to give up the ghost
  to die

GIANT a giant
  a person whose ability and achievements exceed that of most other people

GIANT to take a giant step forward
  to make a significant advance

GIDDY to play the giddy goat
  to act the fool

GIFT I fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts
  I am suspicious of generous behavior from traditional opponents (from Virgil’s AENEID, in reference to the Trojan horse)

GIFT to look a gift horse in the mouth
  to be suspicious about a benefit which has been volunteered

GILD to gild the lily
  (actually: to gild refined gold, to paint the lily) to do something patently unnecessary

GILT gilt-edged
  very safe

GIRD to gird up one’s loins
  to get ready for action

GLARE glaring error
  patently obvious mistake

GLASS people in glass houses should not throw stones
  those who are less than perfect are foolish to criticize others

GLASSES to see something through rose-colored spectacles
  to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

GLEAM to be only a gleam in someone’s eyes
  to be a long way from final achievement

GLEE to rub one’s hands with glee
  to express great satisfaction

GLITTER all that glitters is not gold
  things are not always what they seem

GLOBE from the four corners of the globe
  from everywhere

GLOVE the gloves are off
  the challenge has been accepted

GLOVE to take off the gloves
  to fight mercilessly or to debate with great ferocity

GLOVE to treat someone with kid gloves
  to handle a person with great discretion
GLOVE to work hand in glove with someone

to work in close cooperation with a person or to be in collusion with a person to the detriment of others

GLOVE with an iron hand in a velvet glove

with a hard attitude made to seem soft

GLOW a warm inner glow

satisfaction at some achievement

GLUE to have one’s eyes glued to something

to concentrate on looking at something to the exclusion of other competing calls for attention

GLUTTON to be a glutton for punishment

to act irresponsibly in the face of inevitable retribution

GNASH to gnash one’s teeth

to express frustration

GNAT to strain at a gnat

to be scrupulous about trifles

GNAW to gnaw one’s fingers to the bone

to fret

GO from go to whoa

from start to finish (refers to the command given to horses)

GO from the word “go”

from the beginning

GO it was touch and go

there were considerable risks—the objective was achieved, but only just

GO to be all systems “go”

to go ahead as fast as possible

GOAL to score a goal

to achieve an objective

GOAL to score an own goal

to blow oneself up

GOAT a scapegoat

a person unfairly blamed for something not his fault

GOAT to play the giddy goat

to act the fool

GOAT to separate the sheep from the goats

to distinguish between those with and without certain attributes (Matthew 25:32)

GOD a little tin god

a petty tyrant

GOD the mills of God grind slowly

retribution may be delayed but is inevitable

GOD to be in the lap of the gods

to be a matter of pure chance (refers to wax tablets inscribed with requests and placed on the knees of statues of Greek gods)

GODFORSaken godforsaken

dismal and without any redeeming feature

GODMOTHER a fairy godmother

a person showing great kindness

GOLD a golden handshake

a large payment in connection with or as an inducement to retirement

GOLD a golden opportunity

an unparalleled opportunity

GOLD a pot of gold

wealth

GOLD all that glitters is not gold

things are not always what they seem

GOLD golden parachute

generous provisions in a remuneration package which come into play in certain circumstances

GOLD golden shackles

financial arrangements designed to discourage employees changing employers

GOLD silence is golden

it is better not to incriminate anyone

GOLD to be a river of gold

to be a source of ongoing great profitability
GOLD to be worth one’s weight in gold
to be very desirable
GOLD to go for the gold
to aim for victory (refers to Olympic medals)
GOLD to have a heart of gold
to have a generous disposition
GOLD to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs
through excessive greed to destroy a very profitable enterprise
GOLD to seek the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow
to have naive expectations
GOLD to strike gold
to have one’s efforts suddenly rewarded by great success
GOLDFISH to be in a goldfish bowl
to be very open to view
GOLDFISH what is this—a bunch of grapes or a bowl of goldfish?
surely you know what this is!
GOLDMINE a goldmine
a source of much wealth or of many facts
GOLIATH a Goliath
a giant or a person whose ability and achievements exceed those of most other people (1 Samuel 17)
GOMORRAH a Sodom and Gomorrah
a place of vice (Genesis 18:20)
GOOD this does my heart good
I rejoice at this
GOOD to be a good boy
to be cooperative
GOOD to be in good heart
to be cheerful, especially in adversity
GOOD to be in someone’s good books
to be well regarded by another person
GOOD to be of good heart
to be brave in adversity
GOOD to have a good nose for business
to be able to identify profitable business situations
GOOD to see someone in a good light
to regard a person favorably
GOOD to throw good money after bad
to waste further money in a vain attempt to recover money already lost
GOODS to deliver the goods
to achieve the objective
GOOSE a wild goose chase
a foolish search for something which does not exist
GOOSE to be too frightened to say ‘‘boo’’ to a goose
to be excessively shy
GOOSE to cook one’s goose
to do something which backfires on one
GOOSE to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs
through excessive greed to destroy a very profitable enterprise
GOOSE what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander
arguments which apply in one case also apply in another
GOOSEBERRY to play gooseberry
to act as an unwelcome chaperon
GORDIAN to cut the Gordian knot
to solve, especially by force, a virtually insoluble problem (refers to a complicated knot tied by Gordius and eventually cut by Alexander the Great)
GOSPEL to take something as gospel
to believe that something is true
GRAB to be up for grabs
to be available virtually for the asking
GRAB to grab the devil by the tail
to face up to difficulties
GRACE to put on airs and graces to act in an affected manner
GRADE to be on the downgrade to be of deteriorating quality
GRADE to make the grade to succeed
GRAIL search for the Holy Grail work toward a difficult goal (refers to a vessel supposedly used by Christ at the last supper and featuring in the Arthurian legends)
GRAIN something goes against the grain something is completely and frustratingly against a people’s inclination
GRANDMOTHER to teach one’s grandmother how to suck eggs to try to tell a much more experienced person something very obvious to him
GRANDSTAND to grandstand to boost oneself
GRANITE to be carved in marble to be virtually unalterable
GRAPE that is just sour grapes those are disparaging remarks made only because he is peeved and resentful at someone else’s better fortune
GRAPE to hear on the grapevine to learn unofficially
GRAPE what is this—a bunch of grapes or a bowl of goldfish? surely you know what this is!
GRASP to grasp at straws to have a hopeless case but show unjustified optimism on noting minor positive features
GRASP to grasp the nettle to deal with a neglected difficulty
GRASS a snake in the grass a person of low character
GRAY to be a gray area to be in an undefined position straddling two or more possibilities
GREASE elbow grease hard manual work
GREASE to grease someone’s palms to bribe a person
GREAT to be going great guns to be making very successful progress
GREAT to be great guns at something to be very skilled at something
GREEK I fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts I am suspicious of generous behavior from traditional opponents (from Virgil’s AENEID, in reference to the Trojan horse)
GREEK something is all Greek to someone
something is incomprehensible to a person
GREEN a green chum
an inexperienced person
GREEN distant fields look greener
activities of which one has no experience seem much easier than is really the case
GREEN to be green
to be naive
GREEN to give the green light
to grant permission
GREEN to have a green thumb
to be good at gardening
GREEN to move on to greener pastures
to commence a new, better career
GREEN to turn green
to become very envious
GREYHOUND move over and let the greyhound see the rabbit
move over
GRIN to grin and bear it
to suffer adversity cheerfully
GRIND the mills of God grind slowly
retribution may be delayed but is inevitable
GRIND to grind to a halt
to cease some activity despite expectations that it would continue
GRIND to have an ax to grind
to have a vested interest
GRINDSTONE to keep one’s nose to the grindstone
to work with particular diligence
GRIP to come to grips with some problem
to be on the way to solving a problem
GRIP to have something in an iron grip
to hold something very securely
GRIST it is all grist to the mill
this is useful but unexciting additional material
GRIT to grit one’s teeth
to get ready to suffer pain
GROAN the table groaned
the food was plentiful
GROUND ground rules
basic principles
GROUND to be on shaky ground
not to have strong arguments
GROUND to be thin on the ground
to be scarce
GROUND to break new ground
to do something for which there is no precedent
GROUND to clear the ground
to dispose of the preliminaries
GROUND to cut the ground from under someone’s feet
to unexpectedly withdraw support and in the process cause embarrassment or to demolish a person’s case
GROUND to fall to the ground
to fail
GROUND to gain ground
to advance one’s position relative to others
GROUND to get in on the ground floor
to invest on very favorable terms
GROUND to get something off the ground
to take a project beyond its initial stages and make it operational
GROUND to give ground
to make some concessions or to retreat or to concede some arguments
GROUND to go to ground
to become unavailable to those seeking a person
GROUND to have one’s feet firmly on the ground
to know what one is doing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROUND</td>
<td>to have the high ground to have an advantage in moral terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUND</td>
<td>to keep an ear to the ground to be well informed as to current developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUND</td>
<td>to kiss the ground to suffer a loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUND</td>
<td>to plow new ground to laboriously engage in an untried activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUND</td>
<td>to prepare one’s ground to get ready for a confrontation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUND</td>
<td>to run someone to the ground to discover the whereabouts of a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUND</td>
<td>to stand one’s ground to maintain a stance in the face of opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROW</td>
<td>growing pains problems encountered by virtue of expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROW</td>
<td>not to let grass grow under one’s feet not to let inertia or delay spoil something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROW</td>
<td>something grows on one one becomes gradually more favorably impressed with something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUARANTEE</td>
<td>to give a cast-iron guarantee to give a very secure undertaking to do something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUARD</td>
<td>new guard changed regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUARD</td>
<td>to catch someone off guard to surprise a person (a fencing term)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUARD</td>
<td>to slip under one’s guard to cause a mistake to be made despite care being taken to prevent this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUARDIAN</td>
<td>someone’s guardian angel someone’s friend, watching over him and advancing his interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUIDE</td>
<td>guiding light yardstick for ethical behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUINEA</td>
<td>a guinea pig a person on whom some new practice is tried out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GULF</td>
<td>to bridge a gulf to overcome a wide divergence in views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUM</td>
<td>to be up a gum tree to be in difficulty or at the end of one’s resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUM</td>
<td>to gum up the works to cause an activity to be halted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUN</td>
<td>a gun with no bullets something incomplete and therefore useless for the desired purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUN</td>
<td>a scattergun approach an effort going here, there and everywhere, instead of being properly targeted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUN</td>
<td>a shotgun wedding a wedding held to ensure that an impending birth will be legitimate (refers to threats by the bride’s father to kill the bridegroom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUN</td>
<td>to be a gun for hire to be a person willing to undertake assignments for a fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUN</td>
<td>to be going great guns to be making very successful progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUN</td>
<td>to be great guns at something to be very skilled at something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUN</td>
<td>to bring out one’s biggest guns to use the most impressive persons or arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUN</td>
<td>to hold a gun at someone’s head to put pressure on a person to make a particular decision regardless of his desires in the matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUN</td>
<td>to jump the gun to start before one is meant to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUN</strong> to look down the barrel of a gun</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> not to touch a hair on someone’s head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be given little choice in a matter</td>
<td>not to harm a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUN</strong> to outgun someone</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> not to turn a hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to outmaneuver a person</td>
<td>to remain composed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUN</strong> to spike someone’s guns</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to a hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cause something to become useless</td>
<td>exactly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUN</strong> to stick to one’s guns</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to be within a hair’s breadth of something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to continue to hold certain beliefs</td>
<td>to be extremely close to something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notwithstanding opposition by others</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to get someone by the short and curly hairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUN</strong> to turn one’s guns on someone</td>
<td>to have domination over a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to criticize a person</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to have a hair of the dog that bit one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GURGLER</strong> to go down the gurgler</td>
<td>to drink more in an attempt to overcome the effects of alcohol already consumed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be ruined</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to keep one’s hair on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUT</strong> a gut feeling</td>
<td>to remain calm in a crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a belief based purely on intuition and unsupported by facts or evidence</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to keep out of someone’s hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUT</strong> gutless wonder</td>
<td>to let another person get on with his work in his own way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coward</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to let one’s hair down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUTFUL</strong> to have had a gutful</td>
<td>to relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be disgusted</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to make someone’s hair curl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUTS</strong> I will have his guts for garters</td>
<td>(of news) to give someone a shock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am extremely angry and dissatisfied with him</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to make someone’s hair stand on end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUTS</strong> to kick someone in the guts</td>
<td>to give a person shocking news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to take action needlessly hurtful to another person</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to split hairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUTS</strong> something has no guts in it</td>
<td>to draw absurdly fine distinctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>something has no real value to it</td>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to tear one’s hair out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be agitated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HAIR</strong> to wear a hair shirt</td>
<td>to practice self-discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to practice self-discipline</td>
<td><strong>HALCYON</strong> in Halcyon days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in past happier times (refers to the 14 days about the winter solstice when winds were calm and to the mythical bird said to breed in a floating nest at that time)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HALF it is six of one and half a dozen of the other it does not matter
HALF not to do anything by halves to do everything extremely well
HALF to do everything by halves to do everything imperfectly or incompletely
HALF to have half a mind to do something to be tempted or mildly inclined to do something
HALF-BAKED half-baked not well thought out
HALF-COCKED to go off half-cocked to act without adequate thought or preparation (refers to a gun at the half-ready)
HALF-HEARTED half-hearted unenthusiastic
HALF-WAY a half-way house an intermediate position
HALL liberty hall a place where one is free to do as one wishes
HALL one can’t beat City Hall the ordinary citizen is powerless against bureaucracy
HALLMARK a hallmark a standard (refers to the official assay mark on gold and silver, originally put on at the Goldsmiths’ Hall)
HALT to grind to a halt to cease some activity despite expectations that it would continue
HAM ham-fisted undiplomatic and clumsy
HAM to be the ham in the sandwich to be caught in the middle of a dispute between other parties
HAMMER to go hammer and tongs to do something with great energy

HAMMER to use a sledgehammer to crack a nut to devote vastly more resources to a project than is warranted by all the circumstances
HAMSTRING to be hamstrung to have limited freedom to act as one would wish
HAND a backhanded compliment a polite expression seemingly of praise but really intended as an insult
HAND a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush a benefit currently available is more valuable than a seemingly much larger benefit which may or may not be achieved in the future
HAND a left-handed compliment a thinly-disguised insult
HAND all hands on deck everybody is requested to help out
HAND all hands to the pumps everybody is requested to help out
HAND at first hand personally
HAND hand over fist rapidly overtaking each other during progress toward a common goal
HAND high-handed overbearing
HAND on the one hand putting one side of the proposition
HAND one’s right-hand man one’s chief aide
HAND single-handedly without help from other persons
HAND sleight of hand deceit by trickery
HAND the hand of fate chance
HAND the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing one section of a large bureaucracy does not realize that another section is simultaneously doing something inconsistent
HAND to accept something with both hands
to accept something eagerly

HAND to be able to do something with one hand behind one’s back
to be able to do something very easily

HAND to be able to lay one’s hands on something
to be able to locate something

HAND to be at hand
to be in the vicinity, ready to help

HAND to be in hand
to be under control

HAND to be in someone’s hands
to be being dealt with by someone with the necessary authority

HAND to be out of someone’s hands
to be up for decision by a different person

HAND to be putty in someone’s hands
to be far too easily influenced by another person

HAND to bind someone hand and foot
to completely limit a person’s freedom to act

HAND to bite the hand that feeds one
to show ingratitude

HAND to catch someone red-handed
to apprehend a person in the course of committing a crime

HAND to deal the final hand
to take steps which conclude a matter

HAND to disclose one’s hand
to give away information regarding one’s intention

HAND to eat out of someone’s hands
to be unduly compliant

HAND to force someone’s hand
to take action causing another person to react

HAND to gain the upper hand
to attain, after some effort, an advantage over another person

HAND to get one’s hands dirty
to do the necessary but unpleasant or menial parts of a task

HAND to get out of hand
to get out of control

HAND to give someone a free hand
to authorize a person to act as he sees fit

HAND to give someone a hand
to assist a person

HAND to go cap in hand
to show humility while soliciting a favor

HAND to go down on one’s hands and knees to someone
with great humility to ask a favor of a person

HAND to grab some opportunity with both hands
to seize some opportunity with great enthusiasm

HAND to hand on the torch
to pass on accumulated knowledge

HAND to hand over something on a silver platter
to provide a valuable benefit for virtually nothing

HAND to handpick someone
to carefully choose a person for his individual attributes

HAND to have a fight on one’s hands
to encounter resistance or opposition to a proposal

HAND to have a hand in something
to be one of the participants in some project

HAND to have blood on one’s hands
to be the person responsible for someone else’s predicament
HAND to have clean hands
to be innocent or to act ethically

HAND to have one’s hands full
to be fully occupied

HAND to have the whip hand
to be in control of a situation

HAND to hold a winning hand
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

HAND to hold someone’s hand
to give detailed on-the-job training and supervision

HAND to hold the power to do something in the hollow of one’s hand
to have the right to make crucial decisions

HAND to join hands with someone
to cooperate with a person

HAND to keep one’s hands in
to engage in activities which reinforce skills which one has previously acquired

HAND to lay one’s hands on something
to acquire something

HAND to lend a hand
to assist

HAND to live from hand to mouth
being in poor financial circumstances to survive with little by way of safety margin

HAND to lose money hand over fist
to lose money very fast and convincingly

HAND to play right into someone’s hands
to act so as to give a person an unintended advantage

HAND to put one’s hand to the plow
voluntarily to undertake some task (Luke 9:62)

HAND to put one’s hand up
to identify oneself

HAND to put one’s hands in one’s pockets
to spend

HAND to rub one’s hands with glee
to express great satisfaction

HAND to rule with an iron hand
to keep strict discipline

HAND to sit on one’s hands
deliberately to do nothing

HAND to stir a hand
to volunteer assistance

HAND to strengthen someone’s hand
to give a person additional authority or greater moral support or more facts to support his case

HAND to take something in hand
to assume control over something

HAND to throw in one’s hand
to give in or to give up

HAND to throw up one’s hands
to express disgust

HAND to tie someone’s hands
behind his back
to make it impossible for a person to act at all

HAND to tip one’s hand
to disclose details of one’s position

HAND to try one’s hand at something
to attempt a new activity, especially by way of experiment

HAND to turn one’s hand to something
to tackle some project

HAND to wait hand and foot on someone
to accommodate a person’s every real or imagined whim

HAND to wash one’s hands of something
to emphatically decline future responsibility
HAND to win hands down
to win very convincingly
HAND to work hand in glove with someone
to work in close cooperation with a person or to be in collusion with a person to the detriment of others
HAND to wring one’s hands
to express despair
HAND with a heavy hand
in an oppressive fashion
HAND with a high hand
arrogantly (Exodus 14:8)
HAND with an iron hand in a velvet glove
with a hard attitude made to seem soft
HAND with an open hand
generously
HANDFUL a handful
a small number
HANDFUL to be a handful
be difficult to manage
HANDLE to fly off the handle
to show irrational anger
HANDLE to get a handle on something
to acquire understanding of something
HANDSHAKE a golden handshake
a large payment in connection with or as an inducement to retirement
HANDSTAND to turn handstands
to express great joy
HANG a peg to hang a hat on something which provides a convenient or plausible excuse for some particular action
HANG not to be a hanging matter
be only a minor mistake
HANG one might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb
further action will not increase the adverse consequences already in train
(Refers to the stealing of both sheep and lambs being capital crimes under old English law)

HANG there is a big question mark hanging over someone’s head
there are considerable doubts about a person’s competence, integrity or suitability
HANG to be a cliff-hanger
be very exciting
HANG to get the hang of something
to learn how to do something
HANG to give someone enough rope to hang himself
to give a person the opportunity to do something which is likely to get him into severe trouble
HANG to hang by a slender thread
to only just survive
HANG to hang fire
to take no immediate action
HANG to hang on by one’s fingernails
to have only a slender hold
HANG to hang on by one’s nails
to have only a slender hold
HANG to hang on by the eyelids
to have only a slender hold
HANG to hang on by the skin of one’s teeth
to only just survive
HANG to hang one’s head
to be ashamed of oneself
HANG to hang onto someone’s coat-tails
to excessively rely on another person’s initiatives
HANG to hang up one’s boots
to retire
HANG to hang up one’s shingle
to go into business offering expert personal services
HANG to have a cloud hanging over one’s head
there is doubt as to one’s future
HANG to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one
to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one

HANG to have a threat hanging over one’s head
to fear some intimated unpleasant action

HANG to let it all hang out
to unburden oneself

HAPPY to be trigger-happy
to be impetuous

HAPPY to present a happy face to the world
bravely to gloss over one’s problems

HARD that is hard to take
it is difficult to face up to the reality of this

HARD to be a hard act to follow
to be an impressive performance, not easily matched by the next person

HARD to be between a rock and a hard place
to be faced with two equally difficult and uncomfortable choices

HARD to be hard to swallow
not to be readily acceptable

HARD to be hard on the heels of something
to closely follow something

HARD to be the hard core
to be the central and most difficult problem

HARD to die hard
not to give up easily

HARD to have a hard row to hoe
to be a difficult assignment

HARD to hit someone hard
to greatly affect a person emotionally or to cost a person a lot of money

HARD to put something into the “too hard” basket
to defer consideration of a difficult issue

HARD to take a hard line
to be uncompromising

HARD-BITTEN hard-bitten
toughened by experience

HARD-BOILED hard-boiled
toughened by experience

HARD-FISTED hard-fisted
mean

HARD-HEADED hard-headed
realistic

HARD-HEARTED hard-hearted
unsympathetic

HARD-MOUTHED hard-mouthed
uncontrollable

HARD-NOSED hard-nosed
tough in negotiations

HARE first catch your hare
do things in logical order and after proper preparation (advice on how to cook a hare in Mrs. Beeton’s celebrated COOK BOOK)

HARE hare-brained
wildly stupid

HARE to chase every hare
to be easily sidetracked

HARE to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds
to keep in with two opposing sides

HARE to set a hare running
in order to achieve some desired effect to initiate some related activity

HARMONIZE to harmonize several things
to make several things conform with each other

HARMONY to be in harmony with someone
to act in the same way as another person

HARNESS in harness
before retirement

HARRY every Tom, Dick and Harry
just about everybody
HARVEST harvest
end result of labor

HASTE to go post haste
to go very fast

HAT I'll eat my hat if so-and-so happens
I do not believe that so-and-so will happen

HAT a peg to hang a hat on
something which provides a convenient or plausible excuse for some particular action

HAT at the drop of a hat
very readily

HAT not to just pick something out of a hat
to choose carefully, after weighing all the considerations

HAT to be old hat
to be a very widely-known fact

HAT to buy straw hats in winter
to buy in a depressed market when most other people are sellers

HAT to keep something under one's hat
to maintain a confidence

HAT to knock something into a cocked hat
to twist something so that its original form is hardly recognizable

HAT to pull a rabbit out of the hat
to produce an unexpected and seemingly miraculous but highly desirable solution

HAT to score a hat trick
to have three successive favorable outcomes

HAT to take one's hat off to someone
to be full of admiration for a person

HAT to talk through one's hat
to say things which demonstrate the speaker's ignorance of the subject

HAT to throw one's hat into the air
to express joy

HAT to throw one's hat into the ring
to publicly announce one's interest in some position

HAT to wear a particular hat
to act in a particular capacity or for a particular vested interest

HATCH to batten down the hatches
to get ready for expected difficulties

HATCH to count one's chickens before they are hatched
to treat as fact the expected results of a future proposal

HATCHET to bury the hatchet
to abandon hostilities

HATCHET to do a hatchet job
to destroy some existing activity or to ruin a person's credibility

HAUL for the long haul
as a long-term proposition

HAUL to haul someone over the coals
to reprimand a person

HAUNT to come back to haunt someone
(of an unpleasant incident) to be a constant reminder to a person

HAY to hit the hay
to go to sleep

HAY to look for a needle in a haystack
to attempt something with a very small chance of success

HAY to make hay while the sun shines
to utilize an opportunity before it disappears

HAYSTACK to find a needle in a haystack
to find something when the probability of finding it is very small

HAYWIRE to go haywire
to refuse to function properly

HEAD a hothead
an impetuous person
HEAD a hydra-headed monster
an evil which is not readily destroyable

HEAD a swelled head
an exaggerated idea of one’s abilities or status

HEAD an old head on young shoulders
experience, knowledge and maturity in a young person

HEAD hard-headed
realistic

HEAD head first
precipitately

HEAD head over heels
topsy-turvy

HEAD heads I win—tails you lose
whichever way this matter goes I will benefit at your expense

HEAD heads will roll
transgressors will be punished

HEAD level-headed
rational

HEAD not to touch a hair on someone’s head
not to harm a person

HEAD off the top of one’s head
based on experience but without detailed consideration

HEAD pigheaded
unduly obstinate

HEAD pull your head in!
do not interfere in this!

HEAD someone’s head is on the block
a person is in danger of having his appointment terminated

HEAD that is on your head
you will have to accept responsibility for that

HEAD there is a big question mark hanging over someone’s head
there are considerable doubts about a person’s competence, integrity or suitability

HEAD to bang one’s head up against a brick wall
to fight an unwinnable case

HEAD to be able to do something standing on one’s head
to be able to do something very easily

HEAD to be at the head of the pack
to be the best of many or the de facto leader

HEAD to be head and shoulders above the rest
to be significantly more capable than others

HEAD to be off one’s head
to be crazy

HEAD to be over someone’s head
to be beyond a person’s ability to understand

HEAD to be unable to make head or tail of something
to be unable to understand how something functions or what something means

HEAD to beat each other over the head
to be always fighting

HEAD to belt someone over the head
to override someone’s views or arguments

HEAD to bite someone’s head off
to rudely express displeasure at some person

HEAD to bury one’s head in the sand
to refuse to face up to an unpleasant truth (refers to the reputed habit of ostriches in danger)

HEAD to come to a head
to reach culmination

HEAD to confront someone head on
to confront a person

HEAD to develop a head of steam
to gain momentum
HEAD to drag someone by the head and ears to force a person to reveal the true facts

HEAD to eat one's head off to eat excessively

HEAD to fall head over heels in love to fall very much in love

HEAD to get one's head blown off to be very soundly abused

HEAD to give someone his head to let a person do as he wants to

HEAD to go off one's head to lose one's temper

HEAD to go over someone's head to bypass lower levels of authority and approach someone more senior instead

HEAD to go to someone's head to cause a person to get an exaggerated idea of his abilities or status

HEAD to hang one's head to be ashamed of oneself

HEAD to have a cloud hanging over one's head there is doubt as to one's future

HEAD to have a head start to have an advantage over others

HEAD to have a threat hanging over one's head to fear some intimated unpleasant action

HEAD to have eyes at the back of one's head to know more of what is going on than is generally realized

HEAD to have one's head in the clouds to be unrealistic

HEAD to have one's head screwed on straight to be shrewd

HEAD to have rocks in the head to be mentally unbalanced

HEAD to head someone in the right direction to assist a person to achieve something

HEAD to hit the nail right on the head to astutely come to the correct conclusion

HEAD to hold a gun at someone's head to put pressure on a person to make a particular decision regardless of his desires in the matter

HEAD to hold one's head high to stay unruffled and to maintain one's dignity despite attempts by others to embarrass

HEAD to just hold one's head above water to cope with problems but with little margin to spare or to stay solvent

HEAD to keep a civil tongue in one's head to be polite, especially under provocation

HEAD to keep a cool head to stay calm and rational in a crisis

HEAD to keep a level head to stay calm and rational in a crisis

HEAD to keep one's head to remain calm in a crisis or to unexpectedly retain an elected or appointed position

HEAD to keep one's head down to work very diligently

HEAD to kick heads in to demonstrate annoyance at or dislike of certain persons

HEAD to knock an idea on the head to utterly reject a proposal

HEAD to knock two heads together to make two persons come to their senses and deal with each other
**HEAD**

to laugh one’s head off
to greatly enjoy something

to let one’s head go
to do as one wants to

to let one’s heart rule one’s head
to act on emotion rather than on reason

to lose one’s head
to become confused

to need something like a hole in the head
to be landed with a completely undesired problem

to need to have one’s head examined
to be foolish

to promote someone over the heads of others
to promote a person to a position more senior than that held by some persons previously outranking him

to pull one’s head in
to retreat from a previously held stance

to put one’s head in the noose
to recklessly and unnecessarily expose oneself to great danger

to put one’s head into the lion’s mouth
to recklessly expose oneself to great danger

to put one’s head on the block
to have the courage of one’s convictions

to put our heads together
to confer and pool ideas

to rear its ugly head
to make an unwelcome appearance

to scratch one’s head
to be amazed or puzzled

to scream one’s head off
to scream very loudly

to shake one’s head
to indicate disbelief or wonder or disapproval

**HEAD**

to snap someone’s head off
to speak to a person aggressively

to tackle someone head-on
to confront a person

to turn someone’s head
to cause a person to get an exaggerated idea of his abilities or status

to turn something on its head
to reverse something

uneasy lies the head that wears a crown
responsibility involves some risks and some burdens (from Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*)

woolly-headed
slightly muddled

you want your head read
you should reconsider this matter

**HEADACHE**
a headache
a cause for worry

**HEADWAY**
to make headway
to make progress

**HEAL**
to heal wounds

to affect a reconciliation

**HEALTH**
to get a clean bill of health
after proper investigation to be found not wanting

**HEAP**
to be at the bottom of the heap
to be in the lowest position in a hierarchy

to be destined for the scrap-heap
to face a future in which one will have no meaningful role

to fall in a heap
(of a proposal) to collapse utterly

**HEAR**
the cheering could be heard a block away
there was great rejoicing

**HEAR**
to hear a whisper

learn a rumored hypothesis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEART chicken-hearted</th>
<th>HEART to eat one's heart out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>showing little courage</td>
<td>to suffer bitterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART cold-hearted</td>
<td>HEART to give someone heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cruel or mean or unmoved</td>
<td>to cause a person to cheer up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART from the bottom of one's heart</td>
<td>HEART to have a change of heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very sincerely</td>
<td>to form a new view in place of a strongly-held previous view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART half-hearted</td>
<td>HEART to have a heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unenthusiastic</td>
<td>to have compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART hard-hearted</td>
<td>HEART to have a heart of gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unsympathetic</td>
<td>to have a generous disposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART heart and soul</td>
<td>HEART to have a heart of oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with great energy</td>
<td>to be brave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART heart failure</td>
<td>HEART to have a heart of stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a shock</td>
<td>to be unfeeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART heart-stopping</td>
<td>HEART to have a heart-to-heart talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exciting</td>
<td>to have a confidential discussion on a highly personal matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART one's heart bleeds for someone</td>
<td>HEART to have one's heart in one's boots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one feels truly sad for a person's fate</td>
<td>to be terrified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART one's heart is not in some cause</td>
<td>HEART to have one's heart in something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one has little enthusiasm for some cause</td>
<td>to be enthusiastic about and committed to a cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART one's heart sank</td>
<td>HEART to have one's heart in the right place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one realized the extent of some disaster</td>
<td>to have a well-developed social conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART open-hearted</td>
<td>HEART to have one's heart set on something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cordial</td>
<td>to be very keen to achieve something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART this does my heart good</td>
<td>HEART to know something in one's heart of hearts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I rejoice at this</td>
<td>to know something while reluctant to admit it, even to oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART to be close to one's heart</td>
<td>HEART to let one's heart rule one's head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be a project on which one is very keen</td>
<td>to act on emotion rather than on reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART to be in good heart</td>
<td>HEART to have one's heart in something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be brave in adversity</td>
<td>to be enthusiastic about and committed to a cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART to be of good heart</td>
<td>HEART to have one's heart in the right place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be brave in adversity</td>
<td>to have a well-developed social conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART to be someone after one's own heart</td>
<td>HEART to have one's heart set on something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be a person who shares one's beliefs</td>
<td>to be very keen to achieve something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART to break someone's heart</td>
<td>HEART to know something in one's heart of hearts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to act in a way causing great upset to another person</td>
<td>to know something while reluctant to admit it, even to oneself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HEART to have one's heart in something
HEART to be enthusiastic about and committed to a cause
HEART to have one's heart in the right place
HEART to have a well-developed social conscience
HEART to have one's heart set on something
HEART to be very keen to achieve something
HEART to know something in one's heart of hearts
HEART to know something while reluctant to admit it, even to oneself
HEART to let one's heart rule one's head
HEART to act on emotion rather than on reason
HEART to lose heart
to cease being enthusiastic

HEART to pour one's heart out to someone
to inflict one's woes on another person

HEART to pull at one's heart strings
to affect one emotionally

HEART to search one's heart
to have misgivings

HEART to steal someone's heart
to cause a person to fall in love with one

HEART to steel one's heart against something
to determine that, notwithstanding one's natural compassion, something shall not happen

HEART to take heart from something
to be encouraged by something

HEART to take something to heart
to learn to appreciate the significance of something or to be much saddened by something

HEART to warm the cockles of someone's heart
to delight a person

HEART to wear one's heart on one's sleeve
to lack the reserve expected of one

HEART warm-hearted
affectionate or generous

HEART with a heavy heart
in sorrow

HEART with a sinking heart
with growing despondency

HEART you can eat your heart out
you are entitled to feel sad or jealous

HEARTACHE heartache
sadness

HEARTBREAK heartbreak
despair

HEARTBURN heartburn
regret at some non-achievement

HEAT if one can't stand the heat
one should stay out of the kitchen
a person should not put himself in a position involving pressures with which he cannot cope (words attributed to Harry S. Truman)

HEAT to take the heat off someone
to divert attention away from a person

HEAT to turn the heat on something
to intensify the investigation of some matter

HEAT to turn up the heat on someone
to increase the pressure on a person

HEAVE to heave a sigh a relief
to express satisfaction at the achievement of a solution to a difficult problem

HEAVEN heaven help you!
you are in trouble

HEAVEN heaven only knows
it is not known

HEAVEN manna from heaven
unexpected benefits (Exodus 16:15)

HEAVEN to be in seventh heaven
to be very happy

HEAVEN to move heaven and earth
to do everything possible

HEAVEN to reek to high heaven
to be patently unethical

HEAVY to make heavy weather of something
to struggle excessively with a relatively simple task

HEAVY to run into heavy weather
to encounter difficulties

HEAVY with a heavy hand
in an oppressive fashion

HEAVY with a heavy heart
in sorrow

HEAVYWEIGHT a heavyweight
a person of importance or influence
HEDGE to be hedged around
(of a statement) to be surrounded by qualifications

HEDGE to hedge one's bets
to take action involving a cost but which is designed to reduce the possible adverse consequences of some activity

HEEL head over heels
topsy-turvy

HEEL to be hot on the heels of something
to closely follow something

HEEL to be someone's Achilles' heel
to represent a weakness in an otherwise strong position (refers to the Greek warrior who was the hero of Homer's Iliad)

HEEL to bring someone to heel
to make a person conform

HEEL to cool one's heels
to be kept waiting

HEEL to dig one's heels in
to become even more stubborn than at first

HEEL to drag one's heels
to perform unduly slowly

HEEL to fall head over heels in love
to fall very much in love

HEEL to kick one's heels
to be kept waiting

HEEL to snap at someone's heels
to be a minor irritation to a person

HEEL well-heeled
rich

HELL all hell broke loose
great confusion erupted

HELL come hell or high water
regardless of the consequences

HELL on a cold day in hell
never

HELL to be hell bent on something
to be very determined to achieve something, regardless of the adverse consequences

HELL to frighten hell out of someone
to alarm a person

HELL to give someone hell
to make life difficult for a person

HELL to have a snowflake's chance in hell
to have no hope or possibility at all

HELL to raise merry hell
to prominently involve others in a matter in the expectation of significant results from this action

HELM to be at the helm
to be in charge

HELP to cry for help
a subconscious or indirect indication that a person is in need of psychological counselling

HELP heaven help you!
you are in trouble

HELP not to lift a finger to help someone
to refuse to assist

HEM to be hemmed in
to be limited in the choice of actions available

HEMORRHAGE to stem the hemorrhage
to put a stop to the financial losses of a project

HEN a mother hen
an overly protective person

HEN hen-pecked
subject to domination by one's wife

HERCULEAN a Herculean cleaning of the stables
a thorough revision of operating procedure (refers to Hercules, a mythical Greek hero who cleaned the stables of Augeas)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>HERCULEAN</strong></th>
<th>to be a Herculean task</th>
<th>HERCULEAN</th>
<th>to be laborious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HERD</strong></td>
<td>to follow the herd</td>
<td>HERD</td>
<td>to do what most other people are doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HERE</strong></td>
<td>the buck stops here</td>
<td>HERE</td>
<td>I accept full responsibility (sign on the desk of Harry S. Truman when president of the United States)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HERE</strong></td>
<td>to be neither here nor there</td>
<td>HERE</td>
<td>to be irrelevant or unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HERESY</strong></td>
<td>heresy</td>
<td>HERESY</td>
<td>views different from those held by the majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HERO</strong></td>
<td>to make a hero of oneself</td>
<td>HERO</td>
<td>to curry favors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HERRING</strong></td>
<td>neither fish, flesh nor good red herring</td>
<td>HERRING</td>
<td>unclassifiable by virtue of being neither one thing nor another (from Cervantes’ DON QUIXOTE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIDE</strong></td>
<td>to be a red herring</td>
<td>HIDE</td>
<td>to be something designed to divert attention away from the main question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIDE</strong></td>
<td>to cover one’s hide</td>
<td>HIDE</td>
<td>to provide excuses or take other evasive action in an attempt to avoid the adverse consequences of one’s actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIDE</strong></td>
<td>to have a thick hide</td>
<td>HIDE</td>
<td>to be impervious to criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIDE</strong></td>
<td>to have the hide of a rhinoceros</td>
<td>HIDE</td>
<td>to be totally unaffected by and unresponsive to valid criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIDE</strong></td>
<td>to hide one’s light under a bushel</td>
<td>HIDE</td>
<td>to keep others in ignorance of one’s skills and experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIDE</strong></td>
<td>to hide under someone’s skirts</td>
<td>HIDE</td>
<td>to let someone else take the consequences of one’s actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIDE</strong></td>
<td>to want someone’s hide</td>
<td>HIDE</td>
<td>to be keen to penalize a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIDEBOUND</strong></td>
<td>hidebound</td>
<td>HIDEBOUND</td>
<td>narrow-minded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>come hell or high water</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>regardless of the consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>high water mark</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>triumph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>to be for the high jump</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>to be threatened with a reprimand and punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>to be on one’s high horse</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>to be excessively pompous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>to fly high</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>to be ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>to have the high ground</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>to have an advantage in moral terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>to hold one’s head high</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>to stay unruffled and to maintain one’s dignity despite attempts by others to embarrass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>to leave someone high and dry</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>to withdraw all support from a person or to isolate a person from a desired involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>to ride high</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>to be successful but vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>with a high hand</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>arrogantly (Exodus 14:8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH-HANDED</strong></td>
<td>high-handed</td>
<td>HIGH-HANDED</td>
<td>overbearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highbrow</strong></td>
<td>highbrow</td>
<td>Highbrow</td>
<td>intellectual or cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGHFLYER</strong></td>
<td>a highflyer</td>
<td>HIGHFLYER</td>
<td>an ambitious and/or successful person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGHLIGHT</strong></td>
<td>a highlight</td>
<td>HIGHLIGHT</td>
<td>a particularly important item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGHLIGHT</strong></td>
<td>to highlight something</td>
<td>HIGHLIGHT</td>
<td>to draw particular attention to a matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGHWAY</strong></td>
<td>highway robbery</td>
<td>HIGHWAY</td>
<td>the charging of grossly excessive prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIJACK</strong></td>
<td>to hijack a debate</td>
<td>HIJACK</td>
<td>to involve oneself in the public discussion of some matter and turn that discussion to one’s advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>light on the hill, distant goal acting as an inspiration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>to be over the hill, to be old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>to be pushing uphill, to face difficulties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>to fight an uphill battle, to face difficulties or to have formidable opposition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>to go downhill, to deteriorate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>to head for the hills, to seek to escape one's commitments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>to push water uphill, to foolishly attempt the impossible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilt</td>
<td>to the hilt, to the maximum extent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himalayan</td>
<td>of Himalayan proportions, huge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinter</td>
<td>to stand up on one's hind legs, to exert one's authority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hind</td>
<td>to talk the hind leg off a donkey, to talk excessively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hind</td>
<td>with 20/20 hindsight, with the benefit of knowing what happened</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip</td>
<td>the hip pocket nerve, the assessment of issues by their financial effects on one</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip</td>
<td>to shoot from the hip, to speak frankly and openly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire</td>
<td>to be a gun for hire, to be a person willing to undertake assignments for a fee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>it hits one, one comes to realize something</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit one's stride, to settle down to some task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit someone below the belt, to act unfairly toward another person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit someone for six, to damage a person's cause</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit someone hard, to greatly affect a person emotionally or to cost a person a lot of money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit someone right between the eyes, to be brutally frank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit the bull's eye, to make the correct decision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit the hay, to go to sleep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit the jackpot, to be very lucky</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit the mark, to achieve one's object or to make the correct decision (refers to archery)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit the nail right on the head, to astutely come to the correct conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit the roof, to be very angry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>to hit the straps, to really get going</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobby</td>
<td>to be off on one's hobby horse, to throw into conversation aspects of a subject in which one has a passionate interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobson</td>
<td>Hobson's choice, no right at all to select (refers to Thomas Hobson, a horsekeeper in Cambridge, England, who offered customers seeking a change of horses a single beast on a &quot;take it or leave it&quot; basis)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoe</td>
<td>to have a hard row to hoe, to be a difficult assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hog</td>
<td>a road hog, an inconsiderate motorist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hog</td>
<td>to go the whole hog, to do something very thoroughly (refers to the close shearing of lambs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOG to make a hog of oneself
to demonstrate greed

HOGWASH hogwash
nonsense

HOIST to be hoist with one's own petard
to have one's own case used against one (refers to being blown up by one's own bomb)

HOLD an argument holding water
a debating point of substance

HOLD hold your horses!
just wait a little!

HOLD no holds barred
without any limitation

HOLD not fit to hold a candle to someone
greatly inferior to another person

HOLD not to hold one's breath for something
to give up all expectation

HOLD to be left holding the baby
to be tricked into accepting responsibility for someone else's problems

HOLD to hold a winning hand
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

HOLD to hold all the aces
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

HOLD to hold all the cards
to be assured of victory

HOLD to hold fire
to defer criticizing

HOLD to hold one's head high
to stay unruffled and to maintain one's dignity despite attempts by others to embarrass

HOLD to hold one's tongue
to keep quiet

HOLD to hold out an olive branch
to make peace overtures (Genesis 8:11)

HOLD to hold someone at bay
to successfully resist an attacker

HOLD to hold someone's hand
to give detailed on-the-job training and supervision

HOLD to hold the floor
to dominate a conversation

HOLD to hold the fort
to be in charge during the temporary absence of a superior

HOLD to hold the purse strings
to have control of expenditure

HOLD to hold the trump card
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

HOLD to hold the wrong end of the stick
to be completely mistaken about something

HOLD to just hold one's head above water
to cope with problems but with little margin to spare or to stay solvent

HOLD to put something on 'hold'
to put something aside for the time being with a view to resuming activity later on (refers to the telephone)

HOLE a black hole
an intermediate range of values producing anomalous results or a particularly obnoxious prison cell

HOLE a dry hole
an exercise which after much effort proves fruitless

HOLE a fox hole
space which is really too small for a person's needs or comfort

HOLE a loop-hole
means of getting around the intention of some regulation

HOLE a square peg in a round hole
a person much more suitable for a position rather different from the one held
HOLE to be in a hole
to experience some difficulties
HOLE to expose holes
to expose weaknesses in an argument
HOLE to have money burning a hole in one’s pocket
to be impatient to spend or invest available funds
HOLE to need something like a hole in the head
to be landed with a completely undesired problem
HOLE to pigeon-hole
to put aside for further consideration in the distant future
HOLE to stop up one hole in a sieve
to do something quite useless
HOLE watch the doughnut—not the hole
look for the positive aspects
HOLE watering hole
a bar or place to get a drink
HOLLOW that has a hollow ring to it
that statement is insincere
HOLLOW to hold the power to do something in the hollow of one’s hand
to have the right to make crucial decisions
HOLY a holier-than-thou attitude
excessive righteousness
HOLY an unholy alliance
a working relationship for a nefarious purpose between unlikely partners
HOLY search for the Holy Grail
work toward a difficult goal (refers to a vessel supposedly used by Christ at the last supper and featuring in the Arthurian legends)
HOME charity begins at home
a person’s first responsibility should be to his family
HOME nothing to write home about
unimpressive
HOME the chickens are coming home to roost
the consequences of past actions are becoming obvious
HOME to argue till the cows come home
to argue forever
HOME to be home and hosed
to have won
HOME to be home on the sheep’s back
to be doing well
HOME to be too close to home
to be too near the truth to be welcome
HOME to bring a fact home to someone
despite his inclination to the contrary to make a person realize a fact
HOME to bring home the bacon
to be successful
HOME to drive the lesson home
to take certain action which is unpleasant but which has the effect of registering a message
HOME to eat someone out of house and home
to ruin a person by eating all he has
HOME to enter the home stretch
to commence the last stage
HOME to keep the home fires burning
to maintain normal domestic activity during the temporary absence of the breadwinner
HOME to take one’s bat and ball home
as a gesture of spite to remove an essential ingredient which one has contributed to a joint enterprise
HOMEWORK to do one’s homework
to thoroughly analyze an issue
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>HONEY</strong></th>
<th>a country in which everything is in abundant supply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HONEYMOON</strong></td>
<td>a short period enjoyed by a newcomer to some activity before his performance is criticized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOOK</strong></td>
<td>by hook or by crook by fair means or foul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOOK</strong></td>
<td>hook line and sinker wholly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOOK</strong></td>
<td>to be hooked on something to be addicted to something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOOK</strong></td>
<td>to get someone off the hook to rescue a person from an embarrassing predicament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOOK</strong></td>
<td>to let someone off the hook to allow a person to escape the adverse consequences of his own actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOOP</strong></td>
<td>to jump through hoops to undergo some ordeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOOT</strong></td>
<td>not to care a hoot not to show the slightest concern or enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOP</strong></td>
<td>something is but a hop, skip and jump away something is nearby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOP</strong></td>
<td>to be on the hop to be always bustling about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOP</strong></td>
<td>to catch someone on the hop to take a person by surprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOP</strong></td>
<td>to hop onto the bandwagon to join the majority (the antonym of &quot;bandwagon effect&quot; is &quot;underdog effect&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HORIZON</strong></td>
<td>the one bright spot on the horizon the only hopeful aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HORIZON</strong></td>
<td>there are black clouds on the horizon bad news is expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HORIZON</strong></td>
<td>to loom on the horizon to be expected but not immediately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **HORN** | the horns of a dilemma the unpalatable alternatives between which a choice must be made |
| **HORN** | to lock horns with someone to have an argument with another person |
| **HORN** | to pull one's horns in to retreat from previously stated views |
| **HORN** | to take the bull by the horns to come to grips with the realities of a difficult problem |
| **HORNET** | to stir up a hornet's nest to take action which results in unpleasant side-effects |
| **HORSE** | I could eat a horse I am very hungry |
| **HORSE** | a Trojan horse a trick (refers to a large gift horse full of soldiers used to bring about the fall of Troy, as described in Homer's Iliad) |
| **HORSE** | a dark horse a person with unsuspected talents |
| **HORSE** | a nod is the same as a wink to a blind horse fine distinctions are not appropriate here |
| **HORSE** | a stalking horse an ostensible reason |
| **HORSE** | a two-horse race a contest between only two serious contestants |
| **HORSE** | a warhorse an old soldier who likes to relive past wartime experiences |
| **HORSE** | a willing horse a cheerful worker |
| **HORSE** | hold your horses! just wait a little! |
| **HORSE** | horse sense natural shrewdness |
| **HORSE** | horsetrading tough negotiations |
**HORSE** it is horses for courses
some combinations work particularly well

**HORSE** that is a horse of a very different color
that is a much more acceptable proposition

**HORSE** the horse and buggy days long ago

**HORSE** to back the wrong horse
to have faith in, give support to and/or invest in a project which proves to be unsuccessful

**HORSE** to be off on one's hobby horse
to throw into conversation aspects of a subject in which one has a passionate interest

**HORSE** to be on one's high horse
to be excessively pompous

**HORSE** to drive a coach and horses through something
to demonstrate major errors in something

**HORSE** to flog a dead horse
to misleadingly do something patently useless

**HORSE** to frighten the horses
to scare people off by one's ill-considered tactics

**HORSE** to learn something from the horse's mouth
to get information from someone qualified to impart it

**HORSE** to look a gift horse in the mouth
to be suspicious about a benefit which has been volunteered

**HORSE** to put the cart before the horse
to do things in the wrong order

**HORSE** to shut the stable door after the horse has bolted
to take preventive action only after the relevant event

**HORSE** to swap horses in midstream
to change direction during the course of a project

**HORSE** wild horses would not cause me to do something
I absolutely refuse to do something (refers to a form of torture)

**HORSEPLAY** horseplay
boisterous and undignified behavior

**HOSED** to be home and hosed
to have won

**HOT** a hot potato
an embarrassing issue

**HOT** a hothead
an impetuous person

**HOT** hot-blooded
very passionate

**HOT** red-hot
highly exciting and desirable

**HOT** to be full of hot air
to have an exaggerated opinion of one's own importance and to boast about it

**HOT** to be hot off the press
to be the latest news

**HOT** to be hot on a subject
to be knowledgeable and enthusiastic about a subject

**HOT** to be hot on the heels of something
to closely follow something

**HOT** to be hot stuff
to be skillful or very passionate

**HOT** to be hot under the collar
to be very agitated

**HOT** to be in hot water
to be very agitated

**HOT** to be in hot water
to be in trouble or to be in difficulty

**HOT** to be in the hot seat
to hold a position requiring one to answer criticism or accusations
| HOT | to blow hot and cold | to vacillate |
| HOT | to get hot | to get close to the solution |
| HOT | to go hot foot | to do something fast |
| HOT | to make some place too hot for someone | to persecute a person and thus make conditions very unpleasant for him |
| HOT | to run hot | (of equipment) to be subject to particularly high usage |
| HOT | to strike while the iron is hot | to take advantage of a situation which cannot last |
| HOTBED | a hotbed of crime | a place where crime flourishes |
| HOUND | to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds | to keep in with two opposing sides |
| HOUND | to set the hounds baying | to excite the gossips by providing material which they can use |
| HOUR | at the eleventh hour | at the last moment (actually "at the twenty-fourth hour" would be more logical) (Matthew 20:9) |
| HOUSE | a half-way house | an intermediate position |
| HOUSE | a house of cards | an organization which gives a misleading impression of solidity |
| HOUSE | a madhouse | an organization in great turmoil |
| HOUSE | a plague on both your houses! | I am disgusted with both of you (from Shakespeare’s ROMEO AND JULIET) |
| HOUSE | people in glass houses should not throw stones | those who are less than perfect are foolish to criticize others |
| HOUSE | to be in the doghouse | to be in disgrace |
| HOUSE | to be on the house | to be free of cost |
| HOUSE | to bring the house down | to greatly amuse an audience |
| HOUSE | to eat someone out of house and home | to ruin a person by eating all he has |
| HOUSE | to put one's house in order | to fix up the deficiencies in one’s affairs |
| HOUSEHOLD | a household name | a very familiar name |
| HOYLE | according to Hoyle | with authority |
| HUMBLE | to eat humble pie | to apologize |
| HUNT | a witchhunt | an exercise seeking to find someone who can be blamed |
| HUNT | to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds | to keep in with two opposing sides |
| HURDLE | to jump a hurdle | to overcome a problem or difficulty |
| HURDLE | to jump that hurdle when one comes to it | to deal with a particular problem only when it becomes necessary to do so |
| HURL | to hurl something in someone's face | to reproach a person in regard to something |
| HURT | someone can't hurt a fly | someone is very gentle and kindhearted |
| HYDE | to do a Jekyll and Hyde | to have a split personality (refers to THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE by Robert Louis Stevenson) |
| HYDRA | a hydra-headed monster | an evil which is not readily destroyable |
HYMNAL to all sing from the same hymnal
to act consistently with each other

I
I to dot the i's and cross the t's
to be meticulous in completing the documentation for a transaction

ICE to break the ice
to take the initiative in starting discussions

ICE to cut no ice with someone
to have little effect on a person

ICE to put something on ice
to put something aside for the time being

ICE to skate on thin ice
to act in disregard of obvious danger

ICEBERG to be the tip of the iceberg
to be only a very small portion of a much larger but less obvious whole

ICING to be icing on top of the cake
to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario

IMAGE to tarnish one's image
to become less highly regarded

IMPETUS to have impetus
to move along forcefully

IMPRIMATUR imprimatur
confirmation that something is in order (Latin, "'let it be printed'; refers to the formal ruling given by a Roman Catholic bishop authorizing the publication of a book on religion or morals)

INCH give him an inch and he will take a mile
make him a small concession and he will abuse it by taking much more

INCH not to give an inch
not to budge or concede to the slightest degree despite pressure to do so

INK the ink is hardly dry
something intended to last a long time is to be changed shortly after its establishment

INNER a warm inner glow
satisfaction at some achievement

INNINGS to have had a good innings
to have had a successful life

INSIDE to know something inside out
to know something very thoroughly

INSIDE to turn something inside out
to examine something thoroughly

INSTRUCTION riding instructions
directions as to how to do something

INTEREST to pay something back with interest
to return a small favor with a bigger favor or to extract retribution of greater value than the circumstances warrant

INTRODUCE to introduce new blood
to recruit new members to some organization

IRON the iron curtain
the border between the communist nations and the rest of the world (from a speech by Sir Winston Churchill in 1946)
IRON to give a cast-iron guarantee
to give a very secure undertaking to
do something

IRON to have a cast-iron case
to be absolutely assured of victory in legal proceedings

IRON to have other irons in the fire
to have the opportunity to do something else as an alternative

IRON to have something in an iron grip
to hold something very securely

IRON to iron out something
to sort out a difficult problem

IRON to rule with a rod of iron
to keep strict discipline

IRON to rule with an iron fist
to keep strict discipline

IRON to strike while the iron is hot
to take advantage of a situation which cannot last

IRON with an iron hand in a velvet glove
with a hard attitude made to seem soft

ISSUE to be a black and white issue
to involve very clear distinctions

ITCH to be itching to go
to be highly enthusiastic and keen to start

ITCHY itchy feet
a desire to travel

ITCHY to have itchy fingers
to be impatient

IVORY to be in an ivory tower
to be immersed in theoretical considerations and ignorant of the practical realities (Song of Solomon 7:4)

J

JACK a Jack of all trades
an amateur who can turn his hand to anything

JACKAL to keep the jackals at bay
to pay one's creditors just sufficient to avoid repercussions

JACKET to keep someone in a straitjacket
to deny a person any discretionary powers at all

JACKPOT to hit the jackpot
to be very lucky

JAM money for jam
remuneration easily earned

JAM to be in a jam
to be in difficulties

JAM to just pick the plums out of the jam
to take only the very best items

JAM to put jam on someone's bread
to make a good situation even better

JAUNDICED jaundiced
affected by jealousy

JAW someone's jaw dropped
someone registered obvious disappointment, incredulity or shock

JEKYLL to do a Jekyll and Hyde
to have a split personality (refers to THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE by Robert Louis Stevenson)

JELLY to be set like a jelly
to be very well established

JEREMIAH Jeremiah
a person who looks on the gloomy side of everything (refers to the prophet Jeremiah in the Old Testament)

JERICHO walls of Jericho
something seemingly solid but actually destructible (Joshua 6:20)

JERK a knee-jerk reaction
a response made instantaneously and without any proper consideration
JETSAM flotsam and jetsam derelict persons, without a fixed abode or stable life

JETTISON to jettison some proposal to abandon some proposal as worthless or impracticable

JEWEL a jewel a valued assistant

JEWEL the jewel in someone’s crown the most significant component

JIB the cut of someone’s jib someone’s personal appearance

JOB something would try the patience of Job something is very vexatious (James 5:11)

JOB to have a job in front of one to face difficulties

JOIN join the club! you are only one of many people with similar problems

JOIN to join forces to cooperate with one another in order to achieve a common objective

JOIN to join hands with someone to cooperate with a person

JOINT to put someone’s nose out of joint to upset another person

JOT not a jot not even a small amount (refers to the Greek letter iota or i)

JOWL cheek by jowl close to each other

JOY to jump for joy to express great satisfaction

JUAN to be a Don Juan to be a libertine

JUDAS to play Judas to betray a person (Matthew 26)

JUDGE to judge a book by its cover foolishly to go only by superficial appearances

JUGULAR to go for the jugular to attempt to destroy something completely

JUICE to stew in one’s juice to suffer the adverse consequences of one’s acts or omissions

JUMP something is but a hop, skip and jump away something is nearby

JUMP to be for the high jump to be threatened with a reprimand and punishment

JUMP to get the jump on someone to get an advantage over a person

JUMP to jump a hurdle to overcome a problem or difficulty

JUMP to jump at the opportunity to enthusiastically take immediate advantage of a good chance

JUMP to jump down someone’s throat to react angrily to the remarks of the other party to a conversation

JUMP to jump for joy to express great satisfaction

JUMP to jump in feet first to take a calculated risk

JUMP to jump into bed with someone to enter into a joint enterprise with another person

JUMP to jump into the ring to join in enthusiastically

JUMP to jump on the bus to join an activity already well under way

JUMP to jump straight in at the deep end to do something without a proper lead-in
JUMP to jump that hurdle when one comes to it
to deal with a particular problem only when it becomes necessary to do so
JUMP to jump the gun
to start before one is meant to
JUMP to jump through hoops
to undergo some ordeal
JUMP to jump to a conclusion
to infer something without proper consideration
JUMP to jump to attention
to show respect
JUMP to jump up and down
to show excitement or anger or frustration
JUMP to nearly jump out of one’s skin
to receive a fright
JUMP to see which way the cat jumps
to await developments
JUMP to want to jump all one’s fences at once
to be unrealistic
JUMP you can jump in the lake
I intend to take no notice whatsoever of you or your views
JUNGLE a jungle
a place where everyone makes his own rules
JUNGLE the law of the jungle
the principle that those having power will use it at the expense of all others
JURY the jury is still out
no decision has yet been made or the public has not yet given an indication of its views
KEEL to keep something on an even keel
to ensure that something is not harmed
KEELHAUL to keelhaul someone
to penalize a person
KEEP to be unable to keep people away with a big stick
to be faced with a large crowd or much demand
KEEP to keep a civil tongue in one’s head
to be polite, especially under provocation
KEEP to keep a level head
to stay calm and rational in a crisis
KEEP to keep a tally
to keep a record (refers to a piece of wood with notches made on it to indicate a count)
KEEP to keep a weather eye out for something
to look out with particular care
KEEP to keep body and soul together
to keep alive
KEEP to keep one’s chin up
to maintain one’s morale
KEEP to keep one’s cotton-picking fingers off something
not to interfere in something
KEEP to keep one’s distance
to avoid familiarity
KEEP to keep one’s ears open
to be on the lookout for useful information
KEEP to keep one’s eye on someone
to supervise a person or to monitor a person’s activities and behavior
KEEP to keep one’s eye on something
to monitor a situation
KEEP to keep one’s eyes open
to be on the lookout for useful information
KEEP to keep one’s eyes open for something
to be on the lookout for an opportunity to do something
**KEEP to keep one's eyes peeled for something**
to be on the constant lookout for something

**KEEP to keep one's fingers crossed**
to hope for a good outcome

**KEEP to keep one's hair on**
to remain calm in a crisis

**KEEP to keep one's hands in**
to engage in activities which reinforce skills which one has previously acquired

**KEEP to keep one's head**
to remain calm in a crisis or to unexpectedly retain an elected or appointed position

**KEEP to keep one's head down**
to work very diligently

**KEEP to keep one's mouth shut**
not to discuss some matter

**KEEP to keep one's nose out of something**
not to meddle in something

**KEEP to keep one's nose to the grindstone**
to work with particular diligence

**KEEP to keep one's pecker up**
to stay cheerful

**KEEP to keep one's powder dry**
to retain key arguments or resources in reserve for use later

**KEEP to keep out of someone's hair**
to let another person get on with his work in his own way

**KEEP to keep someone in a straitjacket**
to deny a person any discretionary powers at all

**KEEP to keep someone in the dark**
to deliberately keep a person uninformed

**KEEP to keep someone on his toes**
to induce a person to be efficient

**KEEP to keep someone's seat warm**
to hold a position temporarily with a view to another person taking it over permanently in the near future

**KEEP to keep something dark**
to keep something secret

**KEEP to keep something on an even keel**
to ensure that something is not harmed

**KEEP to keep something under one's hat**
to maintain a confidence

**KEEP to keep something up one's sleeve**
to secretly retain something in reserve for use in the future or at a later stage of negotiations

**KEEP to keep tabs on something**
to monitor something

**KEEP to keep the ball rolling**
to take advantage of the existing momentum or to participate actively

**KEEP to keep the homes fires burning**
to maintain normal domestic activity during the temporary absence of the breadwinner

**KEEP to keep the jackals at bay**
to pay one's creditors just sufficient to avoid repercussions

**KEEP to keep the lid on something**
to keep a matter under control

**KEEP to keep the pot boiling**
to ensure that an issue stays current

**KEEP to keep the wolf from the door**
to avoid imminent trouble

**KEEP to keep track of something**
to be completely aware of where something is and how it is functioning

**KEEP to keep under wraps**
to keep confidential

**KEEP to keep up with the ball**
to stay on top of the situation
KEEP why keep a dog and bark oneself?
it is silly to pay for assistance and then do things personally
KEEPER keepers of the flame
persons keen to maintain old traditions
KEEPER to let something go to the keeper
to deliberately ignore a particular incident
KETTLE the pot calling the kettle black
a person criticizing another person without realizing his own even greater shortcomings
KETTLE to be a different kettle of fish
to be something very dissimilar
KETTLE to be a fine kettle of fish
to be a terrible muddle
KEY to strike the right key
find the appropriate solution
KEYNOTE keynote address
opening address, designed to set the theme of a conference
KICK I could kick myself
I regret that I acted thus
KICK a kick in the pants
an admonition
KICK to be alive and kicking
be in good form
KICK to kick a man when he is down
to take unfair advantage of a person already in difficulty
KICK to kick heads in
to demonstrate annoyance at or dislike of certain persons
KICK to kick in
to contribute financially
KICK to kick off
to start some action
KICK to kick one’s heels
to be kept waiting
KICK to kick over one’s traces
to become insubordinate
KICK to kick some proposal around
to examine a proposal from all angles
KICK to kick someone around
to abuse a person
KICK to kick someone in the guts
to take action needlessly hurtful to another person
KICK to kick someone in the teeth
to take action which demonstrates annoyance at or dislike of a person
KICK to kick someone out
to expel a person
KICK to kick someone upstairs
to promote a person to a purely ceremonial position
KICK to kick the bucket
to die
KICK to kick the cat
to take out one’s anger on some innocent party
KICK to kick up a fuss
to create a fuss
KID to treat someone with kid gloves
to handle a person with great discretion
KILL to be dressed to kill
to be more finely dressed than the occasion warrants
KILL to be in at the kill
to be present at the climactic finish to something
KILL to be killed in the rush
to be the supplier of something extremely popular
KILL to kill oneself laughing
to be greatly amused
KILL to kill some proposal stone dead
to abandon some proposal completely
KILL to kill the fatted calf
to demonstrate welcome and forgiveness on a person’s return (Luke 15:23)

KILL to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs
through excessive greed to destroy a very profitable enterprise

KILL to kill two birds with one stone
to achieve a second objective in the course of achieving the first objective

KILL to make a killing
to be in a very successful business venture

KINDRED kindred spirit
person with similar interests and eccentricities

KING a cat may look at a king
don’t give yourself airs!

KING to pay a king’s ransom
to pay a very large sum

KINGMAKER kingmaker
person engaging in behind-the-scenes activities to promote another person to a particular leadership position

KISS to be the kiss of death
to be something intended to be helpful but resulting in total destruction

KISS to kiss and make up
to reconcile one’s differences

KISS to kiss something good-bye
to give something up as permanently lost

KISS to kiss the ground
to suffer a loss

KISS to kiss the rod
to accept punishment meekly

KIT to have a field marshal’s baton in one’s kit
to be ambitious

KITCHEN everything but the kitchen sink
a lot of things

KITCHEN if one can’t stand the heat one should stay out of the kitchen
a person should not put himself in a position involving pressures with which he cannot cope (words attributed to Harry S. Truman)

KITCHEN to get the rounds of the kitchen
(of a husband) to be subject to personal abuse by his wife

KITE to fly a kite
to issue uncovered checks in the hope that they will be covered before clearance or to test public reaction to legislation in contemplation by leaking broad details of it to the media

KITTY to have kittens
to be in a state of great dismay (refers to a superstition that certain acts would cause women to bear kittens instead of children)

KNEE a knee-jerk reaction
a response made instantaneously and without any proper consideration

KNEE since he was knee high to a grasshopper
since he was a very young child

KNEE to be cut off at the knees
to have a pet project aborted

KNEE to beg on bended knees
to request in great earnestness

KNEE to force someone onto his knees
to inflict a humiliating defeat on a person

KNEE to go down on one’s hand and knees to someone
with great humility to ask a favor of a person

KNEE weak-kneed
unassertive or irresolute

KNELL to sound the death knell of something
to indicate the impending end of something

165
KNICKERS to get one's knickers in a knot
to get unduly excited

KNIFE before one can say "knife"
very quickly

KNIFE one could have cut the atmosphere with a knife
those present were very tense

KNIFE the knives are out
there is an active campaign against someone

KNIFE to hold a knife at someone's throat
to exert undue pressure on another person in an endeavor to achieve a result which would otherwise not be forthcoming

KNIFE to sharpen the knives
to get ready for a concerted attack on some principle

KNIFE to stick a knife into someone
to act vindictively toward a person

KNIGHT a knight in shining armor
a very helpful person

KNIGHT a white knight
a party voluntarily coming to the assistance of another party at considerable cost to itself

KNIT to knit one's brows
to indicate one's displeasure

KNOCK on the deathknock
at the last possible moment

KNOCK to knock an idea on the head
to utterly reject a proposal

KNOCK to knock on doors
to seek out opportunities to do business

KNOCK to knock someone off his perch
to displace a person from his leadership position in some competitive situation

KNOCK to knock something into a cocked hat
to twist something so that its original form is hardly recognizable

KNOCK to knock the stuffing out of someone
to completely demoralize a person

KNOCK to knock two heads together
to make two persons come to their senses and deal with each other

KNOT at a rate of knots
very fast

KNOT to cut the Gordian knot
to solve, especially by force, a virtually insoluble problem (refers to a complicated knot tied by Gordius and eventually cut by Alexander the Great)

KNOT to get into a knot
to get into a state of confusion

KNOT to get one's knickers in a knot
to get unduly excited

KNOT to tie the knot
to marry

KNOW I don't know whether I'm Arthur or Martha
I haven't time to think

KNOW by their fruits ye shall know them
their reputation will be based on their results (Matthew 7:20)

KNOW father knows best
as an expert I know better than you do just what is most suitable for you

KNOW not to know someone from Adam
to be unable to recognize a person

KNOW the devil one knows is better than the devil one does not know
the status quo is more comfortable than change
KNOW the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing
one section of a large bureaucracy does not realize that another section
is simultaneously doing something inconsistent

KNOW to know a thing or two about something
to have acquired a lifetime of cunning about a subject

KNOW to know how many beans make five
to have common sense

KNOW to know one's mind
to form and adhere to an opinion

KNOW to know the ropes
to know how to do one's job

KNOW to know where one stands
to know what one supports or how one is affected

KNOW to know which way to turn
to know which strategy to adopt or where to seek assistance

KNUCKLE to rap someone over the knuckles
to admonish a person

KOSHER to be kosher
to fulfill all requirements (refers to food complying with all aspects of Jewish religious law)

LADDER to be at the bottom of the ladder
to be in the most junior position in some hierarchy

LADY it's not over till the fat lady sings
it is not finished yet

LAKE you can jump in the lake
I intend to take no notice whatsoever of you or your views

LAMB a lamb led to slaughter
a naive person allowing himself to be exploited

LAMB one might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb
further action will not increase the adverse consequences already in train (refers to the stealing of both sheep and lambs being capital crimes under old English law)

LAMB sacrificial lamb
somebody unfairly made to suffer for the mistakes of others

LAMB to be mutton dressed up as lamb
to foolishly pretend to be younger

LAMB to wait two shakes of a lamb's tail
to wait just a few moments

LAME a lame dog
a person under some disadvantage needing attention and assistance

LAME a lame duck
a person unable to fend for himself (a lame duck president—a president still in office but without influence because the commencement of his successor's term is imminent)

LAND to ascertain the lay of the land
to establish the pertinent facts and opinions

LAND to be in cloud cuckoo land
to be mad or to have unrealistic expectations
| **LAND** to be in the land of the living | **LARK** to rise with the lark to get up early |
| to be alive | **LAST** a cobbler should stick to his last every person should confine himself to activities for which he has been trained |
| **LAND** to land something to achieve something | **LAST** the final straw the latest step, which, when added to a large number of seemingly harmless previous steps, sets off a disaster resulting from the cumulative effect |
| **LANDMARK** a landmark ruling a decision marking a turning point in the way a matter is approached | **LAST** the last bastion the only remaining defensive measure |
| **LANDSCAPE** to be part of the landscape to be present and fully accepted without question | **LAST** the last of the Mohicans to be the last of a group (refers to a near extinct tribe of American Indians) (title of a novel by James Fenimore Cooper) |
| **LANDSLIDE** a landslide an electoral result involving victory or defeat by an unexpectedly large margin | **LAST** to be on one’s last legs to be nearly worn out |
| **LANE** life in the fast lane existence full of exciting but worthless activity | **LAST** to have come down in the last shower to be naive |
| **LANE** to go down memory lane to reminisce | **LAST** to make a last-ditch stand to make a brave effort to stave off final defeat |
| **LANGUAGE** to speak the same language to have a good understanding and similar ideas | **LAST** to play the last card in the pack to lower one’s standards in a final desperate effort |
| **LAP** to be in the lap of the gods to be a matter of pure chance (refers to wax tablets inscribed with requests and placed on the knees of statues of Greek gods) | **LAST** to squeeze the last drop out of something to get the maximum advantage out of some favorable situation |
| **LAP** to drop into one’s lap to turn up fortuitously | **LATE** late in the day only when a project is well advanced |
| **LAP** to dump something in someone’s lap to impose some responsibility on another person | **LATHER** to get a lather up to get unduly excited |
| **LAP** to lap it up to enjoy the attention | **LATHER** to whip oneself into a lather to become unduly excited |
| **LARGE** larger than life in person and full of enthusiasm | **LARGE** to be a small cog in a large wheel to be a relatively unimportant person in a large organization |
LAUGH to laugh all the way to the bank
to appreciate one's good fortune

LAUGH to laugh one's head off
to greatly enjoy something

LAUGH to laugh something out of court
to ridicule a proposition as having no basis whatsoever

LAUGH you will laugh on the other side of your face
you will regret this

LAUREL to look to one's laurels
to be careful not to lose one's reputation for some skill

LAUREL to rest on one's laurels
to use a reputation for success earned in earlier times as a substitute for current endeavor

LAW Murphy's law
the principle that everything which can go wrong will go wrong

LAW Parkinson's law
the principle that work expands to match the work capacity available (title of a book by Prof. C. Northcote Parkinson)

LAW the law of the jungle
the principle that those having power will use it at the expense of all others

LAW to lay down the law
to be officious

LAY not to lay a finger on someone
to refrain from hurting a person

LAY to be a laid-down misere
to be very easily accomplished and/or to be certain of outcome (refers to the declaration in certain card games undertaking to win no tricks)

LAY to be able to lay one's hands on something
to be able to locate something

LAY to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs
through excessive greed to destroy a very profitable enterprise

LAY to lay a proposal on the table
to make a proposal available for discussion or to adjourn discussion on a proposal for an indefinite period

LAY to lay down the law
to be officious

LAY to lay it on the line
to make clear what the accepted rules of behavior are

LAY to lay it on with a trowel
to flatter

LAY to lay one's cards on the table
to be utterly frank and open or to honestly disclose one's position

LAY to lay one's hands on something
to acquire something

LAY to lay some theory to rest
to abandon some theory as being no longer appropriate

LEAD a lamb led to slaughter
a naive person allowing himself to be exploited

LEAD all roads lead to Rome
all alternatives will have the same outcome

LEAD the blind leading the blind
persons without the necessary skills for a task purporting to impart those skills to others

LEAD to go down like a lead balloon
to receive a very cool reception

LEAD to lead a dog's life
to be ill-treated

LEAD to lead someone a merry dance
to mislead a person
LEAD to lead someone by the nose  
to induce another person to comply  
with one’s wishes

LEAD to lead someone up the  
garden path  
to mislead a person by deliberately  
fallacious arguments

LEAD to lead with one’s chin  
by one’s brash behavior to virtually  
invite one’s opponents to take action  
against one

LEAD to swing the lead  
to cheat an employer by not working  
while being paid to do so

LEADING a leading question  
a very pertinent question (the misuse  
of a legal term, which actually means  
a question so framed as to suggest the  
answer)

LEADING to be the leading light  
to be the most important person in a  
venture

LEADING to have a leading edge  
to have an advantage

LEAF to take a leaf out of  
someone’s book  
to model oneself on another person

LEAF to turn over a new leaf  
to reform

LEAGUE to be in the same league  
to have comparable skills

LEAN a shoulder to lean on  
sympathy

LEAN to lean on someone  
to utilize the support of another per- 
son or to pressure another person to  
do something against his inclination

LEAP a leap into the dark  
a rash move

LEAP a quantum leap  
a gigantic step forward

LEAP by leaps and bounds  
with surprisingly fast progress

LEAP to leap at an idea  
to accept a suggestion enthusiastically

LEAP to leapfrog something  
to overtake something, with the like- 
lihood of in turn being overtaken (re- 
fers to a game in which participants  
jump over each other in turn)

LEAP to leap in  
to commence an activity without con- 
sidering the wisdom of doing so or  
the best way to proceed

LEARN to learn a lesson  
to benefit from one’s experience

LEARN to learn something from  
the horse’s mouth  
to get information from someone  
qualified to impart it

LEARN to learn the ropes  
to be taught the elementary features

LEASE a new lease on life  
the prospect of a worry-free existence  
from now on

LEASH to hold someone on a short  
leash  
to give a person very little authority

LEAST to take the line of least  
resistance  
to succumb to outside pressure

LEAVE a case of rats leaving a  
sinking ship  
the desertion of an enterprise in antic- 
ipation of imminent failure

LEAVE to be left holding the baby  
to be tricked into accepting responsi- 
bility for someone else’s problems

LEAVE to leave no stone unturned  
to be very thorough

LEAVE to leave one’s mark on  
something  
to be responsible for permanently  
altering the way something is operated

LEAVE to leave oneself wide open  
to act in such a way that one’s oppo- 
nents will find much which can be  
easily criticized
LEAVE to leave others for dead
to be vastly superior

LEAVE to leave someone cold
to fail to impress a person

LEAVE to leave someone high and dry
to withdraw all support from a person or to isolate a person from a desired involvement

LEAVE to leave someone in the lurch
to desert a person who is in difficulties (refers to the score in certain games)

LEAVE to leave someone out in the cold
to deny a desired objective to a person

LEAVE to leave something up in the air
to continue with an unresolved problem

LEAVE to leave the door open
to issue a standing invitation for the resumption of some negotiations

LEAVE without leaving any footprints
without making any impression

LEECH leech
person taking undue advantage of others

LEEWAY to make up leeway
to get back to a normal position or to get to the position held by one’s competitors

LEFT a left-handed compliment
a thinly-disguised insult

LEFT the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing
one section of a large bureaucracy does not realize that another section is simultaneously doing something inconsistent

LEFT to have two left feet
to be clumsy

LEG not to have a leg to stand on
to have one’s arguments completely demolished or to be without acceptable excuse or explanation

LEG to be on one’s last legs
to be nearly worn out

LEG to cost an arm and a leg
to be excessively expensive

LEG to do the leg work
to carry out the tedious part of a project

LEG to give someone a leg up
to give a person some assistance

LEG to have a leg in
to have an opportunity which has the potential to lead to bigger things

LEG to have one’s tail between one’s legs
to show great humility in the light of a backdown

LEG to pull someone’s leg
to tell a false but plausible story as an act of humor

LEG to shake a leg
to hurry up

LEG to stand up on one’s hind legs
to exert one’s authority

LEG to talk the hind leg off a donkey
to talk excessively

LEG with his tail between his legs contritely

LEG ROPE to put a leg rope on someone
to give a person very little authority

LEMON the answer is a lemon
the outcome is inconclusive

LEMON to sell someone a lemon
to sell a person a grossly defective product on the basis that it represents quality

LEMON to suck the lemon dry
to get the maximum advantage out of some favorable situation
LEND to lend a hand
to assist

LEND to lend one’s name to
something
to endorse something

LEND to lend someone an ear
to pay attention to a person

LEND to lend weight to something
to use one’s influence in support of
some cause

LENGTH at arm’s length
between parties who are strangers
bearing no special duty to each other
and who have no financial or other
relationship with each other (a legal
term)

LENGTH to go to great lengths
to take much trouble

LEOPARD a leopard cannot
change his spots
each person is born with certain unal-
terable characteristics

LESSON to drive the lesson home
to take certain action which is un-
pleasant but which has the effect of
registering a message

LESSON to learn a lesson
to benefit from one’s experience

LESSON to teach someone a lesson
to inflict something unpleasant on a
person in the hope that it will lead to
a change in his behavior.

LET bloodletting
planned reductions

LET to let blood
to allow some harm as the price for
achieving some greater benefit

LET to let someone off the hook
to allow a person to escape the ad-
verse consequences of his own actions

LETTER a dead letter
a rule still in existence but no longer
observed in practice

LETTER a red-letter day
an important occasion (refers to the
color used to print saints’ days on
some calendars)

LEVEL a level playing field
competition on equal terms

LEVEL to be on the level
to be honest

LEVEL to keep a level head
to stay calm and rational in a crisis

LEVEL water will find its own level
people will reach an appropriate posi-
tion relative to others

LEVEL-HEADED level-headed
rational

LIBERTY liberty hall
a place where one is free to do as one
wishes

LICENSE a license to print money
a lucrative government-conferred mo-
nopoly or privilege

LICK to lick one’s chops
to look forward to something with
pleasurable anticipation

LICK to lick one’s wounds
adjust oneself to defeat

LICK to lick someone’s boots
to show humility

LICK to lick something into shape
to make something presentable and
effective

LID to blow the lid off something
expose something no matter how
embarrassing this might be

LID to keep the lid on something
keep a matter under control

LIE one has made one’s bed and
one will now have to lie on it
one has to bear the consequences of
one’s actions

LAY to ascertain the lay of the land
to establish the pertinent facts and
opinions
LIE to let sleeping dogs lie
to refrain from raising an issue which
is not obviously requiring attention

LIE to lie low
to stay inconspicuous

LIE to take something lying down
to accept a disadvantage without
protest

LIE uneasy lies the head that wears
a crown
responsibility involves some risks
and some burdens (from Shakespeare’s
HENRY IV)

LIFE I cannot for the life of me
I just cannot

LIFE a new lease on life
the prospect of a worry-free existence
from now on

LIFE larger than life
in person and full of enthusiasm

LIFE life in the fast lane
existence full of exciting but worthless activity

LIFE life raft
financial assistance sufficient to avert insolvency

LIFE not on your life
definitely not

LIFE to be the life and soul of the party
to be the prime enthusiast for a cause

LIFE to breathe life into a corpse
to revive something moribund

LIFE to lead a dog’s life
to be ill-treated

LIFE to save someone’s life
to be of great help to a person

LIFE you can bet your life on something
something is certain to happen

LIFE BLOOD the lifeblood
the main or essential ingredient; or
the person or factor instilling enthusiasm

LIFT not to lift a finger to help someone
to refuse to assist

LIFT to lift one’s game
to raise the standard of one’s performance

LIGHT a chink of light
a small hope of a solution or breakthrough

LIGHT a highlight
a particularly important item

LIGHT a light in the sky
a sign of great hope

LIGHT guiding light
yardstick for ethical behavior

LIGHT in the cold light of day
in an unemotional atmosphere at a later stage

LIGHT light dawns
the point is grasped

LIGHT light on the hill
distant goal acting as an inspiration

LIGHT light-fingered
good at stealing

LIGHT shining light
eminent or scholarly person

LIGHT to be in the limelight
to be exposed to public attention

LIGHT to be the leading light
to be the most important person in a venture

LIGHT to bring something to light
to draw to public attention

LIGHT to get the red light
to be forbidden to do something

LIGHT to give the green light
to grant permission

LIGHT to hide one’s light under a bushel
to keep others in ignorance of one’s skills and experience
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Light</th>
<th>to highlight something to draw particular attention to a matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>to light a fuse to cause serious reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>to see red lights flashing to be conscious of the danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>to see someone in a good light to regard a person favorably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>to see the light to understand the real situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>to see the light at the end of the tunnel to be close to finalizing a long exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>to see the light of day to be made public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>to shed light on something to give explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>to steal the spotlight to set out to be the center of attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>to turn the spotlight on something to draw public attention to something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightly</td>
<td>to tread lightly to be careful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning</td>
<td>a lightning rod a person who attracts trouble to himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightweight</td>
<td>lightweight uninfluential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilliputian</td>
<td>Lilliputian small (refers to a place in Swift's Gulliver's Travels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>lily-livered cowardly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>lily-white honest and incorruptible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>to gild the lily (actually: to gild refined gold, to paint the lily) to do something patently unnecessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limb</td>
<td>to go out on a limb to put oneself at risk through foolish action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limbo</td>
<td>to be in limbo to have one's ultimate fate yet to be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limbo</td>
<td>to consign something to limbo to consider something as permanently disposed of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limelight</td>
<td>to be in the limelight to be exposed to public attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit</td>
<td>the sky is the limit the cost is no obstacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linchpin</td>
<td>linchpin essential feature central to a project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>hook, line and sinker wholly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>someone's job is on the line a person's career path is under consideration and/or his present position is at risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>the Plimsoll line the standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>the bottom line the conclusion which matters or the net effect of a series of developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>to be further down the line to have a low priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>to be in the firing line to be among the first to be under attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>to be line ball to be equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>to be out of line to adopt a stance not held by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>to draw the line at that to refuse to go any further</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>to fall into line to conform with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>to lay it on the line to make clear what the accepted rules of behavior are</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LINE to line one's pockets
to make, improperly and secretly, a
profit out of some transaction

LINE to make a beeline for something
to go straight to something with great
enthusiasm or to head for some goal
by the most direct route

LINE to put one's reputation on the line
to take a public stance in the realiza-
tion that there is a risk that one's reputa-
tion will suffer if one is proved wrong

LINE to read between the lines
to appreciate the true significance of
something not put into words

LINE to sign on the dotted line
to confirm one's agreement

LINE to sit on the sidelines
not to take part in the main action

LINE to step out of line
to infringe accepted rules of behavior

LINE to swallow the line
to accept as truth the story being proffered

LINE to take a hard line
to be uncompromising

LINE to take the line of least resistance
to succumb to outside pressure

LINE to toe the line
to conform

LINE to tread the thin line
cautiously to take action in circum-
stances where either too much or too
little will cause difficulties

LINEN to wash one's dirty linen in public
to expose one's domestic differences
to the world at large

LINGER the melody lingers on
the benefit of past actions remains

LINING every cloud has a silver lining
there are benefits even in seemingly adverse situations

LINK the weakest link in the chain
the least efficient component in a project the overall efficiency of which is governed by the efficiency of the least efficient component

LION the lion's share
the biggest portion

LION to beard the lion in his den
to visit someone important at his headquarters

LION to put one's head into the lion's mouth
to recklessly expose oneself to great danger

LION to throw someone to the lions
to abandon a person

LIP a stiff upper lip
obstinate courage in the face of pain or adversity

LIP to be tight-lipped
to keep confidences or to be uncom-
municative

LIP to bite one's lip
to control one's anger

LIP to pay lip service to some rules
to disregard some rules in practice while acknowledging them in words

LIP to seal one's lips
to keep a confidence

LIST a shopping list
a catalogue of demands

LISTEN a listening post
a place where information of strategic value can be collected

LITMUS a litmus test
an event which allows the outcome of future events to be predicted more accurately

175
LITTLE a little bird told me
I heard from an unnameable informant (Ecclesiastes 10:20)

LITTLE a little tin god
a petty tyrant

LITTLE little pitchers have long ears
children have a tendency to overhear things

LITTLE tall oaks from little acorns grow
even major enterprises have to have small beginnings (from ""Lines written for a School Declamation"" by David Everett)

LITTLE to be a big fish in a little pond
to be a person holding an important office but in an unimportant organization

LITTLE to twist someone around one’s little finger
by charm to get one’s way

LIVE not to live in each other’s pockets
to each follow his own lifestyle

LIVE to be a live wire
to be an enthusiast

LIVE to live from hand to mouth
being in poor financial circumstances, to survive with little by way of safety margin

LIVE to live in a fool’s paradise
to delude oneself

LIVER lily-livered
cowardly

LIZARD flat out like a lizard
to be hard at work (a play on words, not a simile)

LLOYD to be Al at Lloyd’s
to be in perfect order (refers to the classification of ships in Lloyd’s register in London)

LOAD that has taken a load off my mind
I am relieved

LOAD to be the throw of a loaded die
to be an act of deceit

LOCK lock, stock and barrel
entirely

LOCK to lock horns with someone
to have an argument with another person

LOCK to lock someone into some arrangement
to create an agreement which cannot be broken by one of the parties

LOCK to lock something up in the old oak chest
to put in a safe place and out of mind

LOGGERHEAD to be at loggerheads
to constantly fight one another

LOGJAM a logjam
a stoppage of activity caused by input in greater volume than allowed for

LOIN to gird up one’s loins
to get ready for action

LONDON it is London to a brick
it is virtually certain

LONE a lone wolf
a person who prefers to act without involving others

LONE to be a lone voice in the wilderness
to be the only person stating unpopular views

LONG for the long haul
as a long-term proposition

LONG he must have a long spoon that sups with the devil
great care is needed when negotiating deals with disreputable parties

LONG it is a long time between drinks
activity is occurring only very spasmodically

LONG it is as broad as it is long
it does not really matter
little pitchers have long ears
children have a tendency to overhear things

take a long walk on a short pier
go away, I want no dealings with you

that is a long shot
there is only a remote possibility

the long and the short of it
all that needs to be said about this

to be long in the tooth
to be old

to draw a long bow
to state a conclusion which while possible is unlikely on the known facts

to enter a long road
to commence a task which will take a long time

to have a long arm
to have far-reaching power

to have a long face
to look miserable

to throw a long shadow
to have wide-spread ramifications

to win by a long chalk
to win very conclusively

a cat may look at a king
don’t give yourself airs!
distant fields look greener
activities of which one has no experience seem much easier than is really the case

one looks for elephants in elephant country
one needs to search in the right place

someone looks as if butter would not melt in his mouth
a person looks sweet and innocent

things look black
there is little hope of success or prosperity or a favorable outcome

to give someone a black look
to indicate one’s displeasure with a person

to look at a gift horse in the mouth
to be suspicious about a benefit which has been volunteered

to look after number one
to act selfishly

to look at someone sideways
to silently and politely indicate one’s disapproval

to look daggers at someone
to look at a person in a way which indicates great animosity

to look down the barrel of a gun
to be given little choice in a matter

to look down the nose at something
to treat a matter with obvious contempt

to look for a needle in a haystack
to attempt something with a very small chance of success

to look on the dark side
to be pessimistic

to look to one’s laurels
to be careful not to lose one’s reputation for some skill

to need to look over one’s shoulder
to be subject to attack which is not obvious

to loom on the horizon
to be expected but not immediately

a loop-hole
a means of getting around the intention of some regulation

a loose cannon on the deck
a mistake likely to cause trouble

to have a loose tongue
to speak foolishly or indiscreetly
LOOSE to have a screw loose
to be mentally unbalanced

LOOSE to play fast and loose
to disregard one's obligations

LOOSE to tie up the loose ends
to complete the minor outstanding items of some substantially finished project

LOSE get lost!
just go away!

LOSE heads I win—tails you lose
whichever way this matter goes I will benefit at your expense

LOSE not to lose any sleep over something
not to worry about some matter

LOSE to be on the losing end of the stick
to be worse off while the other party to a transaction becomes correspondingly better off

LOSE to lose face
to endure embarrassment by virtue of being defeated or having one's errors found out

LOSE to lose heart
to cease being enthusiastic

LOSE to lose money hand over fist
to lose money very fast and convincingly

LOSE to lose one's head
to become confused

LOSE to lose one's marbles
to become senile

LOSE to lose one's nerve
to abandon, out of fear, a decision to do something

LOSE to lose one's right arm
to lose some highly-valued assistance

LOSE to lose one's touch
to cease to be familiar with something

LOSE to lose steam
to slow down

LOSE what one loses on the swings
one gains on the roundabouts
there are advantages and disadvantages which offset each other

LOSE you can get lost
I intend to take no notice whatsoever of you or your views

LOUD to come through loud and clear
to be well understood

LOVE love me—love my dog
if you accept me then you must also accept my associates

LOVE not for love or money
definitely not

LOVELY everything in the garden is lovely
everything is fine

LOW low-down
confidential information relevant to something

LOW the lowest common denominator
the highest level of taste found among all the members of some target audience

LOW to lie low
to stay inconspicuous

LOWER to lower one's rights
to reduce one's ambition

LOWER to lower the boom
to terminate an activity

LUCK the very best of British luck
you will have a hard time of it, but you carry my best wishes

LUCK to be the luck of the draw
to be a chance result

LUCK to push one's luck
having already done well in something, to then take risks which can prejudice everything

LUCK to take pot luck
to take whatever happens by chance to be available
LUCKY one can thank one's lucky stars
one was extremely fortunate

LUKEWARM lukewarm
unenthusiastic though not hostile

LUMP to have a lump in one's throat
to feel emotional

LURCH to leave someone in the lurch
to desert a person who is in difficulties (refers to the score in certain games)

LURK to lurk in the shadows
to have a low profile at the moment, but with the possibility of becoming much more conspicuous at any time

LYNX lynx-eyed
having acute vision

MACABRE danse macabre
gruesome final step (French, "ghastly dance")

MACHINE a sausage machine
the turning out of large volumes without particular thought

MACHINE when the wash comes through the machine
in due course

MACHINERY to be a well-oiled piece of machinery
to be functioning very satisfactorily

MACKEREL to throw a sprat to catch a mackerel
to risk a little in the hope of gaining much

MAD a madhouse
an organization in great turmoil

MAGIC a magic bullet
a guaranteed remedy

MAGIC the magic moment
the perfect time

MAGIC there is no magic in that that is quite ordinary

MAGIC to get a magic carpet ride to something
to be very fortunate in achieving some objective

MAGIC to wave a magic wand
to direct affairs without the restraints of the real world

MAGNET to be a magnet
to be a factor drawing a crowd of people

MAHOMET if the mountain will not come to Mahomet then Mahomet will go to the mountain
on recognizing that one has insufficient power to effect one's most desired solution, one decides to make do with the next best alternative

MAIDEN the answer to a maiden's prayer
an unexpected but very welcome happening

MAIN to splice the main brace
to serve an extra ration of rum

MAINSTREAM mainstream
orthodox

MAKE matchmaker
intermediary facilitating or instigating some merger

MAKE not to be made of money
not to be wealthy

MAKE ready-made
easily fabricated or available without difficulty

MAKE to kiss and make up
to reconcile one's differences

MAKE to make or break someone
to be a factor leading either to a person's success or to his failure, with no intermediate position

MAN a poor man's something
a second-best version
MAN every man and his dog
everybody
MAN he is your man
he conforms to an ideal
MAN one man's meat is another
man's poison
people's tastes differ
MAN one's right-hand man
one's chief aide
MAN the man in the street
the average citizen
MAN to be a man of straw
to have no assets while giving a con-
trary appearance
MAN to be one's own man
to approach every issue in a totally
objective manner
MAN to kick a man when he is
down
to take unfair advantage of a person
already in difficulty
MAN to separate the men from the
boys
to distinguish between those with and
without certain skills
MAN two men and a dog
very few people
MANAGE to stage-manage
something
to arrange how something happens
MANGER to be a dog in the
manger
to spitefully deny something to oth-
ers, notwithstanding its uselessness to
oneself
MANNA manna from heaven
unexpected benefits (Exodus 16:15)
MANSIZE a mansize job
a large task worth doing well
MANTLE to assume someone's
mantle
to take over another person's role
MAP to put some organization on
the map
to make the organization a force to be
reckoned with
MARATHON marathon
requiring great endurance (refers to
the run to get aid during the battle of
Marathon in 490 BC)
MARBLE to be carved in marble
to be virtually unalterable
MARBLE to lose one's marbles
to become senile
MARCH in the course of a day's
march
while carrying out one's normal activ-
ities
MARCH to get one's marching
orders
to be told to leave
MARCH to march to a different
drum
to show an independent approach
MARCH to steal a march on
someone
to anticipate another person's actions
and get in ahead
MARE a mare's nest
a discovery with illusory benefits
MARGIN safety margin
allowance for miscalculations
MARINE tell it to the marines
such nonsense is not believable
MARINER to be an albatross
around someone's neck
to be a great burden (popularized by
Coleridge's ANCIENT MARINER)
MARK a hallmark
a standard (refers to the official assay
mark on gold and silver, originally
put on at the Goldsmiths' Hall)
MARK a landmark ruling
a decision marking a turning point in
the way a matter is approached
MARK high water mark
triumph

MARK mark my words
you will find out that I am right

MARK the mark of Cain
disgrace (Genesis 4:15)

MARK the river found its mark
equilibrium between two pressures
has been achieved

MARK to be first off the mark
to start ahead of all others

MARK to be slow off the mark
to be slow to start something

MARK to be up to the mark
to be of the right standard

MARK to be wide off the mark
to have a belief which is far removed
from the true position

MARK to get full marks for something
to deserve praise for something

MARK to have a black mark against one's name
to have a tarnished reputation

MARK to hit the mark
to achieve one's object or to make the correct decision (refers to archery)

MARK to leave one's mark on something
to be responsible for permanently altering the way something is operated

MARK to make one's mark
to make an impression on people (refers to the cross made as the signature of illiterate persons)

MARK to make something one's trademark
to earn a reputation for maintaining some stance

MARK to mark time
to do nothing while awaiting developments

MARK to overstep the mark
to fail to observe the proprieties

MARKET to be a drug on the market
to be in overplentiful supply

MARSHAL to have a field marshal's baton in one's kit
to be ambitious

MARTHA I don't know whether I'm Arthur or Martha
I haven't time to think

MASK to unmask someone
to discover a person's true identity

MAST to nail one's colors to the mast
to publicly declare one's position and to maintain it in the face of criticism

MASTER a chessmaster
a clever strategist

MASTER a master stroke
particularly brilliant action

MASTER a past master
an expert with long experience

MATCH game, set and match
completion

MATCH the whole shooting match
the whole lot

MATCH to put a match to gasoline
to make a bad situation worse

MATCHMAKER matchmaker
intermediary facilitating or instigating some merger

MATTER it is mind over matter
one's resolve to overcome suffering will succeed

MATTER not to matter a row of beans
to be utterly unimportant

MAVERICK maverick
a person who likes to do things differently from other persons (refers to unbranded livestock)
MCCOY to be the real McCoy
the genuine article (refers to an American boxer who became world welterweight champion in 1890)

MEALY mealy-mouthed
not at all forceful in debate

MEASURE to take someone’s measure
to sum up a person’s character or skills

MEAT one man’s meat is another man’s poison
people’s tastes differ

MEAT to be easy meat
to be an opponent who is readily outwitted

MEAT to be meat and drink
to be very pleasurable

MEAT to be the ham in the sandwich
to be caught in the middle of a dispute between other parties

MEAT to contain much meat
to contain much material worthy of consideration

MEAT to make mincemeat of something
to devastate something

MECCA a Mecca for something
a place at which supporters of something congregate

MEDICINE strong medicine
a tough remedy

MEDICINE to get a taste of one’s own medicine
to suffer from an initiative intended to affect only other persons

MEDICINE to take one’s medicine
to submit to something unpleasant but necessary

MEET to make ends meet
to live within one’s income

MEET to meet one’s Waterloo
to receive a decisive defeat (refers to Napoleon’s fate at the Battle of Waterloo)

MELODY the melody lingers on
the benefit of past actions remains

MELT someone looks as if butter would not melt in his mouth
a person looks sweet and innocent

MELT to go back into the melting pot
to be up for reconsideration ab initio

MELTING a melting pot
a country where people with different ethnic backgrounds over time merge into one nation

MEND to mend fences
to achieve a reconciliation

MERRY the more the merrier
everyone is welcome

MERRY to be on a merry-go-round
to be sent from one bureaucrat to another

MERRY to lead someone a merry dance
to mislead a person

MERRY to raise merry hell
to prominently involve others in a matter in the expectation of significant results from this action

MESS to clean up a mess
to sort out mistakes or neglect

MESS to sell one’s birthright for a mess of pottage
through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)

MESSAGE to get the message
to understand the real import of what is being said

METEORIC meteoric
rapid

MEXICAN a Mexican standoff
a situation where neither of two parties is making a move
MICROSCOPE to be under the microscope
to be the subject of close examination

MID to swap horses in midstream
to change direction during the course of a project

MIDAS the Midas touch
attributes which cause a person’s ventures to be extremely profitable
(refers to King Midas of Phrygia, who had the power to turn everything
touched into gold)

MIDDLE a middle-of-the-road solution
a solution near the middle of a range of possibilities

MIDNIGHT to burn the midnight oil
to work late into the night

MILCH a milch cow
an easy and plentiful source of some desired benefit

MILE a milestone
an achievement

MILE someone would run a mile
a person would do anything to escape his responsibilities

MILE to be able to spot trouble a mile away
to be able to spot trouble before it actually happens

MILE to be miles apart
to have great philosophical differences

MILE to be miles away
to have one’s mind on other matters

MILE to go the extra mile
to work beyond the call of duty

MILE to miss something by a mile
to be nowhere near one’s target

MILE to stick out a mile
to be very apparent

MILE give him an inch and he will take a mile
make him a small concession and he will abuse it by taking much more

MILEAGE to get some mileage out of something
to benefit from something

MILK a land of milk and honey
a country in which everything is in abundant supply

MILK it is no use crying over spilt milk
lamenting over a disaster achieves nothing

MILK to be cream on top of the milk
to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario

MILL it is all grist to the mill
this is useful but unexciting additional material

MILL run of the mill
normal or average

MILL the mills of God grind slowly
retribution may be delayed but is inevitable

MILL to put someone through the mill
to give a person practical experience

MILLSTONE a millstone round someone’s neck
a great burden

MINCE not to mince words
to speak bluntly

MINCE to make mincemeat of something
to devastate something

MIND a thought in the back of one’s mind
an undeveloped idea

MIND in one’s mind’s eye
using a vivid imagination

MIND it is mind over matter
one’s resolve to overcome suffering will succeed

MIND that has taken a load off my mind
I am relieved
MIND the mind boggles
this is astonishing
MIND to be a weight off one's mind
to be a great relief
MIND to be of two minds
to be undecided between two alternatives
MIND to be of one mind
(of several people) to be agreed
MIND to be out of one's cotton-picking mind
to act irrationally
MIND to broaden someone's mind
to expose a person to a greater variety of experiences and interests than he had previously
MIND to change one's mind
to alter the views which one had previously formed
MIND to cloud one's mind
to allow irrelevant or extraneous factors to affect one's impartiality or judgment
MIND to cross one's mind
to occur to one
MIND to drive someone out of his mind
to cause great worry to a person
MIND to give someone a piece of one's mind
to abuse another person
MIND to have a mind of one's own
not to be easily influenced
MIND to have a one-track mind
to keep coming back to one narrow topic of conversation
MIND to have an open mind
to be willing to assess evidence on its merits and without prejudging it
MIND to have half a mind to do something
to be tempted or mildly inclined to do something
MIND to know one's mind
to form and adhere to an opinion
MIND to make up one's mind
to reach a conclusion after contemplating a matter
MIND to prey on one's mind
(of a problem) to keep worrying one
MIND to put someone's mind at rest
to reassure a person
MIND to slip one's mind
to be overlooked or forgotten
MIND to speak one's mind
to express one's views frankly and forcefully
MIND to spring to mind
to suddenly occur to a person
MINE a goldmine
a source of much wealth or of many facts
MINE a minefield
a source of great hidden danger or of difficulties not obvious on a first encounter
MINNOW to miss the sharks while netting the minnows
to succeed in minor aspects but fail in the ones that really matter
MINT to charge a mint
to impose very high prices
MIRAGE mirage
illusory benefit
MIRE to sink deeper into the mire
to get into further difficulties
MISERE to be a laid-down misère
to be very easily accomplished and/or to be certain of outcome (refers to the declaration in certain card games undertaking to win no tricks)
MISS not to miss a beat
to carry on without the slightest interruption
MISS to miss something by a mile
   to be nowhere near one's target
MISS to miss the boat
   to fail to exploit an opportunity
MISS to miss the bus
   to fail to exploit an opportunity
MISS to miss the sharks while netting the minnows
   to succeed in minor aspects but fail in the ones that really matter
MISS to miss the train
   to fail to exploit an opportunity
MITE not a mite
   not at all (refers to a Flemish coin of small value)
MIX a mixed bag
   some advantages and some disadvantages
MIX to be a mixed blessing
   to be an outcome with some desirable and some undesirable features
MOHICAN the last of the Mohicans
   to be the last of a group (refers to a near extinct tribe of American Indians) (title of a novel by James Fenimore Cooper)
MOLD to be cast in someone's mold
   to take after another person
MOLE to make mountains out of molehills
   to treat a minor problem as though it were a major disaster
MOMENT at the psychological moment
   at the most appropriate instant of time (a phrase which actually confuses the German word for "motive" with the term for an instant of time)
MOMENT the magic moment
   the perfect time
MOMENTUM to have momentum
   to move along forcefully
MONEY a license to print money
   a lucrative government-conferred monopoly or privilege
MONEY money for jam
   remuneration easily earned
MONEY not for love or money
   definitely not
MONEY not to be made of money
   not to be wealthy
MONEY pin money
   an allowance to a wife for her personal use
MONEY that is money down the drain
   money has been wastefully lost on a failed project
MONEY the money is rolling in
   the scheme is very profitable
MONEY to have a run for one's money
   to at least get some enjoyment out of an otherwise abortive exercise
MONEY to have money burning a hole in one's pocket
   to be impatient to spend or invest available funds
MONEY to have money flowing out of one's ears
   to be very rich
MONEY to lose money hand over fist
   to lose money very fast and convincingly
MONEY to put money on the table
   to back one's judgment in a tangible way or to demonstrate one's sincerity
MONEY to put one's money where one's mouth is
   to back one's judgment by putting assets at risk
MONEY to see the color of someone's money
   to get evidence of the sincerity of a person's proposal
MONEY to throw good money after bad
   to waste further money in a vain attempt to recover money already lost
MONKEY *monkey business*
mischievous or underhand activity

MONKEY *to play monkey tricks on someone*
to engage in discreditable behavior affecting a person

MONSTER *a hydra-headed monster*
an evil which is not readily destroyable

MONSTER *to create a Frankenstein*
to create something wicked and out of control (a reference to the fictional creator of a monster, in mistake for a reference to the monster itself)

MONTH *to be the flavor of the month*
to be a commodity temporarily popular without a logical reason

MOON *once in a blue moon*
very rarely (refers to the volcanic eruption at Krakatoa in 1883 when volcanic dust caused the moon to appear blue)

MOON *to be over the moon*
to be very excited

MOONLIGHT *a moonlight flit*
an escape from creditors

MOONSHINE *moonshine*
unrealistic ideas

MORTEM *to conduct a postmortem on something*
to review past actions with a view to learning lessons for the future (Latin, “after the death”)

MORTGAGE *to have a mortgage on something*
to have a moral claim in regard to a matter

MORTGAGE *to mortgage the future*
to get benefits now but at a cost in due course

MOSAIC *a mosaic*
something with a large number of different aspects to it

MOTE *a mote in someone’s eye*
a fault in another person which is trifling in comparison to an unrecognized major fault in oneself (Matthew 7:3)

MOTH *moth-eaten*
(of ideas, etc.) antiquated

MOTHBALL *to mothball equipment*
to put equipment on a “care and maintenance” basis

MOTHER *a mother hen*
an overly protective person

MOTHERHOOD *a motherhood statement*
a statement so obvious and uncontroversial as not to be worth making (such as “motherhood is a good thing”)

MOTION *to set the wheels in motion*
to institute appropriate action

MOUNTAIN *if the mountain will not come to Mahomet then Mahomet will go to the mountain*
on recognizing that one has insufficient power to effect one’s most desired solution one decides to make do with the next best alternative

MOUNTAIN *to make mountains out of molehills*
to treat a minor problem as though it were a major disaster

MOUSE *a game of cat and mouse*
negotiations between two parties of unequal bargaining power during which the stronger makes some temporary concessions to the weaker without, however, affecting the latter’s eventual total default

MOUSE *mice have been here*
intruders have entered this place

MOUSE *to labor mightily and bring forth a mouse*
to be quite ineffective
MOUSE when the cat is away the mice will play
in the absence of supervision discipline will be lax

MOUTH hard-mouthed
uncontrollable

MOUTH mealy-mouthed
not at all forceful in debate

MOUTH out of the mouths of babes
(as indiscreetly revealed) the truth

MOUTH someone looks as if butter would not melt in his mouth
a person looks sweet and innocent

MOUTH to be a big mouth
to lack discretion in one's conversation

MOUTH to be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth
to be brought up by wealthy parents

MOUTH to be down in the mouth
to be depressed

MOUTH to be left with a nasty taste in one's mouth
to be appalled or very disappointed at another person's unethical behavior to one

MOUTH to foam at the mouth
to show anger

MOUTH to have one's heart in one's mouth
to be startled

MOUTH to keep one's mouth shut
not to discuss some matter

MOUTH to learn something from the horse's mouth
to get information from someone qualified to impart it

MOUTH to live from hand to mouth
being in poor financial circumstances to survive with little by way of safety margin

MOUTH to look a gift horse in the mouth
to be suspicious about a benefit which has been volunteered

MOUTH to make one's mouth water
to excite desire

MOUTH to put one's foot in one's mouth
to say something foolish

MOUTH to put one's head into the lion's mouth
to recklessly expose oneself to great danger

MOUTH to put one's money where one's mouth is
to back one's judgment by putting assets at risk

MOUTH to put words into someone's mouth
to attempt to get someone to say something in the particular terms drafted by another person

MOUTH to shoot one's mouth off
to speak without thinking

MOUTH to take food out of the mouths of children
cruelly to deprive the needy

MOUTH you took the words right out of my mouth
you have just said what I was about to say

MOVE a moving target
an objective subject to constant revision

MOVE move over and let the greyhound see the rabbit
move over

MOVE to move down a notch
to accept a lower position

MOVE to move heaven and earth
to do everything possible

MOVE your move!
the next step is up to you
**MOVER** prime mover
person initiating and promoting a cause

**MUCKRAKER** a muckraker
a person who sets out to publicize misconduct of prominent persons or institutions

**MUD** a stick-in-the-mud
an unenterprising person

**MUD** his name is mud
he completely lacks credibility (a play on the name of one Dr. Samuel Mudd)

**MUD** some mud will stick
reputations will be hurt even after accusations are proved false

**MUD** to muddy the waters
to deliberately confuse an issue by creating a diversion

**MUD** to sink deeper into the mud
to get into even greater difficulty

**MUD** to make unfair imputations

**MUDRAKER** a mudraker
a person who sets out to publicize features harming another person's reputation

**MUG** a mug's game
activity which wise persons would eschew

**MUMBO** mumbo jumbo
blatant nonsense (refers to a deity worshipped by primitive tribes)

**MURDER** to be sheer murder
to be extremely unpleasant or difficult; or to be an inglorious defeat

**MURDER** to get away with murder
to do something outrageous without penalty

**MURPHY** Murphy's law
the principle that everything which can go wrong will go wrong

**MUSCLE** to flex one's muscles
to exert one's personality or powers

**MUSEUM** a museum piece
an old article the use of which is no longer efficient

**MUSHROOM** to mushroom
to expand rapidly

**MUSIC** to be music to one's ears
to be comments which one is very pleased to hear

**MUSIC** to face the music
to accept responsibility when confronted by one's critics

**MUSIC** when the music stops
suddenly and soon (refers to an imminent crisis leading to some resolution of a matter as in a game of musical chairs)

**MUSICAL** to play musical chairs
to be a part of a general reshuffling of duties or functions which is not necessarily to everyone's liking

**MUTTON** to be mutton dressed up as lamb
to foolishly pretend to be younger

**MYOPIA** myopia
the inability to appreciate an argument (lit., short-sightedness)

**N**

**N** to the nth degree
with great precision

**NAIL** a thumbnail sketch
brief but pertinent details

**NAIL** on the nail
immediately

**NAIL** to be another nail in someone's coffin
to represent a further step toward someone's downfall

**NAIL** to bite one's fingernails
to anxiously await a decision

**NAIL** to fight tooth and nail
to strive very hard to win
NAIL  to hang on by one's fingernails
to have only a slender hold

NAIL  to hit the nail right on the head
to astutely come to the correct conclusion

NAIL  to nail a lie
to expose an untruth

NAIL  to nail one's colors to the mast
to publicly declare one's position and to maintain it in the face of criticism

NAIL  to nail someone
to put the blame on a person

NAIL  to nail someone to the wall
to outmaneuver another person

NAIL  to nail something down
to tie up the loose ends of an arrangement

NAME  a rose by any other name would smell as sweet
the form does not affect the substance
(from Shakespeare's ROMEO AND JULIET)

NAME  his name is mud
he completely lacks credibility (a play on the name of one Dr. Samuel Mudd)

NAME  no names—no packdrill
the identities of the parties will be kept confidential in order to protect them

NAME  so-and-so is the name of the game
so-and-so is the essential element of the exercise

NAME  to drop names
to slip names of celebrities allegedly known to the speaker into a conversation in an attempt to impress

NAME  to give a dog a bad name
to malign a person

NAME  to have a black mark against one's name
to have a tarnished reputation

NAME  to lend one's name to something
to endorse something

NAME  to make a name for oneself
to earn a good reputation by virtue of some skill

NARROW  to be on the straight and narrow
to be completely honest

NASTY  a nasty piece of work
an unpleasant person

NASTY  to be left with a nasty taste in one's mouth
to be appalled or very disappointed at another person's unethical behavior to one

NATURAL  to die a natural death
by virtue of changed circumstances or the effluxion of time to be no longer relevant

NATURE  the nature of the beast
the reality of the situation

NATURE  to be second nature to someone
to be something which a person does intuitively

NAVEL  to contemplate one's navel
to be introspective

NECK  a bottleneck
a factor obstructing an even flow

NECK  a millstone round someone's neck
a great burden

NECK  at a break-neck pace
very fast

NECK  it is neck or nothing
a desperate effort is called for

NECK  neck and neck
(of contestants) with little between them
NECK  neck of the woods
        localized area
NECK  to be a pain in the neck
        to be an unpleasant person or to be a
        nuisance
NECK  to be an albatross around
        someone's neck
        to be a great burden (popularized by
        Coleridge's ANCIENT MARINER)
NECK  to be up to one's neck in
        something
        to be very deeply involved in some-
        thing
NECK  to break one's neck to do
        something
        to be particularly keen
NECK  to breathe down someone's
        neck
        to cause annoyance to another person
        by remaining in his vicinity or by
        supervising him too closely; or to be
        narrowly behind another person in
        some competitive situation
NECK  to cop it in the neck
        to suffer a severe disaster
NECK  to save someone's neck
        to come to the rescue of a person
NECK  to send a chill down
        someone's neck
        to be worrying news
NECK  to stick one's neck out
        to have the courage of one's convic-
        tions or to take a calculated risk
NEED  to need something like a
        hole in the head
        to be landed with a completely un-
        desired problem
NEEDLE to be on pins and needles
        to be very agitated
NEEDLE to find a needle in a
        haystack
        to find something when the probabil-
        ity of finding it is very small
NEEDLE to look for a needle in a
        haystack
        to attempt something with a very
        small chance of success
NELLY  nervous Nellies
        persons unwilling to take any risks
NEMESIS  nemesis
        downfall serving as retribution (refers
        to a goddess in Greek mythology)
NERVE  the hip pocket nerve
        the assessment of issues by their fi-
        nancial effects on one
NERVE  to get on someone's nerves
        by one's behavior to cause annoyance
        to a person
NERVE  to have a nerve
        to be impudent
NERVE  to have nerves of steel
        not to be easily frightened
NERVE  to lose one's nerve
        to abandon, out of fear, a decision to
        do something
NERVE  to touch a nerve
        to mention something which another
        person would rather pretend did not
        exist
NERVOUS  nervous Nellies
        persons unwilling to take any risks
NEST  a mare's nest
        a discovery with illusory benefits
NEST  a nest egg
        life savings
NEST  to be a cuckoo in the nest
        to purport to be a member of a group
        of people although having no such
        right
NEST  to feather one's own nest
        to improperly arrange a transaction
        on behalf of others to one's own
        financial advantage
NEST  to foul one's own nest
        to disparage one's home or work-
        place
NEST to stir up a hornet’s nest
to take action which results in unpleasant side-effects

NET a safety net scheme
a scheme for dealing with the exceptional cases not covered by normal arrangements

NET to catch someone in the net
to unexpectedly involve a particular person in the course of activity designed to involve many others

NET to draw the nets closer
to intensify one’s efforts

NET to miss the sharks while netting the minnows
to succeed in minor aspects but fail in the ones that really matter

NET to slip through the net
to happen as an isolated case despite steps taken to prevent such events

NET to spread the net more widely
to become more comprehensive

NETTLE to grasp the nettle
to deal with a neglected difficulty

NEW a new broom
a changed regime which is likely to alter the status quo

NEW a new lease on life
the prospect of a worry-free existence from now on

NEW new guard
changed regime

NEW one cannot teach an old dog new tricks
people get irreversibly set in their ways

NEW to be a new ball game
to be subject to completely revised rules or very different conditions

NEW to be the dawn of a new day
to be the start of a different regime

NEW to break new ground
to do something for which there is no precedent

NEW to introduce new blood
to recruit new members to some organization

NEW to plow new ground
to laboriously engage in an untried activity

NEW to put a new face on something
to alter the way something should be regarded

NEW to turn over a new leaf
to reform

NEWCASTLE to carry coals to Newcastle
to do something ridiculously unnecessary

NICHE to carve out a niche for oneself
to deliberately create an opportunity to use one’s talents effectively

NICHE to find one’s niche
to find the opportunity to use one’s talents

NIGER the nigger in the woodpile
the factor spoiling an otherwise satisfactory arrangement

NIGHT a fly-by-night operator
a confidence trickster

NIGHT ships that pass in the night
persons who fail to meet up

NIGHT the night is young
the project is only at a very early stage

NIGHT to be a night owl
to habitually go to bed late

NIGHT to spend a sleepless night
to worry about something

NIGHTMARE a nightmare
an unpleasant experience

NIMBLE nimble-footed
quick to change the direction of one’s activities when circumstances warrant
**NINE** a nine-day wonder
an exciting event, but one which will cease to arouse interest when the novelty has worn off

**NINE** a stitch in time saves nine
preventive maintenance saves money in the long run

**NINE** to be dressed up to the nines
to be attired in excessively elaborate garments

**NINE** to be on cloud nine
to be very happy

**NINETEEN** to talk nineteen to the dozen
to engage in much idle chatter

**NIP** to nip something in the bud
to stop some activity in its early stages when stopping it is still relatively easy

**NIT** to nitpick
to criticize a person in respect to very minor matters

**NOBODY** to be a nobody
to be unimportant

**NOD** a nod and a wink
a sign that understanding has been reached in a matter which in the interests of discretion has not been discussed aloud

**NOD** a nod is the same as a wink to a blind horse
fine distinctions are not appropriate here

**NOD** to get the nod
to receive approval

**NOIRE** to be someone's bete noire
to be a person whose ideas and actions cause upset and loathing in another person (French, "black beast")

**NOISE** to make a noise about something
to complain or express dissatisfaction about something

**NOOK** in every nook and cranny everywhere

**NOOSE** to put one's head in the noose
to recklessly and unnecessarily expose oneself to great danger

**NOOSE** to tighten the noose
to get closer to inflicting defeat

**NOSE** hard-nosed
tough in negotiations

**NOSE** to be no skin off someone's nose
not to matter to a person

**NOSE** to be on the nose
to be accurate (of a proposal or scheme)

**NOSE** to bite someone's nose off
to speak to a person aggressively

**NOSE** to cut one's nose off to spite one's face
to act in pique in a way which harms only oneself

**NOSE** to escape by the skin of one's nose
to only just avoid some disaster

**NOSE** to follow one's nose
to act intuitively

**NOSE** to get a bloody nose
to suffer an undignified rebuff

**NOSE** to get up someone's nose
to irritate a person

**NOSE** to have a good nose for business
to be able to identify profitable business situations

**NOSE** to keep one's nose clean
to act with circumspection and honesty despite temptation to do otherwise

**NOSE** to keep one's nose out of something
not to meddle in something

**NOSE** to keep one's nose to the grindstone
to work with particular diligence
NOSE to lead someone by the nose
to induce another person to comply
with one’s wishes

NOSE to look down the nose at
something
to treat a matter with obvious contempt

NOSE to pay through the nose
to pay an excessive price

NOSE to poke one’s nose into
something
to interfere

NOSE to poke one’s nose outside
to venture outside

NOSE to put someone’s nose out of
joint
to upset another person

NOSE to rub someone’s nose in it
to humiliate a person by highlighting
something embarrassing to him

NOSE to take a nosedive
to suddenly and unexpectedly fall
steeply

NOSE to take something on the
nose
to meekly accept a rebuff

NOSE to thumb one’s nose at
someone
to show one’s contempt for someone
in authority and to ostentatiously dis-
regard his orders

NOSE to turn up one’s nose at
something
to express one’s disdain

NOSE under someone’s nose
in a person’s immediate area of re-
sponsibility or in circumstances where
he should have known something

NOTCH to move down a notch
to accept a lower position

NOTE to compare notes
to exchange information about some
subject of mutual interest

NOTE to hit a sour note
to discover an unexpected flaw in an
otherwise satisfactory piece of work

NOTE to strike the right note
to make a good impression

NUDGE to give something a nudge
forward
to give modest encouragement to
something

NUMBER one’s days are numbered
one is about to be abolished

NUMBER one’s opposite number
a person with similar responsibilities
in another organization

NUMBER someone’s number is up
a person’s period of activity or influ-
ence is about to expire

NUMBER to look after number one
to act selfishly

NURSE to nurse one’s bruises
to face up to the consequences of defeat

NUT nuts and bolts
basic ingredients

NUT someone is a hard nut to crack
it is very difficult to persuade a per-
son to do something

NUT to be nuts
to be crazy

NUT to be nuts about someone
to be infatuated with a person

NUT to use a sledgehammer to
crack a nut
to devote vastly more resources to a
project than is warranted by all the
circumstances

NUTSHELL in a nutshell
by way of summary

O

OAK tall oaks from little acorns
grow

even major enterprises have to have
small beginnings (from “Lines writ-
ten for a School Declamation” by
David Everett)
OAK to have a heart of oak
to be brave

OAK to lock something up in the old oak chest
to put in a safe place and out of mind

OAR to stick one's oar in
to intervene without invitation in a dispute to which one is not a party

OATS to feel one's oats
to display self-importance

OATS to sow wild oats
to indulge in foolish behavior while a young adult

OCEAN an ocean full of fish
plenty of opportunity

OCEAN to be only a drop in the ocean
to be quite insignificant in the total scene

ODDS that is over the odds
that is unacceptable

ODDS to be at odds with someone
to disagree with a person

ODDS to beat the odds
to do better than could reasonably have been expected

ODDS to have the odds stacked against one
to be faced with many difficulties frustrating a project

ODDS to pay over the odds
to pay too much

OIL not to be an oil painting
to be ugly

OIL to be a well-oiled piece of machinery
to be functioning very satisfactorily

OIL to burn the midnight oil
to work late into the night

OIL to get the good oil
to receive useful, reliable and timely information

OIL to oil the wheels
to make things go smoothly

OIL to pour oil on troubled waters
to calm down a situation

OIL to run something on the smell of an oil rag
to run something very economically and efficiently

OINTMENT a fly in the ointment
a flaw (refers to dead flies turning perfumes rancid) (Ecclesiastes 10:1)

OLD an old flame
a former lover

OLD an old head on young shoulders
experience, knowledge and maturity in a young person

OLD it is on for young and old
the excitement has started

OLD one cannot teach an old dog new tricks
people get irreversibly set in their ways

OLD to be old hat
to be a very widely known fact

OLD to lock something up in the old oak chest
to put in a safe place and out of mind

OLD to rekindle an old flame
to inspire the reinstatement of a former loving relationship

OLIVE to hold out an olive branch
to make peace overtures (Genesis 8:11)

OMEGA from alpha to omega
from start to finish (refers to the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet)

OMELETTET one cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs
the desired end dictates the means even if they cause harm to others

OMELETTET to unscramble the omelette
to undo something which cannot be undone
ONE a one-way street
a flow of activity in only one direction

ONE a one-man band
a person performing many different roles single-handedly

ONE on the one hand
putting one side of the proposition

ONE one for the road
a final drink before leaving

ONE one-eyed
biased

ONE to be one in the eye for someone
to represent an unexpected and unwelcome defeat

ONE to be one out of the box
to be unexpectedly superb

ONE to be only round one
to be only the first of many stages

ONE to go back to square one
to start all over again

ONE to have a one-track mind
to keep coming back to one narrow topic of conversation

ONE to look after number one
to act selfishly

ONION to know one's onions
to be well informed in some area (refers to Dr. C. T. Onions, editor of the SHORTER OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY)

OPEN an open sesame
access to something normally inaccessible

OPEN one's door is always open
people can take their problems to one at any time

OPEN open slather
freedom for people to do what they want

OPEN open-hearted
cordial

OPEN to be an eye opener
to be a surprise

OPEN to be an open and shut case
to be an unarguable proposition (a phrase popular in detective novels and probably a play on the two meanings of the word "case")

OPEN to be out in the open
(of information) to be publicly available

OPEN to come out into the open
to start being frank

OPEN to have an open mind
to be willing to assess evidence on its merits and without prejudging it

OPEN to keep one's ears open
to be on the lookout for useful information

OPEN to keep one's eyes open
to be on the lookout for useful information

OPEN to keep one's eyes open for something
to be on the lookout for an opportunity to do something

OPEN to leave oneself wide open
to act in such a way that one's opponents will find much which can be easily criticized

OPEN to leave the door open
to issue a standing invitation for the resumption of some negotiations

OPEN to open someone's eyes to something
to alert another person to the truth of something

OPEN to open the batting
to be the first in a series of persons speaking or doing something

OPEN to open up a Pandora's box
to do something which produces all sorts of undesired and unexpected side-effects (refers to the woman in Greek mythology who brought misery to mankind; the box contained human ills)
OPEN to open up an old wound
to take action which revives a long-standing grievance

OPEN to open up doors
to create opportunities

OPEN to open up the floodgates
to take action which will have massive consequences

OPEN with an open hand
generously

OPEN with one's eyes wide open
fully conscious of the ramifications

OPEN with open arms
enthusiastically

OPENING an opening wide enough
to drive a coach and four through an excellent opportunity

OPENING opening gambit
the first in a series of strategic moves (a tautological expression which also involves a misunderstanding of a technical chess term)

OPENING opening shot
first step in an activity expected to last a long time

OPERA a soap opera
a radio or television serial, often based on exaggerated domestic situations of no great importance (refers to sponsorship by soap manufacturers)

OPPOSITE one's opposite number
a person with similar responsibilities in another organization

ORANGE to add apples to oranges
to quite illogically lump unconnected things together

ORCHESTRATE to orchestrate something
to arrange for something to happen

ORDER in apple pie order
in perfect order and condition

ORDER just what the doctor ordered
exactly right

ORDER the order of the day
the customary behavior

ORDER to be a tall order
to be an unreasonable expectation

ORDER to get one's marching orders
to be told to leave

ORDER to put one's house in order
to fix up the deficiencies in one's affairs

OSTRICH to be an ostrich
to refuse to face up to an unpleasant truth (refers to the reputed habit of ostriches in danger)

OTHER to be on the other side of the fence
to have an opposing point of view or position

OUNCE not to have an ounce of sense
to be stupid

OUNCE to drain every ounce out of something
to get the maximum use or pleasure out of something

OUTGUN to outgun someone
to outmaneuver a person

OVER to be all over bar the shouting
to be virtually finished

OVERBOARD to go overboard
to act foolishly and in an excessive way

OVERKILL overkill
more action than really required for the purpose

OVERSHADOW to overshadow someone

to reduce the influence of a person by outshining him
OVERSTEP to overstep the mark
to fail to observe the proprieties

OVERTIME to work overtime at
something
to spend a lot of time and effort at doing something

OVERTONE overtones
implied threats

OVERTURE to make overtures to
someone
to make suggestions to a person, inviting further negotiations

OWL to be a night owl
to habitually go to bed late

OYSTER the world is one’s oyster
one has enormous scope for activity

P

P to watch one’s p’s and q’s
to be very careful (may refer to pints and quarts of beer on a hotel slate or to easily-confused printer’s type)

PACE to put someone through his paces
to test a person

PACE to set the pace
to give a lead in regard to a rate of progression

PACK to be at the head of the pack
to be the best of many or the de facto leader

PACK to bring someone back to the pack
to make a person conform

PACK to pack one’s bags
to signal one’s intention to depart

PACK to play every card in the pack
to try very hard and use every conceivable argument

PACK to play the last card in the pack
to lower one’s standards in a final desperate effort

PACK to send someone packing
to dismiss a person ignominiously

PACKDRILL no names—no packdrill
the identities of the parties will be kept confidential in order to protect them

PAD to keep off someone’s pad
not to interfere with or compete against another person in his customary area of activity

PADDLE to paddle one’s canoe
to do something unaided and in one’s own way

PADDock to have a spell in the paddock
to have leave of absence

PAIN growing pains
problems encountered by virtue of expansion

PAIN to be a pain in the neck
to be an unpleasant person or to be a nuisance

PAINT to paint a black picture
to state a set of unfavorable factors

PAINT to paint oneself into a corner
to foolishly put oneself into a position from which escape is impossible

PAINT to paint someone black
to ruin a person’s reputation

PAINT to paint the town red
to go on an exciting social outing

PAINTER to cut the painter
to become separated

PAINTING not to be an oil painting
to be ugly

PAIR a pigeon pair
one son and one daughter as the sole offspring

PAJAMAS to be the cat’s pajamas
to have an exaggerated idea of one’s importance
PALACE *a palace revolt*
the overthrow of those in authority by
their subordinates

PALE *to be beyond the pale*
to be socially unacceptable, espe-
cially for unacceptable standards or
behavior

PALE *to be only a pale shadow of
something*
to be a weak imitation

PALM *to grease someone's palms*
to bribe a person

PALPABLE *palpable*
readily understandable

PAN *a flash in the pan*
something which begins promisingly
but does not last (refers to the prim-
ing of old guns)

PAN *out of the frying pan into the
fire*
from one bad situation to an even
worse one

PAN *to pan out*
to succeed

PANCAKE *every Pancake Tuesday*
only on rare occasions (refers to
Shrove Tuesday, when pancakes are
traditionally eaten)

PANDORA *to open up a Pandora's
box*
to do something which produces all
sorts of undesired and unexpected
side-effects (refers to the woman in
Greek mythology who brought mis-
ery to mankind; the box contained
human ills)

PANIC *to hit the panic button*
to act hastily and irrationally

PANTS *a kick in the pants*
an admonition

PANTS *to bore the pants off
someone*
to weary a person by dull and un-
interesting conversation

PANTS *to catch someone with his
pants down*
to act when another person least ex-
pects it

PANTS *to charm the pants off
someone*
to delight a person

PANTS *to fly by the seat of one's pants*
to act unprofessionally

PANTS *to scare the pants off
someone*
to greatly frighten a person

PANTS *to wear the trousers*
to be the dominant party

PAPER *only a cigarette paper
between them*
virtually equal or close together

PAPER *a paper tiger*
an empty threat

PAPER *paper warfare*
an excessive amount of correspond-
ence or red tape

PAPER *to have shares in a paper
company*
to institute unnecessary clerical pro-
cedures

PAPER *to paper over the cracks*
to institute extremely superficial and
basically ineffective remedies

PAPER *to start with a blank sheet
of paper*
to commence an exercise without
being bound by any established prac-
tices

PAR *to be below par*
to be less than the desired standard

PAR *to be par for the course*
to be normal

PARACHUTE *golden parachute*
generous provisions in a remunera-
tion package which come into play in
certain circumstances

PARADISE *to live in a fool's
paradise*
to delude oneself
PARALLEL parallel
similar or corresponding

PARALYZE to paralyze something
to bring something to a standstill

PARCEL to be part and parcel
to be the essential ingredients

PARE cheese paring
stingy

PARIAH pariah
social outcast (refers to members of a
low caste in India)

PARISH parish pump issues
issues of trivial importance

PARK to be in the right ballpark
to be approximately correct

PARKINSON Parkinson’s law
the principle that work expands to
match the work capacity available (ti-
tle of a book by Prof. C. Northcote Parkinson)

PAROCHIAL parochial
narrow minded

PARRY to parry some argument
to deflect some argument (refers to
fencing)

PART to be part and parcel
to be the essential ingredients

PART to be part of the furniture
to be so familiar that one’s presence
goes completely unnoticed

PART to be part of the landscape
to be present and fully accepted with-
out question

PART to fire a parting shot
to make a defiant gesture on leaving

PART to play one’s part
to cooperate or carry out one’s obli-
gations under some arrangement

PARTHIAN a Parthian shaft
a cutting remark made at the moment
of departure (refers to missiles shot
backward by flying Parthian horsemen)

PARTY the party is over
the previous pleasant arrangements
have been discontinued

PARTY to be the life and soul of
the party
to be the prime enthusiast for a cause

PARTY to come to the party
to agree to someone’s terms

PAS faux pas
something indiscreet or offending so-
cial conventions (French, ‘‘false step’’)

PASS ships that pass in the night
persons who fail to meet up

PASS to pass the buck
in an uncooperative spirit to decline
responsibility for a matter on the
grounds that someone else more prop-
erly has responsibility for it

PASS to pass with flying colors
to be very successful

PASSPORT to be a passport to
success
to be a means of achieving success

PASSWORD the password is
so-and-so
the main attraction is so-and-so

PAST a past master
an expert with long experience

PASTOR pastor
religious official in charge of a con-
gregation

PASTURE to move on to greener
pastures
to commence a new, better career

PAT to pat oneself on the back
immodestly to congratulate oneself

PAT to pat someone on the back
to congratulation a person or to reas-
sure a person

PATCH a sticky patch
a period fraught with difficulties
PATCH not to be a patch on someone
to not be comparable to a person
PATCH to be on someone’s cabbage patch
to engage in a competitive activity in a territory regarded by someone already there as rightfully belonging exclusively to him
PATCH to patch up some quarrel
to reconcile one’s differences
PATCHWORK a patchwork quilt
a result arising from many uncoordinated inputs
PATH path
means of achieving an objective
PATH slippery path
dangerous course of action
PATH to be on a path strewn with roses
to lead a very pleasant life
PATH to be on the warpath
to be on the lookout for faults which can be criticized
PATH to beat a path to someone’s door
to seek a person out in great numbers
PATH to block someone’s path
to interfere with a person’s opportunity to advance himself
PATH to cross someone’s path
to meet another person by chance
PATH to lead someone up the garden path
to mislead a person by deliberately fallacious arguments
PATH to smooth the path for someone
to use one’s influence to make arrangements so that a person’s task will be easier or more readily accomplished
PATH to tread a particular path
to take certain initiatives

PATIENCE something would try the patience of Job
something is very vexatious (James 5:11)
PATIENCE to have the patience of a saint
to endure annoyances with particular calm
PAUL to rob Peter in order to pay Paul
to fix up one grievance by causing another
PAVE to pave the way
to prepare for something
PAW to be a cat’s paw
to be a person who is being used as a tool by others
PAWN a pawn
a person of small importance who is manipulated by others
PAY he who pays the piper calls the tune
a person contributing money or resources to a project is entitled to a say in its control
PAY that has put paid to it
the project can no longer proceed
PAY to pay a king’s ransom
to pay a very large sum
PAY to pay lip service to some rules
to disregard some rules in practice while acknowledging them in words
PAY to pay off
to be successful
PAY to pay someone back in his own coin
to retaliate in kind
PAY to pay something back with interest
to return a small favor with a bigger favor or to extract retribution of greater value than the circumstances warrant

200
PAY to pay the price
- to suffer the adverse consequences of one’s acts or omissions

PAY to rob Peter in order to pay Paul
- to fix up one grievance by causing another

PAY to strike pay dirt
- to become successful

PEA a pea and thimble trick
- a clever fraud committed in the presence of its victim without this being obvious at the time

PEANUT to earn peanuts
- to get a reward which is far too small in relation to the value of the services rendered

PEARL a pearl
- a thing of great excellence

PEARL to cast pearls before swine
- to confer valuable benefits on someone who neither recognizes nor appreciates them

PEBBLE not to be the only pebble on the beach
- not to be the only available person

PEBBLE to throw a pebble against the window
- to gently draw attention to oneself

PECK hen-pecked
- subject to domination by one’s wife

PECK pecking order
- order of seniority

PECKER to keep one’s pecker up
- to stay cheerful

PEDAL to backpedal
- to reverse to some extent previously applied policies

PEDAL to softpedal
- to restrain oneself

PEDESTAL to put someone on a pedestal
- to admire a person and regard him as more marvelous than is warranted

PEDESTRIAN pedestrian
- uninspired

PEEL to keep one’s eyes peeled for something
- to be on the constant lookout for something

PEG a peg to hang a hat on
- something which provides a convenient or plausible excuse for some particular action

PEG a square peg in a round hole
- a person much more suitable for a position rather different from the one held

PEG off the peg
- (of clothes) ready-made

PEG to be level pegging
- (of contestants) to have little between them

PEG to peg out
- to die (refers to the final stroke in a game of croquet)

PEG to take someone down a peg or two
- to point out to a person that he is not as good as he thinks he is

PEN to put pen to paper
- to set out one’s ideas in written form

PEN with a stroke of the pen
- by edict

PENCIL to need to sharpen one’s pencil
- to be required to improve one’s performance

PENDULUM the swing of the pendulum
- the alternation of voter acceptance between opposing political parties

PENETRATE to penetrate someone’s thick skull
- to make a person understand something difficult or acknowledge something unwelcome

PENNY a twopenny halfpenny outfit
- a quite insignificant operation
PENNY in for a penny—in for a pound
once something is commenced it ought to be finished; or if one is willing to take a small risk then one might as well take a bigger one

PENNY penny-pinching
excessively frugal

PENNY the penny dropped
a person has just realized a fact which should have been obvious (refers to old-fashioned pay toilets)

PENNY to be only ten pence in the shilling
to be slightly stupid

PENNY to throw in one’s six pennies’ worth
to modestly supply one’s own facts or views

PENNY to turn an honest penny
to earn money out of odd jobs

PEOPLE people in glass houses should not throw stones
those who are less than perfect are foolish to criticize others

PEOPLE to be unable to keep people away with a big stick
to be faced with a large crowd or much demand

PERCH to knock someone off his perch
to displace a person from his leadership position in some competitive situation

PERSPECTIVE to put something into perspective
to explain the background of something so that its significance in relation to other things can be better appreciated

PETARD to be hoist with one’s own petard
to have one’s own case used against one (refers to being blown up by one’s own bomb)

PETER to rob Peter in order to pay Paul
to fix up one grievance by causing another

PETER to tickle the Peter
to rob one’s employer

PETREL to be a stormy petrel
a person who disturbs a pleasant state of affairs by agitating for change

PETRIFY to be petrified
to be badly scared

PETTICOAT petticoat government
rule by women

PHOENIX to rise from the ashes like a Phoenix
to be the replacement for something destroyed in some disaster (refers to a mythical bird which was supposed to rise from the ashes in its funeral pyre with renewed youth)

PHOTO a photo finish
a close result in a contest

PICK not to just pick something out of a hat
to choose carefully, after weighing all the considerations

PICK to handpick someone
to carefully choose a person for his individual attributes

PICK to have a bone to pick
to have a grievance which requires discussion

PICK to just pick the plums out of the jam
to take only the best items

PICK to keep one’s cotton-picking fingers off something
not to interfere in something

PICK to nitpick
to criticize a person in respect to very minor matters

PICK to pick someone’s brain
to get the benefit of another person’s knowledge and experience
PICK to pick up the pieces
to resume previous activities to the
maximum extent possible after some
setback

PICKLE to be in a pickle
to be in difficulties

PICNIC to be no picnic
to be unpleasant

PICTURE to balance the picture
to put the other side of the story or to
quote facts in contradiction

PICTURE to change the whole
picture
to alter the major assumptions on
which some assessment was based

PICTURE to conjure up a picture
to use words to convey a vivid
impression

PICTURE to have a clear picture of
something
to have a good understanding of
something

PICTURE to paint a black picture
to state a set of unfavorable factors

PICTURE to present a rosy
picture
to state a set of favorable factors

PICTURE to put someone in the
picture
to fill a person in with the back-
ground of a situation

PICTURE to see the big picture
to have the vision and imagination
enabling a project to be developed as
part of a bigger whole

PIE in apple pie order
in perfect order and condition

PIE, pie in the sky
a hoped for result unlikely to be
achieved

PIE to eat humble pie
to apologize

PIE to have a finger in the pie
to have an interest in a project

PIE to have one’s fingers in many
different pies
to be engaged in a variety of separate
activities

PIECE a museum piece
an old article the use of which is no
longer efficient

PIECE a nasty piece of work
an unpleasant person

PIECE early in the piece
at an early stage of some activity

PIECE to be a piece of cake
to be very easy or greatly to one’s
liking

PIECE to be a well-oiled piece of
machinery
to be functioning very satisfactorily

PIECE to be cut to pieces
to be very upset

PIECE to be shot to pieces
to have one’s case seriously damaged

PIECE to be thrilled to pieces
to be greatly thrilled

PIECE to fall to pieces
(of a plan) to collapse

PIECE to give someone a piece of
one’s mind
to abuse another person

PIECE to have a piece of someone
to vent one’s frustration on a person

PIECE to have a piece of the action
to be one of several parties to a
project

PIECE to pick up the pieces
to resume previous activities to the
maximum extent possible after some
setback

PIER take a long walk on a short
pier
go away, I want no dealings with you
PIG a guinea pig
a person on whom some new practice is tried out

PIG to buy a pig in a poke
to buy goods of unknown quality

PIGEON a pigeon pair
one son and one daughter as the sole offspring

PIGEON to be one's pigeon
to be one's area of responsibility

PIGEON to pigeon-hole
to put aside for further consideration in the distant future

PIGEON to throw a cat among the pigeons
to cause consternation by revealing an unpleasant and unexpected fact

PIGHEADED pigheaded
unduly obstinate

PILL to be a bitter pill to swallow
to be great humiliation and disappointment which have to be endured

PILL to sugar the pill
to cause something to be more acceptable

PILLAR a pillar of some organization
a significant supporter of some organization

PILLAR to drive someone from pillar to post
to send a person to a series of places in a vain attempt to achieve something

PILLORY to put someone in the pillory
to hold a person up to ridicule for his beliefs

PIN for two pins I would do so-and-so
my tolerance is almost exhausted and I am very tempted to do so-and-so

PIN not to care a pin for something
not to have the slightest interest in something

PIN pin money
an allowance to a wife for her personal use

PIN to be on pins and needles
to be very agitated

PIN to pin someone down
to find a person willing to accept blame or responsibility or to force a person to announce a decision or concede a point

PIN with one's ears pinned back
chastened

PINCH penny-pinching
excessively frugal

PINCH to feel the pinch
to be adversely affected by financial stringency

PINEAPPLE to have hold of the wrong end of the pineapple
to be utterly mistaken

PINK to be tickled pink
to be very pleased

PINK to look in the pink
to look well

PINPOINT to pinpoint
to identify very precisely

PINPRICK a pinprick
a trifling irritation

PINT one can't get a quart into a pint pot
one cannot do the impossible

PINTSIZE pintsize
small

PIP to pip someone at the post
to achieve something only just ahead of a rival

PIPE put that in your pipe and smoke it
contemplate that fact

PIPE to pipe someone on board
to welcome a person
PIPEDREAM a pipedream
a fanciful notion, wished for but unlikely

PIPELINE a pipeline to someone
an intermediary used as a means of communicating ideas to a person

PIPELINE to be in the pipeline
to be being dealt with

PIPER he who pays the piper calls
the tune
a person contributing money or resources to a project is entitled to a say in its control

PIRATE pirate
(of radio) unlicensed; (of recordings or computer software) published in breach of copyright law

PISTOL to hold a pistol at
someone’s head
to put pressure on a person to make a particular decision regardless of his desires in the matter

PIT a pit of disaster
great and unexpected misfortune

PITCH to be at fever pitch
to be in a state of excited activity

PITCH to be up to concert pitch
to be ready

PITCH to cruel someone’s pitch
to spoil a person’s chances

PITCH to queer the pitch for
someone
to spoil the opportunity a person has to do something

PITCHER little pitchers have long ears
children have a tendency to overhear things

PITFALL pitfall
unsuspected danger

PLACE a place in the sun
a favorable situation

PLACE to be between a rock and a hard place
to be faced with two equally difficult and uncomfortable choices

PLACE to have one’s heart in the right place
to have a well-developed social conscience

PLACE to put someone back in his place
to make it clear to a person that he should not continue to act as though he had greater seniority than he really has

PLAQUE a plague on both your houses!
I am disgusted with both of you (from Shakespeare’s ROMEO AND JULIET)

PLAGUE to be of plague proportions
to be great in number

PLAIN to be plain sailing
to be quite straightforward and very easy

PLANET to be off the planet
to be extremely naive or uninformed

PLANK to walk the plank
to face certain doom

PLATE to bring a plate
to take food to a party

PLATE to have too much on one’s plate
to be unable to cope with one’s workload

PLATE to serve something up to someone on a plate
to make something especially easy for a particular person

PLATTER to hand over something on a silver platter
to provide a valuable benefit for virtually nothing

PLAY a level playing field
competition on equal terms
**PLAY** don't play games with me!
do not insult my intelligence by that line of conduct

**PLAY** foul play
treachery or murder

**PLAY** horseplay
boisterous and undignified behavior

**PLAY** to be child's play
to be easy or to require only elementary skills and knowledge

**PLAY** to be in full play
to be fully operational

**PLAY** to find out the state of play
to ascertain the current position of some project

**PLAY** to play Judas
to betray a person (Matthew 26)

**PLAY** to play Russian roulette
to take stupid risks

**PLAY** to play a deep game
to show cunning

**PLAY** to play ball
to cooperate

**PLAY** to play by Marquis of Queensberry rules
to act ethically

**PLAY** to play by the book
to apply the rules strictly

**PLAY** to play down something
to seek to have less emphasis or attention given to something

**PLAY** to play ducks and drakes
not to treat the matter seriously

**PLAY** to play every card in the pack
to try very hard and use every conceivable argument

**PLAY** to play fast and loose
to disregard one's obligations

**PLAY** to play gooseberry
to act as an unwelcome chaperon

**PLAY** to play it by ear
to develop one's strategy to always fit in with circumstances as they change from time to time

**PLAY** to play it cool
to take a low-key and rational approach

**PLAY** to play it safe
to take no risks

**PLAY** to play monkey tricks on someone
to engage in discreditable behavior affecting a person

**PLAY** to play musical chairs
to be a part of a general reshuffling of duties or functions which is not necessarily to everyone's liking

**PLAY** to play one's cards right
to approach a matter sensibly

**PLAY** to play one's part
to cooperate or carry out one's obligations under some arrangement

**PLAY** to play possum
to pretend that one is not present

**PLAY** to play right into someone's hands
to act so as to give a person an unintended advantage

**PLAY** to play second fiddle
to fulfill a subordinate role

**PLAY** to play the cards as they fall
to deal with problems as they arise

**PLAY** to play the game
to observe the letter and the spirit of the rules or to act honorably

**PLAY** to play the giddy goat
to act the fool

**PLAY** to play the last card in the pack
to lower one's standards in a final desperate effort

**PLAY** to play the trump card
to make a final move, thereby defeating one's opponents
PLAY to play the gallery
to do something which appeals to the
general public rather than something
which is right

PLAY to play with dynamite
to invite trouble by virtue of one’s
risky conduct

PLAY to play with fire
to invite trouble through one’s foolish
conduct

PLAY to underplay some situation
to hold something in reserve

PLAY two can play at that game
it is possible to retaliate

PLAY when the cat is away the mice
will play
in the absence of supervision, discipline will be lax

PLAY without any cards to play
without the means to achieve something

PLAYERS a trap for young players
a good opportunity for the inexperienced or naive to make mistakes

PLEAD to plead the Fifth Amendment
to refuse to answer an unwelcome question (refers to the Fifth Amend-
ment of the United States Constitution, which provides protection against
self-incrimination)

PLIMSOLL the Plimsoll line
the standard

PLOT to plot a safe course through troubled waters
to make a plan which overcomes certain difficulties

PLOW speed the plow!
let us get on with this as fast as possible!

PLOW to plow new ground
to laboriously engage in an untried activity

PLOW to plow on
to methodically and painstakingly con-
tinue with an activity

PLOW to plow profits back
to retain profits in a business

PLOW to put one’s hand to the plow
voluntarily to undertake some task
(Luke 9:62)

PLUCK to pluck figures out of the air
to just make figures up arbitrarily

PLUG to have the plug pulled out from under one
to have a successful activity destroyed by the actions of someone else

PLUM the plum
the best item in a collection

PLUM to just pick the plums out of the jam
to take only the best items

PLUNGE to take the plunge
to expose oneself to certain risks

POACH to poach on someone’s preserves
to encroach uninvited on another per-
son’s territory

POCKET not to live in each other’s pockets
to each follow his own lifestyle

POCKET the hip pocket nerve
the assessment of issues by their fi-
nancial effects on one

POCKET to be in someone’s pocket
to be subject to undue influence by another person

POCKET to be out of pocket
to have been forced to spend money which cannot be recovered from others

POCKET to have deep pockets
to have large financial resources

POCKET to have money burning a hole in one’s pocket
to be impatient to spend or invest available funds

POCKET to line one’s pockets
to make, improperly and secretly, a profit out of some transaction
POCKET to put one's hands in one's pockets
to spend

POINT it is pointing in the right direction
success looks likely

POINT not to put too fine a point on it
speaking bluntly

POINT to get brownie points
to do a person a favor with the likely result that the recipient will do a favor in return in due course

POINT to pinpoint
to identify very precisely

POINT to point the bone at someone
to accuse a person (actually, an Australian Aboriginal method of applying a curse)

POINT to point the finger at someone
to accuse a person or allege some indiscretion on his part

POINT to reach boiling point
to reach a climax

POINT to refuse point blank
to refuse outright

POINT to score a point
to make a clever contribution in the course of debate

POINT to score points
to make a good impression

POINT to score top points
to outwit other persons

POINT to take the point
to understand the proposition being advanced without necessarily accepting it

POISON one man's meat is another man's poison
people's tastes differ

POKE to be better than one can poke a stick at
to be particularly welcome

POKE to be more than one can poke a stick at
to be more than can reasonably be handled

POKE to buy a pig in a poke
to buy goods of unknown quality

POKE to poke one's nose into something
to interfere

POKE to poke one's nose outside
to venture outside

POKER a game of poker
negotiations in which the parties try to bluff each other

POKER a poker face
a facial expression which does not reveal one's thoughts during negotiations

POLARIZE to polarize
to cause people to identify themselves as belonging to groups holding opposing views

POLE not to touch something with a ten-foot pole
to go out of one's way to avoid something

POLE to be at the bottom of the totem pole
to be in the most junior position in some hierarchy

POLE to be poles apart
to have ideas which are very different

POND to be a big fish in a little pond
to be a person holding an important office but in an unimportant organization

PONTIFICATE to pontificate
to speak as if with great authority and with an assumed air of infallibility

PONY a show pony
a pompous person

POOR a poor man's something
a second best version
POOR poor devil
person to be pitied

POP someone's eyes popped
a person expressed great surprise

POPPY a tall poppy
a person with great power or responsibility
and/or in receipt of high remuneration

POPPY to cut tall poppies down to size
to humiliate haughty persons

PORK to pork barrel
to spend taxpayers' money in one area
in order to attract political support

PORT any port in a storm
anything which helps to avoid difficulties is welcome

PORT port of call
one of a series of places being visited

POSUM to play possum
to pretend that one is not present

POSUM to stir the possum
to set out to raise controversial issues

POST a listening post
a place where information of strategic value can be collected

POST a staging post
a place where action is initiated

POST to conduct a postmortem on something
to review past actions with a view to learning lessons for the future (Latin, "after the death")

POST to drive someone from pillar to post
to send a person to a series of places in a vain attempt to achieve something

POST to go post haste
to go very fast

POST to keep someone posted
to keep a person informed

POST to pip someone at the post
to achieve something only just ahead of a rival

POST to signpost something
to give an indication of the alternatives available

POSTAGE only a postage stamp between them
virtually equal or close together

POT a melting pot
a country where people with different ethnic backgrounds over time merge into one nation

POT a pot of gold
wealth

POT fleshpots
sumptuous living (Exodus 16:3)

POT one can't get a quart into a pint pot
one cannot do the impossible

POT the pot calling the kettle black
a person criticizing another person without realizing his own even greater shortcomings

POT to go back into the melting pot
to be up for reconsideration ab initio

POT to keep the pot boiling
to ensure that an issue stays current

POT to seek the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow
to have naive expectations

POT to stir the pot
to set out to raise controversial issues

POT to sweeten the pot
to provide a few additional inducements

POT to take pot luck
to take whatever happens by chance to be available

POTATO a hot potato
an embarrassing issue

POTATO to be small potatoes
to be quite unimportant

POTSHOT to take a potshot at someone
to make disparaging remarks about a person
POTTAGE to sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)

POUND in for a penny—in for a pound once something is commenced it ought to be finished; or if one is willing to take a small risk then one might as well take a bigger one

POUND one's pound of flesh that which is due to one (from Shakespeare's MERCHANT OF VENICE)

POUR it never rains but it pours crises often occur together

POUR to pour cold water on some idea to be unenthusiastic about some proposal or scornful of its apparent weaknesses

POUR to pour oil on troubled waters to calm down a situation

POUR to pour one's heart out to someone to inflict one's woes on another person

POUR to pour gasoline on the flames to make a bad situation worse

POUR to pour vitriol on something to sharply criticize something

POWDER to keep one's powder dry to retain key arguments or resources in reserve for use later

POWER more power to your elbow may your praiseworthy efforts lead to success

POWER the power behind the throne a person exercising the real authority but without having the official right to do so (the antonym of "titular head")

POWER under one's own power without external help

PRAYER on a wing and a prayer without proper resources

PRAYER the answer to a maiden's prayer an unexpected but very welcome happening

PRE-EMPT to pre-empt some issue to deliberately do something which has the effect of limiting the range of alternative approaches to a matter

PREACH to preach to the converted to say something to those who already believe in it

PREPARE to prepare one's ground to get ready for a confrontation

PRESENT to present a rosy picture to state a set of favorable factors

PRESERVES to poach on someone's preserves to encroach uninvited on another person's territory

PRESS to be hot off the press to be the latest news

PRESS to press a button to make something happen

PRESSURE to apply pressure on someone to induce a person to do something which he would otherwise not do by implying adverse consequences if he does not cooperate

PRETTY to sit pretty to be comfortably off

PREY to prey on one's mind (of a problem) to keep worrying one

PRICE that has nothing to do with the price of fish that is quite irrelevant

PRICE to pay the price to suffer the adverse consequences of one's acts or omissions

PRICK a pinprick a trifling irritation
PRICK to prick up one's ears
  to suddenly start paying attention to a
  conversation in progress as a result of
  a half-heard phrase

PRIEST the high priest of something
  the leading advocate of something

PRIMA a prima donna
  a person with an exaggerated opinion
  of his own importance which makes
  relations with others needlessly diffi-
  cult (Italian, "first lady")

PRIME prime mover
  person initiating and promoting a cause

PRIME to engage in pump priming
  to spend public money with the aim
  of attracting parochial electoral support

PRINT a license to print money
  a lucrative government-conferred mo-
  nopoly or privilege

PRINT to fill in the fine print
  to provide the precise details in re-
  spect of something presently existing
  in broad outline only

PRIZE not to be here to win prizes
  to be altruistic

PRIZE to win the booby prize
  to do worse than all others

PRIZE to win the prize in a canter
  to win very easily

PROBLEM a problem child
  a source of unnecessary difficulty

PRODUCE to produce something
  out of thin air
  to get hold of something in circum-
  stances where this seemed impossible

PROFILE profile
  description

PROMISE to promise the earth
  to give extravagant assurances

PROOF the proof of the pudding is
  in the eating
  the success of a venture will be mea-
  sured by its results

PROPORTION to be of plague
  proportions
  to be great in number

PRUNE to prune
  to remove the superfluous

PSYCHOLOGY at the
  psychological moment
  at the most appropriate instant of time
  (a phrase which actually confuses the
  German word for "motive" with the
  term for an instant of time)

PUBLIC to wash one's dirty linen in
  public
  to expose one's domestic differences
  to the world at large

PUDDING the proof of the pudding
  is in the eating
  the success of a venture will be mea-
  sured by its results

PULL not to pull any punches
  to be brutally frank

PULL pull your head in!
  do not interfere in this!

PULL to have pull
  to have influence

PULL to have the plug pulled out
  from under one
  to have a successful activity destroyed
  by the actions of someone else

PULL to pull a fast one
  to engage in a dirty trick

PULL to pull a rabbit out of the hat
  to produce an unexpected and seem-
  ingly miraculous but highly desirable
  solution

PULL to pull at one's heart strings
  to affect one emotionally

PULL to pull one's fingers out
  to get on with a job with alacrity

PULL to pull one's head in
  to retreat from a previously held stance

PULL to pull one's horns in
  to retreat from previously stated views
PULL to pull one's socks up
to set out to improve or correct one's inadequate behavior or performance

PULL to pull one's weight
to do one's proper share of the work requiring to be done

PULL to pull oneself together
to cease acting without purpose or enthusiasm

PULL to pull oneself up by one's bootstraps
to make a praiseworthy effort to better oneself unaided

PULL to pull oneself up by one's own shoelaces
to make a superhuman effort

PULL to pull out all stops
to make maximum effort

PULL to pull someone's chestnuts out of the fire
to retrieve a situation

PULL to pull someone's leg
to tell a false but plausible story as an act of humor

PULL to pull something off
to achieve success in some enterprise

PULL to pull something out of the fire
to salvage something in a seemingly hopeless situation

PULL to pull strings
to use one's special influence with those in a position to make favorable decisions which might otherwise not be forthcoming

PULL to pull the rug out from under someone
to unexpectedly withdraw support and in the process cause embarrassment

PULL to pull the wool over someone's eyes
to deceive or deliberately mislead another person

PULL to pull together
to work in harmony

PULL to pull up the drawbridge
to refuse to cooperate

PULSE to have one's fingers on the pulse
to know what is going on

PUMP all hands to the pumps
everybody is requested to help out

PUMP parish pump issues
issues of trivial importance

PUMP to engage in pump priming
to spend public money with the aim of attracting parochial electoral support

PUNCH not to pull any punches
to be brutally frank

PUNCH to be punch drunk
to be stupefied by some news

PUNCH to beat someone to the punch
to get to some objective ahead of some keen rival

PUNCH to telegraph one's punches
by one's actions to give advance warning of one's future plans

PUNCTUATE to punctuate something
to interrupt something

PUNISHMENT to be a glutton for punishment
to act irresponsibly in the face of inevitable retribution

PUNT to take a punt
to take a calculated risk

PUP to sell someone a pup
to cheat a person in a transaction, especially by misrepresentation as to the true value of something

PURPLE to be purple with rage
to be very angry

PURPOSE the devil can cite scripture for his purpose
a person can quote a respectable or hostile authority while advocating a disreputable cause of his own (from Shakespeare's MERCHANT OF VENICE)
PURR to positively purr
(of a person) to be very pleased; (of an engine) to run very smoothly

PURSE one can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear
it is impossible to manufacture something of a high standard without appropriate raw materials

PURSE to button up one’s purse
to refuse to spend money

PURSE to hold the purse strings
to have control of expenditure

PURSE to tighten the purse strings
to reduce outlays

PUSH to be pushing uphill
to face difficulties

PUSH to push a barrow
to promote a particular cause

PUSH to push one’s luck
having already done well in something, to then take risks which can prejudice everything

PUSH to push someone around
to exercise, in an obnoxious manner, one’s superiority over another person

PUSH to push someone over the brink
by a small action to cause the absolute ruin (financially or emotionally) of someone already in peril

PUSH to push water uphill
to foolishly attempt the impossible

PUSSY to pussyfoot around
to take ineffectual steps

PUTTY to be putty in someone’s hands
to be far too easily influenced by another person

PUZZLE a Chinese puzzle
a perplexing enigma

PYRRHIC a Pyrrhic victory
a win which costs more than if there had been a loss (refers to the battle at which King Pyrrhus of Epirus defeated the Romans at Asculum)

Q

Q to watch one’s p’s and q’s
to be very careful (may refer to pints and quarts of beer on a hotel slate or to easily-confused printer’s type)

QUAGMIRE to be in a quagmire
to be in great difficulty

QUAKE to quake in one’s boots
to be afraid

QUANTUM a quantum leap
a gigantic step forward

QUART one can’t get a quart into a pint pot
one cannot do the impossible

QUEENSBERRY to play by Marquis of Queensberry rules
to act ethically

QUEER a queer fish
an unusual type of person

QUEER to be in Queer Street
to be in debt

QUEER to queer the pitch for someone
to spoil the opportunity a person has to do something

QUESTION a leading question
a very pertinent question (the misuse of a legal term, which actually means a question so framed as to suggest the answer)

QUESTION burning question
a much-discussed question

QUESTION there is a big question mark hanging over someone’s head
there are considerable doubts about a person’s competence, integrity or suitability
QUICK to be quick on one's feet
to cleverly take advantage of a situation

QUICK to be quick on the draw
to act precipitately

QUIET on the quiet
surreptitiously

QUIET to shed a quiet tear for something
to lament the passing of something

QUIETLY to quietly fold up one's tent
to surreptitiously abandon a previously-cherished stance

QUILT a patchwork quilt
a result arising from many uncoordinated inputs

QUIT to quit the scene
to depart

QUIVER another arrow in one's quiver
an additional reason

QUOTE to quote chapter and verse
to authenticate the information

R

RABBIT move over and let the greyhound see the rabbit
move over

RABBIT to pull a rabbit out of the hat
to produce an unexpected and seemingly miraculous but highly desirable solution

RACE a two-horse race
a contest between only two serious contestants

RACE not to be in the race
to lack the required standard

RACE rat race
pressures of modern living

RACE your race is run
you have had your opportunity

RACK to go to rack and ruin
to face downfall or destruction

RAFT life raft
financial assistance sufficient to avert insolvency

RAG rags to riches
the transition from poverty to wealth

RAG to be a red rag to a bull
to be something which makes a person very angry and very excited (refers to the erroneous belief that the color red, rather than the motion of waving, excites a bull)

RAG to run something on the smell of an oil rag
to run something very economically and efficiently

RAGE to be purple with rage
to be very angry

RAIL to run off the rails
to significantly depart from the intended course of action

RAILROAD to railroad something through
to rush people into accepting a proposal

RAILWAY what a way to run a railway!
the way things are done is disgraceful (refers to a cartoon)

RAIN it never rains but it pours
crises often occur together

RAIN to rain cats and dogs
to rain heavily

RAINBOW to chase rainbows
to be quite unrealistic

RAINBOW to seek the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow
to have naive expectations

RAINY to keep something for a rainy day
to keep something in reserve

RAISE curtain raiser
introduction
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RAISE</strong></th>
<th>hair-raising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAISE</strong></td>
<td>to raise Cain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to create a disturbance (Genesis 4:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAISE</strong></td>
<td>to raise merry hell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to prominently involve others in a matter in the expectation of significant results from this action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAISE</strong></td>
<td>to raise one’s eyebrows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to express one’s utter astonishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAISE</strong></td>
<td>to raise one’s voice for some cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to publicly advocate some cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAISE</strong></td>
<td>to raise someone’s hackles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to make a person angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAISE</strong></td>
<td>to raise something to a fine art form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to become very clever at doing something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAISE</strong></td>
<td>to raise the stake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to increase the amount of potential gain or loss in a project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAKE</strong></td>
<td>a muckraker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a person who sets out to publicize misconduct of prominent persons or institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAKE</strong></td>
<td>a mudraker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a person who sets out to publicize features harming another person’s reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RALLY</strong></td>
<td>to rally to the flag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to show support for a cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAM</strong></td>
<td>to ram something down someone’s throat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to pressure another person into accepting an idea with which he does not agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RANK</strong></td>
<td>to be the first cab off the rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to start ahead of all others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RANK</strong></td>
<td>to break ranks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to identify oneself as having separate interests or views from the rest of a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RANK</strong></td>
<td>to close ranks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to sink minor differences in order to present a unified front to a common enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RANSOM</strong></td>
<td>to pay a king’s ransom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to pay a very large sum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAP</strong></td>
<td>to rap someone over the knuckles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to admonish a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RARE</strong></td>
<td>to be a rare bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be an unusual type of individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAREFY</strong></td>
<td>in a rarefied atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in ignorance of the real world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAT</strong></td>
<td>a case of rats leaving a sinking ship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the desertion of an enterprise in anticipation of imminent failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAT</strong></td>
<td>rat race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pressures of modern living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAT</strong></td>
<td>to smell a rat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to become suspicious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RATE</strong></td>
<td>at a rate of knots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RATTLE</strong></td>
<td>saber rattling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hints of retribution if certain conduct does not cease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAW</strong></td>
<td>a raw deal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unfair treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAZOO</strong></td>
<td>not to have a brass razoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be very poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAZOR</strong></td>
<td>to be on the razor’s edge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be in great danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>READ</strong></td>
<td>to need to have one’s head examined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be foolish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>READ</strong></td>
<td>to read between the lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to appreciate the true significance of something not put into words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>READ</strong></td>
<td>to read the Riot Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to reprimand persons who are excessively noisy (refers to the police reading out to a rowdy crowd extracts from a law requiring its dispersion)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
READ you want your head examined
you should reconsider this matter

READ you wouldn't read about it!
that is unbelievable

READY ready-made
easily fabricated or available without
difficulty

REAL to be a real trooper
to be a person willing to try anything

REAP to reap as one has sown
to experience the consequences of one's
own actions

REAP to reap the whirlwind
to suffer the adverse consequences of
a bad act

REAP to sow the wind and reap the
whirlwind
to make bad mistakes and to suffer the
even worse consequences

REAR to rear its ugly head
to make an unwelcome appearance

REARRANGE to rearrange the
dockchairs on the Titanic
to take some initiative which is quite
useless because it does not take much
greater change into account

REASON without rhyme or reason
quite unaccountably

RECEIVE to receive the coup de
grace
to be finished off by an opponent
(French, "mercy stroke")

RECHARGE to recharge one's
batteries
to have a recuperative break

RECIPE a recipe for disaster
a certain way of achieving disaster

RECORD track record
proven performance

RED a red-letter day
an important occasion (refers to the
color used to print saints' days on
some calendars)

RED neither fish, flesh nor good
red herring
unclassifiable by virtue of being nei-
ther one thing nor another (from
Cervantes' DON QUIXOTE)

RED red-hot
highly exciting and desirable

RED red tape
ever bureaucratic procedures

RED the red-carpet treatment
courtesies extended to a person to
make him feel important and welcome

RED to be a red herring
to be something designed to divert
attention away from the main question

RED to be a red rag to a bull
to be something which makes a per-
son very angry and very excited (re-
fers to the erroneous belief that the
color red, rather than the motion of
waving, excites a bull)

RED to be in the red
to owe money

RED to be left red-faced
to be embarrassed

RED to catch someone red-handed
to apprehend a person in the course
of committing a crime

RED to get the red light
to be forbidden to do something

RED to paint the town red
to go on an exciting social outing

RED to see red
to become very angry

RED to see red lights flashing
to be conscious of the danger

REED to be a broken reed
to be a weak and unreliable person

REEK to reek to high heaven
to be patently unethical

REEL to leave someone reeling
to leave a person in a state of shock
REHEARSAL  dress rehearsal
preliminary skirmish

REIN  a tight rein
strong controls

REIN  to give rein to one's fancy
to let one's imagination have free scope

REIN  to give someone free rein
to confer complete discretion on another person

REIN  to rein in something
to keep better control over something

REIN  to take over the reins
to assume control

REINVENT  to reinvent the wheel
to waste resources doing something already accomplished

REKINDLE  to rekindle an old flame
to inspire the reinstatement of a former loving relationship

RELIGIOUSLY  religiously
conscientiously

REPEL  to repel boarders
to keep out unwanted persons

REPUBLIC  a banana republic
a country with a poor economy

RESISTANCE  to take the line of least resistance
to succumb to outside pressure

RESPONSIVE  to strike a responsive chord
to get a favorable reaction to a proposal

REST  to be head and shoulders above the rest
to be significantly more capable than others

REST  to lay some theory to rest
to abandon some theory as being no longer appropriate

REST  to put someone's mind at rest
to reassure a person

REST  to rest on one's laurels
to use a reputation for success earned in earlier times as a substitute for current endeavor

RETREAT  to beat a retreat
to abandon some project

RETREAT  to retreat into one's shell
to become shy and introverted

RETURN  to return the compliment
to reciprocate or to extract revenge

RHINOCEROS  to have the hide of a rhinoceros
to be totally unaffected by and unresponsive to valid criticism

RHYME  without rhyme or reason
quite unaccountably

RIBBON  blue ribbon
of superb quality (refers to the insignia of the Order of the Garter)

RIBBON  to be shot to ribbons
(of an argument) to be utterly discredited

RIBBON  to tear something to ribbons
to damage something severely

RICH  that is a bit rich
that is very cheeky

RICHES  rags to riches
the transition from poverty to wealth

RID  to get rid of the dead wood
to terminate the services of unsatisfactory personnel

RIDE  a roller coaster ride
a series of successes followed by failures

RIDE  riding instructions
directions as to how to do something

RIDE  to be riding for a fall
to act in a reckless manner

RIDE  to get a magic carpet ride to something
to be very fortunate in achieving some objective
RIDE to get an armchair ride
to be given a particularly easy time

RIDE to go along for the ride
to seek to benefit from a project in which others contribute the effort

RIDE to ride high
to be successful but vulnerable

RIDE to ride on the back of someone
without effort to benefit from the prior efforts of others

RIDE to ride on the sheep's back
to benefit from the production of wool

RIDE to ride out the storm
to come safely through some dangerous situation

RIDE to ride roughshod over someone
to disregard the feelings and wishes of a person

RIDE to ride the wave
to be successful for the time being

RIDE to take someone for a ride
to deceive a person

RIGHT I would give my right arm for something
I am very keen to acquire something

RIGHT a step in the right direction
the first in a series of measures designed to correct some problem

RIGHT one's right-hand man
one's chief aide

RIGHT the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing
one section of a large bureaucracy does not realize that another section is simultaneously doing something inconsistent

RIGHT to be in the right ballpark
to be approximately correct

RIGHT to get on someone's right side
to make a good impression on a person

RIGHT to have one's heart in the right place
to have a well-developed social conscience

RIGHT to lose one's right arm
to lose some highly-valued assistance

RIGHT to play one's cards right
to approach a matter sensibly

RIGHT to sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage
through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)

RIGHT to set someone on the right road
to show a person how to go about doing something

RIGHT to start off on the right foot
to commence an operation with great care to do it correctly

RIGHT to strike the right chord
to appeal successfully to someone's emotions

RIGHT to strike the right key
to find the appropriate solution

RIGHT to strike the right note
to make a good impression

RING that has a hollow ring to it
that statement is insincere

RING that has a nice ring to it
that sounds attractive

RING the alarm bells are ringing
it is unwise to proceed

RING to jump into the ring
to join in enthusiastically

RING to ring a bell
to sound familiar or recall something to mind

RING to ring down the curtain on something
to treat something as concluded
RING to ring the changes
to exhaust the number of different ways of doing something (refers to the permutations used for ringing peals of church bells)
RING to run rings around someone
to easily outwit another person
RING to step into the ring
to enter a competitive environment
RING to throw one’s hat into the ring
to publicly announce one’s interest in some position
RIOT to read the Riot Act
to reprimand persons who are excessively noisy (refers to the police reading out to a rowdy crowd extracts from a law requiring its dispersion)
RIOT to run riot
to act impetuously and without restraint
RIP to be a Rip van Winkle
to be a person out of touch with current conditions (title of and character in a book by Washington Irving)
RIP to rip someone off
to exploit a person
RIP to rip something to shreds
to damage something severely
RIPPLE to make ripples
to disturb the status quo
RISE rising star
person making good progress in his career
RISE the curtain rises on something
something is about to start
RISE to rise from the ashes like a Phoenix
to be the replacement for something destroyed in some disaster (refers to a mythical bird which was supposed to rise from the ashes of its funeral pyre with renewed youth)
RISE to rise with the lark
to get up early
RIVER the river found its mark
equilibrium between two pressures has been achieved
RIVER to be a river of gold
to be a source of ongoing great profitability
RIVER to sell someone down the river
to betray a person who has placed his trust in one
RIVET to be riveted to one’s seat
to find the activity being watched very exciting and worthy of full attention
ROAD a middle-of-the-road solution
a solution near the middle of a range of possibilities
ROAD all roads lead to Rome
all alternatives will have the same outcome
ROAD fork in the road
turning point for decisions
ROAD one for the road
a final drink before leaving
ROAD roadblocks
difficulties
ROAD the royal road to success
the way of attaining success without effort
ROAD this is the end of the road for someone
a person will have no further opportunity to do something
ROAD to be at the crossroads
to need to choose between several mutually exclusive alternatives
ROAD to be on the road to Damascus
to see the error of one’s ways (Acts 9:3)
ROAD to enter a long road
to commence a task which will take a long time
ROAD to face a rocky road ahead
to be likely to encounter difficulties
ROAD to get the show on the road
to commence a planned activity
ROAD to go down a particular road
to adopt a particular strategy
ROAD to happen down the road
to happen later
ROAD to road test something
to try something out under real conditions
ROAD to set someone on the right road
to show a person how to go about doing something
ROAR to be within a bull’s roar of something
to be very close to something
ROAST a roasting
a scolding
ROB to rob Peter in order to pay Paul
to fix up one grievance by causing another
ROBBERY daylight robbery
the charging of grossly excessive prices
ROBBERY highway robbery
the charging of grossly excessive prices
ROBIN a round robin
(1) series of checks from A to B, from B to C, from C to A, and so on, leaving all of them in the same net position as before
ROBIN a round robin
(2) a document signed by members of an organization which has the same effect as a resolution of a meeting
ROBINSON before one can say ‘‘Jack Robinson’’
very quickly
ROCK bedrock price
lowest possible price
ROCK rock bottom
very low
ROCK someone’s marriage is on the rocks
someone’s marriage has broken down
ROCK to be between a rock and a hard place
to be faced with two equally difficult and uncomfortable choices
ROCK to be on the rocks
to be bankrupt
ROCK to have rocks in the head
to be mentally unbalanced
ROCK to rock the boat
to disturb the comfortable status quo
ROCKET to give someone a rocket
to severely reprimand a person
ROCKET to put a rocket under someone
to induce a person to take some action
ROCKET to skyrocket
(of a price or value) to increase greatly in a short time
ROCKY to face a rocky road ahead
to be likely to encounter difficulties
ROD to kiss the rod
to accept punishment meekly
ROD to make a rod for one’s own back
to act in disregard of likely disadvantages for oneself
ROD to rule with a rod of iron
to keep strict discipline
ROGUE a rogue elephant
a person of vicious temper who acts in an undisciplined way
ROLL heads will roll
trangressors will be punished
ROLL the caravan will roll on
the activity will continue
ROLL the money is rolling in
the scheme is very profitable
ROLL to get rolled
to be outvoted
ROLL to have an audience rolling in the aisles
  to amuse an audience
ROLL to keep the ball rolling
  to take advantage of the existing momentum or to participate actively
ROLL to roll off the tongue
  to be said very easily
ROLL to roll up one’s sleeves
  to get on with a job energetically
ROLL to start the ball rolling
  to commence and enthusiastically advance an activity involving people
ROLLER a roller coaster ride
  a series of successes followed by failures
ROME all roads lead to Rome
  all alternatives will have the same outcome
ROME to fiddle while Rome burns
  to neglect important considerations while concentrating on trivial side-issues
ROME when in Rome do as the Romans do
  it is best to conform to the local customs
ROOF the roof has fallen in
  an enterprise has collapsed
ROOF to go through the roof
  (of a person) to be very upset or (of prices) to escalate greatly
ROOF to hit the roof
  to be very angry
ROOF to scream something from the rooftops
  to communicate a message to a wide audience
ROOF under one roof
  under the same management
ROOM no room at the inn
  no room
ROOM there is no room to swing a cat
  this place is very small (actually refers to a cat-o’-nine-tails)
ROOST the chickens are coming home to roost
  the consequences of past actions are becoming obvious
ROOST to rule the roost
  to dominate
ROOT deep-rooted
  strongly felt
ROOT grass roots
  at the lowest level
ROOT to put one’s roots down
  to settle in
ROOT to strike at the roots of something
  to work toward the destruction of something
ROPE to be on the ropes
  to be facing defeat
ROPE to give someone enough rope to hang himself
  to give a person the opportunity to do something which is likely to get him into severe trouble
ROPE to give someone too much rope
  to give a person too much latitude
ROPE to know the ropes
  to know how to do one’s job
ROPE to learn the ropes
  to be taught the elementary features
ROPE to put a leg rope on someone
  to give a person very little authority
ROPE to show someone the ropes
  to teach a beginner how to do something
ROSE a rose between two thorns
  something beautiful in the midst of ugliness
ROSE  a rose by any other name
would smell as sweet
the form does not affect the substance
(from Shakespeare's ROMEO AND JULIET)

ROSE  to be no bed of roses
to be difficult or uncomfortable

ROSE  to be on a path strewn with roses
to lead a very pleasant life

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

ROSE  to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

ROSE  to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregara
ROW to have a hard row to hoe
to be a difficult assignment

ROYAL a battle royal
a fight or argument with many simultaneous participants

ROYAL the royal road to success
the way of attaining success without effort

RUB here's the rub
this is where a difficulty arises (a term used in lawn bowling)

RUB not to have the wherewithal to rub two sticks together
to be very poor

RUB to rub it in
to humiliate another person by emphasizing his defeat

RUB to rub off on someone
to benefit a person through an association which increases his skills

RUB to rub one's chin
to muse

RUB to rub one's eyes
to express astonishment

RUB to rub one's hands with glee
to express great satisfaction

RUB to rub salt into someone's wound
to deliberately make damage even worse

RUB to rub shoulders with someone
to mingle with a person

RUB to rub someone up the wrong way
to annoy someone with actions failing to recognize his current mood

RUB to rub someone's nose in it
to humiliate a person by highlighting something embarrassing to him

RUBBER to rubber-stamp something
to endorse without considering the merits

RUBBISH a load of rubbish
blatant nonsense

RUBICON to cross the Rubicon
to make an irreversible decision in regard to some commitment

RUDDER to be a rudderless ship
to be a project not managed properly

RUFFLE to ruffle someone's feathers
to engage in behavior which irritates another person

RUG to pull the rug out from under someone
to unexpectedly withdraw support and in the process cause embarrassment

RUG to sweep something under the carpet
to pretend that some blemish does not exist

RUIN to go to rack and ruin
to face downfall or destruction

RULE ground rules
basic principles

RULE to bend the rules
to overlook minor infractions of the rules

RULE to let one's heart rule one’s head
to act on emotion rather than on reason

RULE to play by Marquis of Queensberry rules
to act ethically

RULE to rule the roost
to dominate

RUMINATE to ruminate
to ponder over a matter (lit., to chew the cud)

RUN a dry run
a trial exercise

RUN run of the mill
normal or average

RUN someone would run a mile
a person would do anything to escape his responsibilities
RUN the sands are running out
to act impetuously and without restraint
the time available for some action is nearly at an end
RUN the tide is running in favor of some proposition
RUN to be up and running
to be operative
RUN to duck for cover
to seek to avoid blame
RUN to have a dream run
to encounter no difficulties
RUN to have a run for one’s money
to at least get some enjoyment out of an otherwise abortive exercise
RUN to have the runs on the board
to have a demonstrable record of achievement
RUN to run a tight ship
to manage an efficient organization
RUN to run around in circles
to engage in excited but useless activity
RUN to run hot
to have a demonstrable record of achievement
RUN to run into a dead end
to get nowhere in an investigation
RUN to run into heavy weather
to encounter difficulties
RUN to run its course
to come to a natural end
RUN to run off the rails
to significantly depart from the intended course of action
RUN to run one’s own ship
to do things and organize subordinates in one’s own way
RUN to run out of steam
to lose one’s energy and enthusiasm
RUN to run rings around someone
to easily outwit another person
RUN to run someone off his feet
to keep a person very busy on some physical task
RUN to run someone to earth
to locate a person
RUN to run someone to the ground
to discover the whereabouts of a person
RUN to run the gauntlet
to be subjected to criticism (from the Spanish word for “passage,” in reference to punishment inflicted on delinquents made to run between two files of soldiers)
RUN to run to seed
to become shabby
RUN to run with something
to take advantage of some current development
RUN to run with the ball
to make the most of the opportunity
RUN to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds
to keep in with two opposing sides
RUN to set a hare running
in order to achieve some desired effect to initiate some related activity
RUN your race is run
you have had your opportunity
RUNG rungs up a ladder
gradual steps to an ultimate goal
RUNNER front-runner
person expected to win
RUSH fools rush in where angels fear to tread
unsophisticated persons take unwise risks in circumstances where more knowledgeable persons would exercise caution
RUSH to be killed in the rush
to be the supplier of something extremely popular
RUSH to rush one's fences
to act precipitately

RUSSIAN to play Russian roulette
to take stupid risks

RUT to be in a rut
to lead a dull life, with no change from long-established habits

S

SABER saber rattling
hints of retribution if certain conduct does not cease

SACK to get the sack
to be dismissed (refers to the bag of tradesmen’s tools)

SACKCLOTH to wear sackcloth and ashes
humbly to demonstrate repentance

SACRED a sacred cow
an institution so well established that it is virtually unalterable

SACRED a sacred trust
a moral obligation

SACRED nothing is sacred
nothing is safe from interference

SACRIFICIAL sacrificial lamb
somebody unfairly made to suffer for the mistakes of others

SADDLE to be in the saddle
to be in command

SAFE to play it safe
to take no risks

SAFE to plot a safe course through troubled waters
to make a plan which overcomes certain difficulties

SAFETY a safety net scheme
a scheme for dealing with the exceptional cases not covered by normal arrangements

SAFETY safety margin
allowance for miscalculations

SAFETY to act as a safety valve
to be a procedure which allows persons with grievances to ventilate them in an orderly fashion

SAIL to be plain sailing
to be quite straightforward and very easy

SAIL to sail against the wind
to oppose the views currently being held by others

SAIL to sail close to the wind
to act in a very dangerous manner

SAIL to sail under false colors
to pretend that one’s real character or beliefs are different from what they really are

SAIL to set sail
to commence a voyage

SAIL to take the wind out of someone’s sails
to upset a person by anticipating his actions or using arguments which he was proposing to use

SAIL to trim one’s sails
to institute austerity

SAINT a saint
a good person

SAINT to have the patience of a saint
to endure annoyances with particular calm

SALE fire sale
a forced sale, realizing bargain prices

SALLY an Aunt Sally
a person who can readily be singled out and criticized as the proxy for a group

SALT below the salt
in a subordinate position (refers to the seating order at ancient Roman dining tables)

SALT not to be worth one’s salt
not to be pulling one’s weight (refers to Roman soldiers being paid in salt—a practice giving rise to the modern word “salary”)
SALT to be the salt of the earth
to be a person whose ordinary efforts benefit the community (Matthew 5:13)
SALT to rub salt into someone's wound
to deliberately make damage even worse
SALT to take something with a grain of salt
to regard the facts in a statement with considerable skepticism
SALVAGE to salvage something out of the wreck
to achieve some minor benefits out of a disastrous situation
SALVO to fire a salvo at someone
to present a series of criticisms to a person
SAMARITAN a good Samaritan
a person going out of his way to do a kindness to others (Luke 10:33)
SAME to all sing from the same hymnal
to act consistently with each other
SAME to be in the same boat
to share a common set of difficulties
SAME to be in the same league
to have comparable skills
SAND shifting sands
arguments which are constantly being changed
SAND the sands are running out
the time available for some action is nearly at an end
SAND to bury one's head in the sand
to refuse to face up to an unpleasant truth (refers to the reputed habit of ostriches in danger)
SANDWICH to be the ham in the sandwich
to be caught in the middle of a dispute between other parties
SAUCE what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander
arguments which apply in one case also apply in another
SAUSAGE a sausage machine
the turning out of large volumes without particular thought
SAVE saved by the bell
rescued before disaster strikes
SAVE to save face
to be allowed to keep one's dignity despite having suffered a defeat or made an error
SAVE to save one's bacon
to escape harm
SAVE to save one's skin
to get off safely
SAVE to save someone's life
to be of great help to a person
SAVE to save someone's neck
to come to the rescue of a person
SAY before one can say 'Jack Robinson'
very quickly
SCALES to tip the scales
to be a factor which in combination with other factors results in a particular decision which would otherwise not have been reached
SCALP to be after someone's scalp
to be keen to penalize a person
SCAPEGOAT a scapegoat
a person unfairly blamed for something not his fault
SCAR to scar someone
to leave a person permanently grieving
SCARCE to make oneself scarce
to take oneself out of view
SCARE to scare the pants off someone
to greatly frighten a person
SCATTER a scattergun approach
an effort going here, there and everywhere, instead of being properly targeted

SCATTER to scatter something to the four winds
to permanently get rid of something

SCENARIO scenario
details of arrangements

SCENE behind the scenes
out of public view or awareness

SCENE to make a scene
to create a fuss

SCENE to quit the scene
to depart

SCENE to set the scene for something
to get things ready for something

SCENT to throw someone off the scent
to deceive a person by giving out misleading indications

SCHOOL to tell tales out of school
to deliberately leak a secret

SCHOOLBOY as every schoolboy knows
as is recognized by everyone

SCORE to even the score
to get one’s own back for some past action

SCORE to score a goal
to achieve an objective

SCORE to score a hat trick
to have three successive favorable outcomes

SCORE to score a point
to make a clever contribution in the course of debate

SCORE to score an own goal
to blow oneself up

SCORE to score points
to make a good impression

SCORE to score top points
to outwit other persons

SCORE to see the score
to appreciate the reality of a situation

SCORE to underscore something
to emphasize something

SCOT to get off scot free
to go unpunished (refers to an exemption from tax)

SCRAPE to really scrape the bottom of the barrel
to lower one’s standards because one is short of important or relevant issues

SCRAP-HEAP to be destined for the scrap-heap
to face a future in which one will have no meaningful role

SCRATCH to be back to scratch
to have to start all over again

SCRATCH to be up to scratch
to be of the required standard

SCRATCH to only scratch the surface
to deal with only a small portion of a much larger whole

SCRATCH to scratch one another’s backs
to help each other

SCRATCH to scratch one’s head
to be amazed or puzzled

SCRATCH to scratch something together
to improvise

SCRATCH to start from behind scratch
to be faced with a handicap

SCRATCH to start from scratch
to commence something without the benefit of any past activity

SCREAM to scream and yell
to protest violently

SCREAM to scream blue murder
to make serious allegations
SCREAM to scream something from the rooftops
to communicate a message to a wide audience

SCREEN to set up a smokescreen
to deliberately confuse an issue by disguising its salient features

SCREW to have a screw loose
to be mentally unbalanced

SCREW to have one's head screwed on straight
to be shrewd

SCREW to put the screws on someone
to exert pressure on a person

SCREW to tighten the screw
to increase the moral and psychological pressure

SCRIPTURE the devil can cite scripture for his purpose
a person can quote a respectable or hostile authority while advocating a disreputable cause of his own (from Shakespeare's MERCHANT OF VENICE)

SCROOGE to be a real Scrooge
to be miserly and unmoved (refers to a character in Charles Dickens' A CHRISTMAS CAROL)

SCYLLA to be between Scylla and Charybdis
to be faced with two equally unpalatable alternatives which cannot both be avoided (refers to the voyage of Ulysses)

SEA a South Sea bubble
an unrealistic financial venture which is bound to result in total loss

SEA between the devil and the deep blue sea
to be faced with two equally unpalatable alternatives which cannot both be avoided

SEA to be all at sea
to be confused as to what is going on and what to do next

SEAL a seal of approval
confirmation that something is satisfactory

SEAL to seal one's lips
to keep a confidence

SEAL to seal someone's fate
to cause a certain outcome adversely affecting a person

SEAL to set the seal on something
to confirm absolutely that something is agreed

SEAM to be bursting at the seams
to be very crowded

SEAM to come apart at the seams
(of an arrangement) to break down

SEARCH a soul-searching exercise
an examination of the advantages and disadvantages of a proposal

SEARCH search for the Holy Grail
work toward a difficult goal (refers to a vessel supposedly used by Christ at the last supper and featuring in the Arthurian legends)

SEARCH to search one's heart
to have misgivings

SEASON the silly season
the holiday period, when hard news is scarce and journalistic standards are lowered

SEAT a backseat driver
a person seeking to exercise control

SEAT to be in the box seat
to be in a very powerful position to control activity

SEAT to be in the driver's seat
to be in charge

SEAT to be in the hot seat
to hold a position requiring one to answer criticism or accusations

SEAT to be on the edge of one's seat
to be very excited at what is currently happening
SEAT to be riveted to one's seat
to find the activity being watched
very exciting and worthy of full
attention
SEAT to fly by the seat of one's pants
to act unprofessionally
SEAT to keep one's seat warm
to hold a position temporarily with a
view to another person taking it over
permanently in the near future
SEAT to take a backseat
not to actively involve oneself
SECOND a second-class citizen
a person not treated as an equal
SECOND second childhood
dotage
SECOND the second eleven
persons performing an important func-
tion but one which is less important
than that performed by others (refers
to cricket)
SECOND to be second nature to
someone
to be something which a person does
intuitively
SECOND to have a second string to
one's bow
to have an additional qualification ap-
propriate to the task
SECOND to play second fiddle
to fulfill a subordinate role
SEE blind Freddy could see that
something is such-and-such
it is very obvious that something is
such-and-such
SEE not to see the wood for the trees
to overlook the general picture be-
cause of undue concentration on the
details
SEE suck it and see
discover experimentally how some-
thing works
SEE to see blood
to be very angry
SEE to see daylight
to get the right answer
SEE to see eye to eye with someone
to agree
SEE to see red
to become very angry
SEE to see red lights flashing
to be conscious of the danger
SEE to see someone in a good light
to regard a person favorably
SEE to see something with half an
eye
to sum up a matter instantly
SEE to see the back of someone
to know that a person is no longer
involved in something
SEE to see the big picture
to have the vision and imagination
enabling a project to be developed as
part of a bigger whole
SEE to see the color of someone's
eyes
to see how a person matches expecta-
tions or requirements
SEE to see the color of someone's
money
to get evidence of the sincerity of a
person's proposal
SEE to see the light
to understand the real situation
SEE to see the light at the end of the
tunnel
to be close to finalizing a long exercise
SEE to see the light of day
to be made public
SEE to see the score
to appreciate the reality of a situation
SEE to see the writing on the wall
to appreciate the inevitability of some
event (Daniel 5)
SEE to see which way the cat jumps
to await developments
SEED to run to seed
to become shabby

SEED to sow seeds
to propagate ideas in the hope that they will be adopted

SEEK to seek the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow
to have naive expectations

SELL to be sold on something
to be utterly dedicated to a proposal

SELL to sell off the family silver
to sell off one's prized possessions

SELL to sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage
through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)

SELL to sell someone a lemon
to sell a person a grossly defective product on the basis that it represents quality

SELL to sell someone a pup
to cheat a person in a transaction, especially by misrepresentation as to the true value of something

SELL to sell someone down the river
to betray a person who has placed his trust in one

SEND to send a chill down someone's neck
to be worrying news

SEND to send a cold shiver down someone's spine
to horrify a person

SEND to send a smoke signal
to give an indication

SEND to send someone away with a flea in his ear
to give a person frank but unwelcome facts (refers to fleas trapped in the armor of ancient knights)

SEND to send someone packing
to dismiss a person ignominiously

SEND to send someone to Coventry
to ostentatiously and collectively ignore a person by way of punishment

SENSE a sixth sense
intuition (refers to the five senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch)

SENSE horse sense
natural shrewdness

SENTENCE to be sentenced to some fate
to be condemned by circumstances to endure some fate

SEPARATE to separate the men from the boys
to distinguish between those with and without certain skills

SEPARATE to separate the sheep from the goats
to distinguish between those with and without certain attributes (Matthew 25:32)

SEPARATE to separate the wheat from the chaff
to distinguish between important and unimportant ingredients

SERVE to serve something up to someone on a plate
to make something especially easy for a particular person

SERVICE to pay lip service to some rules
to disregard some rules in practice while acknowledging them in words

SESAME an open sesame
access to something normally inaccessible

SET game, set and match
completion

SET the rot set in
conditions started to deteriorate

SET the stage is set
something is about to happen

SET the sun has set on something
something has concluded

230
<p>| SET to be set like a jelly to be very well established |
| SET to have one's heart set on something to be very keen to achieve something |
| SET to set a hare running in order to achieve some desired effect, to initiate some related activity |
| SET to set one's cap at someone (of females) to try to attract a person as a marriage partner |
| SET to set one's sights on something to aim to achieve something |
| SET to set sail to commence a voyage |
| SET to set someone on the right road to show a person how to go about doing something |
| SET to set someone's teeth on edge to cause a person to feel unhappy at a situation |
| SET to set something in concrete to make something virtually unalterable |
| SET to set the Thames on fire to do something noteworthy |
| SET to set the hounds baying to excite the gossips by providing material which they can use |
| SET to set the pace to give a lead in regard to a rate of progression |
| SET to set the scene for something to get things ready for something |
| SET to set the seal on something to confirm absolutely that something is agreed |
| SET to set the wheels in motion to institute appropriate action |
| SET to set the world on fire to do something particularly brilliant |
| SET to set tongues wagging to behave in a way which encourages scandal mongers |
| SET to set up a smokescreen to deliberately confuse an issue by disguising its salient features |
| SETTLE when the dust settles when sufficient time has passed |
| SEVEN to be at sixes and sevens to be confused, concerned and undecided |
| SEVEN to be in seventh heaven to be very happy |
| SEVERE to be a severe blow to be a great disappointment |
| SEW to sew something up to negotiate a deal |
| SHACKLE golden shackles financial arrangements designed to discourage employees changing employers |
| SHADE to throw someone in the shade to surpass a person |
| SHADOW to be in someone's shadow to be unable to exert one's personality because of association with a more important person |
| SHADOW to be only a pale shadow of something to be a weak imitation |
| SHADOW to cast a shadow over something to introduce a note of warning or sadness in regard to some matter |
| SHADOW to lurk in the shadows to have a low profile at the moment, but with the possibility of becoming much more conspicuous at any time |
| SHADOW to overshadow someone to reduce the influence of a person by outshining him |
| SHADOW to shadow box to go through the motions without achieving or intending to achieve anything |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHADOW</th>
<th>to throw a long shadow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to have widespread ramifications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAFT</th>
<th>a Parthian shaft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a cutting remark made at the moment of departure (refers to missiles shot backward by flying Parthian horsemen)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAGGY</th>
<th>a shaggy-dog story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an amusing anecdote with an unexpected ending, often involving talking animals given certain human skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAKE</th>
<th>a golden handshake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a large payment in connection with or as an inducement to retirement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAKE</th>
<th>in two shakes of a duck’s tail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in an instant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAKE</th>
<th>to shake a leg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to hurry up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAKE</th>
<th>to shake a tree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to do something in order to see what will result</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAKE</th>
<th>to shake down</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to sleep on an improvised bed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAKE</th>
<th>to shake one’s head</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to indicate disbelief or wonder or disapproval</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAKE</th>
<th>to wait two shakes of a lamb’s tail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to wait just a few moments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAKY</th>
<th>to be on shaky ground</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>not to have strong arguments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAMBLES</th>
<th>to throw something into a shambles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to make something messy and useless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAPE</th>
<th>not to do something in any shape or form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>not to do something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAPE</th>
<th>shipshape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in excellent condition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAPE</th>
<th>to lick something into shape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to make something presentable and effective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHARE</th>
<th>a share of the cake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a portion of the total available for distribution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHARE</th>
<th>the lion’s share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the biggest portion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHARE</th>
<th>to have shares in a paper company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to institute unnecessary clerical procedures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHARK</th>
<th>to miss the sharks while netting the minnows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to succeed in minor aspects but fail in the ones that really matter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHARP</th>
<th>sharp dealer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>person engaging in barely honest or mildly unethical practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHARP</th>
<th>to have a sharp tongue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to speak one’s mind in forceful language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHARPEN</th>
<th>need to sharpen one’s pencil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be required to improve one’s performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHARPEN</th>
<th>to sharpen one’s ax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to get ready for a difficult task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHARPEN</th>
<th>to sharpen the knives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to get ready for a concerted attack on some principle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHATTER</th>
<th>earth-shattering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHAVE</th>
<th>to be a close shave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be a narrow escape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHED</th>
<th>to shed a quiet tear for something</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to lament the passing of something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHED</th>
<th>to shed crocodile tears</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be a hypocrite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHED</th>
<th>to shed light on something</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to give explanations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHEEP</th>
<th>a black sheep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a disreputable member of an otherwise reputable group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SHEEP one might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb further action will not increase the adverse consequences already in train (refers to the stealing of both sheep and lambs being capital crimes under old English law)

SHEEP to be a wolf in sheep's clothing to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous although masquerading as something harmless (Matthew 7:15)

SHEEP to be home on the sheep's back to be doing well

SHEEP to cast sheep's eyes at someone to look at a person amorously

SHEEP to ride on the sheep's back to benefit from the production of wool

SHEEP to separate the sheep from the goats to distinguish between those with and without certain attributes (Matthew 25:32)

SHEEP to spoil the ship for a ha' p' orth of tar to engage in a false economy (the current word “ship” is actually a mistake for the original word “sheep” and the tar refers to the treatment of wounds)

SHEEPISH sheepish embarrassed, as though guilty

SHEER to be sheer murder to be extremely unpleasant or difficult; or to be an inglorious defeat

SHEET the sheet anchor the source of one's confidence

SHEET to start with a blank sheet of paper to commence an exercise without being bound by any established practices

SHELF to be on the shelf to be available for marriage

SHELL to be shell-shocked to be stunned by unexpected bad news

SHELL to retreat into one's shell to become shy and introverted

SHELVE to shelve some proposal to abandon some proposal

SHEPHERD to shepherd some group to marshall the members of some group

SHIBBOLETH a shibboleth a doctrine once held as essential but now abandoned as having outlived its usefulness (a word used as a test to determine to which tribe an Israelite belonged) (Judges 12:6)

SHIFT shifting sands arguments which are constantly being changed

SHILLING to be only ten pence in the shilling to be slightly stupid

SHILLING to cut someone off with a shilling to exclude a person as a beneficiary under one's will (refers to the mistaken belief that a will cannot be upset in favor of a person actually named in a will and clearly not overlooked)

SHINE a knight in shining armor a very helpful person

SHINE shining light eminent or scholarly person

SHINE to make hay while the sun shines to utilize an opportunity before it disappears

SHINE to take a shine to someone to be keen on a person

SHINE to take the shine off something to spoil the performance of something

SHINE to take the shine out of something to demonstrably surpass
**SHINGLE** to hang up one’s shingle
to go into business offering expert personal services

**SHIP** a case of rats leaving a sinking ship
the desertion of an enterprise in anticipation of imminent failure

**SHIP** enough to sink a battleship
more than sufficient

**SHIP** shipshape
in excellent condition

**SHIP** ships that pass in the night
persons who fail to meet up

**SHIP** to abandon ship
to abrogate one’s responsibilities or to abandon a project

**SHIP** to be a rudderless ship
to be a project not managed properly

**SHIP** to run a tight ship
to manage an efficient organization

**SHIP** to run one’s own ship
to do things and organize subordinates in one’s own way

**SHIP** to spoil the ship for a ha’p’orth of tar
to engage in false economy (the current word “ship” is actually a mistake for the original word “sheep” and the tar refers to the treatment of wounds)

**SHIP** when one’s ship comes in
when one’s business venture is successfully completed or when luck arrives

**SHIRT** keep your shirt on!
relax!

**SHIRT** so-and-so would give one the shirt off his back
so-and-so is very generous

**SHIRT** to lose one’s shirt
to suffer heavy financial losses

**SHIRT** to put one’s shirt on something
to invest heavily in some speculative venture

**SHIRT** to wear a hair shirt
to practice self-discipline

**SHIVER** to send a cold shiver down someone’s spine
to horrify a person

**SHOAL** to founder on the shoals of something
to come to grief because of unexpected dangers

**SHOCK** to be shell-shocked
to be stunned by unexpected bad news

**SHOE** to be in someone’s shoes
to have another person’s responsibility

**SHOE** to fill someone’s shoes
to be a good successor

**SHOE** to wait for the other shoe to drop
to await the seemingly imminent and inevitable (refers to a man undressing, disturbing a neighbor by dropping one shoe, then frustrating his expectation by putting the other shoe down gently)

**SHOELACE** to pull oneself up by one’s own shoelaces
to make a superhuman effort

**SHOESTRING** to do something on a shoestring
to do something with great economy

**SHOOT** a straight shooter
a person who is frank and outspoken

**SHOOT** a troubleshooter
a person good at finding and then rectifying faults

**SHOOT** shoot!
go on, speak!

**SHOOT** the whole shooting match
the whole lot

**SHOOT** to be on a slippery shoot
to court disaster

**SHOOT** to be shot to pieces
to have one’s case seriously damaged

**SHOOT** to be shot to ribbons
(of an argument) to be utterly discredited
SHOOT to shoot from the hip
to speak frankly and openly

SHOOT to shoot one's bolt
to lose one's temper

SHOOT to shoot one's mouth off
to speak without thinking

SHOOT to shoot oneself in the foot
to act in a foolish way and thus harm
one's own cause

SHOOT to shoot someone down in flames
to utterly destroy another person's arguments

SHOOT to shoot something out of the water
to frustrate something

SHOP a bull in a china shop
a careless person likely to cause great damage

SHOP a shopping list
a catalogue of demands

SHOP to shop around
to explore alternatives

SHOP to shut up shop
to cease an established activity

SHOP to talk shop
to discuss business or professional matters on a social occasion

SHORT take a long walk on a short pier
go away, I want no dealings with you

SHORT the long and the short of it
all that needs to be said about this

SHORT to be short and sweet
to be very brief and to the point

SHORT to be shortchanged
to be given less than is due to one

SHORT to draw the short straw
to be the one appointed to do something

SHORT to get someone by the short and curly hairs
to have domination over a person

SHORT to give someone short shift
to be impatient with a person (refers to the confession to a priest just before an execution)

SHORT to have a short fuse
to lose one's temper very readily

SHORT to hold someone on a short leash
to give a person very little authority

SHORT to short-circuit something
to do something, eliminating various intermediate steps

SHORT to take shortcuts
to do something by a faster but less thorough method

SHORTHAND to be a shorthand
way of saying something
to be a way of saying something in summarized form

SHORTSIGHTED to be shortsighted
not to recognize the likely consequences

SHOT a bit shot
an important person

SHOT a shot in the arm
something to revive a person's enthusiasm

SHOT a shot in the dark
an intelligent or lucky guess

SHOT a sitting shot
an initial move which is designed to establish facts for use in a later action

SHOT opening shot
first step in an activity expected to last a long time

SHOT shots across the bow
warnings

SHOT that is a long shot
there is only a remote possibility

SHOT to be a sitting shot
to be a person whose actions make him very vulnerable to criticism
SHOT to beat by a long shot
to defeat very convincingly
SHOT to call the shots
to have the direction over a project
SHOT to fire a parting shot
to make a defiant gesture on leaving
SHOT to give one's best shot
to make the best attempt possible
SHOT to have a shot at someone
to use subtly chosen words implying friendly criticism but designed to embarrass another person
SHOT to have a shot at something
to attempt to achieve something
SHOT to take a potshot at someone
to make disparaging remarks about a person
SHOTGUN a shotgun wedding
a wedding held to ensure that an impending birth will be legitimate (refers to threats by the bride's father to kill the bridegroom)

SHOULDER a shoulder to cry on
sympathy
SHOULDER a shoulder to lean on
sympathy
SHOULDER an old head on young shoulders
experience, knowledge and maturity in a young person
SHOULDER shoulder to shoulder
in close proximity
SHOULDER straight from the shoulder
bluntly
SHOULDER to be head and shoulders above the rest
to be significantly more capable than others
SHOULDER to carry the world on one's shoulders
to resent being left to perform a huge task single-handedly (refers to Atlas, who was condemned to bear the heavens on his shoulders for leading the Titans against the gods)

SHOULDER to give someone the cold shoulder
to ostentatiously ignore a person
SHOULDER to have a chip on one's shoulder
to unreasonably resent something
SHOULDER to have broad shoulders
to be able to cope well with responsibility
SHOULDER to need to look over one's shoulder
to be subject to attack which is not obvious
SHOULDER to put a burden on someone's shoulders
to impose responsibilities on a person
SHOULDER to put one's shoulder to the wheel
to make a strong effort
SHOULDER to rub shoulders with someone
to mingle with a person
SHOULDER to shoulder the blame
to accept the blame
SHOULDER to shrug one's shoulders
to indicate that one does not know or care or that one is unable or unwilling to assist
SHOULDER to stand on someone's shoulders
to build upon another person's ideas
SHOULDER to take a weight off someone's shoulder
to assist a person by relieving him of some responsibility
SHOULDER to work shoulder to shoulder
to work with united effort
SHOUT to be all over bar the shouting
to be virtually finished
SHOW a show pony
a pompous person

SHOW a sideshow
an unimportant adjunct

SHOW the show must go on
despite difficulties the action in contemplation has to proceed

SHOW to bare one's teeth
to imply threats

SHOW to get the show on the road
to commence a planned activity

SHOW to give the show away
to indiscreetly reveal sensitive information

SHOW to show dividends
to be successful

SHOW to show one's face
to put in an appearance

SHOW to show one's true colors
to disclose one's real character or beliefs

SHOW to show someone the door
to ask a person to leave

SHOW to show someone the ropes
to teach a beginner how to do something

SHOW to show the flag
to visit a place in order to boost morale there

SHOW to show the white feather
to indicate cowardice (refers to crossbred birds, not regarded as useful in cock fighting)

SHOW to steal the show
to have the maximum appeal to those watching

SHOWCASE showcase
magnificent

SHOWDOWN showdown
disclosure of certain pertinent facts

SHOWER to have come down in the last shower
to be naive

SHRED to rip something to shreds
to damage something severely

SHRIFT to give someone short shrift
to be impatient with a person (refers to the confession to a priest just before an execution)

SHRINK a shrinking violet
a shy person

SHRUG to shrug one's shoulders
to indicate that one does not know or care or that one is unable or unwilling to assist

SHRUG to shrug something off
to indicate that one is unable or unwilling to do something

SHUDDER one shudders to think
what the outcome might be
there is great concern as to the outcome

SHUT to be an open and shut case
to be an unarguable proposition (a phrase popular in detective novels and probably a play on the two meanings of the word "case")

SHUT to keep one's mouth shut
not to discuss some matter

SHUT to shut one's eyes to something
to deliberately take no notice of something, especially in dereliction of one's duty

SHUT to shut the door on someone
to deny another person a desired opportunity

SHUT to shut the stable door after the horse has bolted
to take preventive action only after the relevant event

SHUT to shut up shop
to cease an established activity

SHUTTER to put up the shutters
to cease an established activity

SHYLOCK a Shylock
a hard-hearted creditor who insists on his legal due (from Shakespeare's MERCHANT OF VENICE)
SIDE a broadside
a short verbal attack

SIDE on our side of the fence
in the group representing our vested interest

SIDE the bright side
the favorable aspects

SIDE the other side of the coin
the arguments for the opposite point of view

SIDE to be a thorn in someone's flesh
to be a person whose persistent presence and righteous views annoy

SIDE to be born on the wrong side of the blanket
to be illegitimate

SIDE to be on the other side of the fence
to have an opposing point of view or position

SIDE to be on the side of the angels
to be on the side of righteousness (from a speech by Benjamin Disraeli)

SIDE to feel the rough side of someone's tongue
to be verbally abused by a person

SIDE to get on someone's right side
to make a good impression on a person

SIDE to get out of bed on the wrong side
to be grumpy

SIDE to know on which side one's bread is buttered
to be aware of the important considerations

SIDE to look on the dark side
to be pessimistic

SIDE to split one's side
to be convulsed with laughter

SIDE you will laugh on the other side of your face
you will regret this

SIDELIGHT sidelight
incidental happening

SIDELINE to sit on the sidelines
not to take part in the main action

SIDESHOW a sideshow
an unimportant adjunct

SIDEWAYS to look at someone sideways
to silently and politely indicate one's disapproval

SIEVE to stop up one hole in a sieve
to do something quite useless

SIFT to sift
to closely examine the evidence or a set of facts with a view to attaching different significance as appropriate to each of the various components

SIGHT to heave a sigh of relief
to express satisfaction at the achievement of a solution to a difficult problem

SIGHT to be a sight for sore eyes
to be something welcome

SIGHT to be shortsighted
not to recognize the likely consequences

SIGHT to lower one's sights
to reduce one's ambition

SIGHT to set one's sights on something
to aim to achieve something

SIGHT with 20/20 hindsight
with the benefit of knowing what happened

SIGN to sign on the dotted line
to confirm one's agreement

SIGN to sign one's own death warrant
to foolishly do something which is inevitably bound to lead to utter disaster

SIGNAL to send a smoke signal
to give an indication

SIGNPOST to signpost something
to give an indication of the alternatives available
SILENCE deafening silence
great apathy and lack of enthusiasm

SILENCE silence is golden
it is better not to incriminate anyone

SILK one can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear
it is impossible to manufacture something of a high standard without appropriate raw materials

SILLY the silly season
the holiday period, when hard news is scarce and journalistic standards are lowered

SILVER every cloud has a silver lining
there are benefits even in seemingly adverse situations

SILVER to be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth
to be brought up by wealthy parents

SILVER to hand over something on a silver platter
to provide a valuable benefit for virtually nothing

SILVER to have a silver tongue
to be eloquent

SILVER to sell off the family silver
to sell off one's prized possessions

SIMON a simple Simon
a foolish, gullible or half-witted person

SIMPLE a simple Simon
a foolish, gullible or half-witted person

SIN for one's sins
by way of punishment, as it were

SING it's not over till the fat lady sings
it is not finished yet

SING to all sing from the same hymnal
to act consistently with each other

SING to sing a particular song
to state particular views

SING to sing for one's supper
to carry out a task in order to receive a favor in return

SING to sing someone's praises
to commend a person exuberantly

SINGLE single-handedly
without help from other persons

SINK a case of rats leaving a sinking ship
the desertion of an enterprise in anticipation of imminent failure

SINK enough to sink a battleship
more than sufficient

SINK everything but the kitchen sink
a lot of things

SINK it is a case of sink or swim
the attempt is worthwhile, despite the risk of failure

SINK one's heart sank
one realized the extent of some disaster

SINK to sink deeper into the mire
to get into further difficulties

SINK to sink deeper into the mud
to get into even greater difficulty

SINK to sink slowly in the west
fail gradually

SINK to sink without a trace
to disappear completely

SINK with a sinking heart
with growing despondency

SINKER hook, line and sinker
wholly

SIT to be a sitting duck
to be readily exploited

SIT to be a sitting shot
to be a person whose actions make him very vulnerable to criticism

SIT to sit on one's hands
deliberately to do nothing

SIT to sit on someone
to repress a person
SIT to sit on the fence
to refuse to choose between two
alternatives
SIT to sit on the sidelines
not to take part in the main action
SIT to sit pretty
to be comfortably off
SIT to sit tight
obstinately to do nothing
SITE a siting shot
an initial move which is designed to
establish facts for use in a later action
SIX it is six of one and half a dozen
of the other
it does not matter
SIX to be at sixes and sevens
to be confused, concerned and unde-
decided
SIX to be six feet under
to be dead
SIX to hit someone for six
to damage a person’s cause
SIX to throw in one’s six pennies’
worth
to modestly supply one’s own facts or
views
SIXTH a sixth sense
intuition (refers to the five senses—
sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch)
SIXTY-FOUR a sixty-four thousand
dollar question
a pertinent but very difficult question
(refers to a TV quiz show in which
an initial prize doubles with the suc-
cessful answering of progressively more
difficult questions)
SIZE to cut tall poppies down to size
to humiliate haughty persons
SIZE to try something on for size
to cheekily do something
SKATE to get one’s skates on
to hurry up
SKATE to skate around some subject
by diversionary tactics to avoid dis-
cussing some subject
SKATE to skate on thin ice
to act in disregard of obvious danger
SKELETON a skeleton in the cup-
board
an unpleasant truth the knowledge of
which has been deliberately suppressed
SKELETON to flesh out the skeleton
to supply the missing pertinent details
SKETCH a thumbnail sketch
brief but pertinent details
SKID to be on skid row
to have no means
SKID to put the skids under someone
to ruin a person
SKIN a cleanskin
a person without a criminal record
SKIN there is more than one way
to skin a cat
this can achieved in a variety of ac-
ceptable ways
SKIN to be no skin off someone’s
nose
not to matter to a person
SKIN to escape by the skin of one’s
nose
to only just avoid some disaster
SKIN to escape by the skin of one’s
teeth
to only just avoid some disaster
SKIN to get under someone’s skin
to annoy another person through
stupidity
SKIN to hang on by the skin of one’s
teeth
to only just survive
SKIN to have a thick skin
to be impervious to criticism
SKIN to nearly jump out of one’s
skin
to receive a fright
SKIN to save one's skin
to get off safely

SKIP something is but a hop, skip and jump away
something is nearby

SKIRT to hide under someone's skirts
to let someone else take the consequences of one's actions

SKIRT to skirt around the difficulties
to act as though the difficulties did not exist

SKITTLES not to be all beer and skittles
not to be all pleasant and easy

SKULL to penetrate someone's thick skull
to make a person understand something difficult or acknowledge something unwelcome

SKY a light in the sky
a sign of great hope

SKY blue sky
supremely optimistic

SKY pie in the sky
a hoped for result unlikely to be achieved

SKY the sky fell in
a very serious problem arose

SKY the sky is the limit
the cost is no obstacle

SKYROCKET to skyrocket
(of a price or value) to increase greatly in a short time

SLACK to take up the slack
to take advantage of surplus capacity

SLAM to slam the door in someone's face
ostentatiously to refuse to have any dealings with a person

SLAP a slap in the face
a calculated insult or action amounting to a rebuke

SLAP a slap on the wrist
a mild rebuke

SLATE to wipe the slate clean
to forgive past indiscretions

SLATHER open slather
freedom for people to do what they want

SLAUGHTER a lamb led to slaughter
a naive person allowing himself to be exploited

SLEDGEHAMMER to use a sledgehammer to crack a nut
to devote vastly more resources to a project than is warranted by all the circumstances

SLEEP not to lose any sleep over something
not to worry about some matter

SLEEP to go to sleep
to become inactive

SLEEP to let sleeping dogs lie
to refrain from raising an issue which is not obviously requiring attention

SLEEP to sleep on one's rights
to fail to exercise some entitlement within a reasonable period

SLEEP to spend a sleepless night
to worry about something

SLEEVE to have a card up one's sleeve
to secretly have information relevant to a transaction

SLEEVE to have an ace up one's sleeve
to hold an impressive counter-argument in reserve

SLEEVE to keep something up one's sleeve
to secretly retain something in reserve for use in the future or at a later stage of negotiations

SLEEVE to laugh up one's sleeve
to laugh surreptitiously
SLEEVE to roll up one’s sleeves to get on with a job energetically
SLEEVE to wear one’s heart on one’s sleeve to lack the reserve expected of one
SLEIGHT sleight of hand deceit by trickery
SLENDER to hang by a slender thread to only just survive
SLICE to claim that something is the best thing since sliced bread to have an exaggerated opinion of the importance or novelty of an invention or practice
SLICE to have a piece of the action to be one of several parties to a project
SLIDE to be on a slippery shoot to court disaster
SLING to sling mud to make unfair imputations
SLIP a slip of the tongue incorrect words uttered accidentally
SLIP to be slipping to be losing one’s cunning or expertise
SLIP to let something slip through one’s fingers to allow something to escape from one’s ownership or control
SLIP to slip one’s mind to be overlooked or forgotten
SLIP to slip through the net to happen as an isolated case despite steps taken to prevent such events
SLIP to slip under one’s guard to cause a mistake to be made despite care being taken to prevent this
SLIPPERY a slippery customer a shifty person
SLIPPERY slippery path dangerous course of action
SLIPPERY to be on a slippery shoot to court disaster
SLOUGH a slough of despond a feeling of hopelessness
SLOW to be slow off the mark to be slow to start something
SLOWLY to slowly bleed to death to be heading in gradual steps toward total ruin
SLUG to slug it out to engage in a minor skirmish
SLY a sly dog a person who is discreet about his weaknesses
SMACK a smack in the eye a rebuff
SMALL it’s a small world it is surprising to meet people one knows in unexpected places
SMALL to be a small cog in a large wheel to be a relatively unimportant person in a large organization
SMALL to be small beer to be quite unimportant
SMALL to be small potatoes to be quite unimportant
SMART to be a smart Alec to give witty but cheeky responses to one’s superiors or customers
SMELL a rose by any other name would smell as sweet the form does not affect the substance (from Shakespeare’s ROMEO AND JULIET)
SMELL something smells something is suspicious
SMELL to come up smelling like a rose not to have a stain on one’s character
SMELL to run something on the smell of an oil rag to run something very economically and efficiently
SMELL to smell a rat
to become suspicious
SMELL to smell blood
to divine imminent victory
SMELL to smell out something
to discover something by careful investigation
SMELL to smell trouble
to perceive difficulties
SMILE to wipe the smile off someone’s face
to destroy a person’s complacency
SMILE wipe that smile off your face! treat this matter more seriously!
SMOKE put that in your pipe and smoke it
contemplate that fact
SMOKE the big smoke
the big city
SMOKE to go up in smoke
to come to nothing
SMOKE to send a smoke signal
to give an indication
SMOKE to set up a smokescreen
to deliberately confuse an issue by disguising its salient features
SMOKE when the smoke clears
when sufficient time has passed
SMOKE where there is smoke there is fire
if there is a hint of trouble, then it is highly likely that there really is trouble
SMOOTH to be in smooth water
to have no troubles
SMOOTH to smooth the path for someone
to use one’s influence to make arrangements so that a person’s task will be easier or more readily accomplished
SMOOTH to take the rough with the smooth
to accept the hardships of life along with its pleasant features

SMORGASBORD smorgasbord
a series of different items from which a number can be chosen (from the Swedish words for “butter,” “goose” and “table”)
SNAG to strike a snag
to encounter a difficulty
SNAIL at a snail’s pace
very slowly
SNAKE a game of snakes and ladders
a series of ups and downs
SNAKE a snake in the grass
a person of low character
SNAP to snap at someone’s heels
to be a minor irritation to a person
SNAP to snap someone’s head off
to speak to a person aggressively
SNEEZE that is not to be sneezed at
that is so significant that it should not be rejected
SNOW to snow someone under
to overload a person with work
SNOWBALL to snowball
to grow rapidly in size or influence
SNOWFLAKE to have a snowflake’s chance in hell
to have no hope or possibility at all
SOAP a soap opera
a radio or television serial, often based on exaggerated domestic situations of no great importance (refers to sponsorship by soap manufacturers)
SOAP to be on one’s soap box
to hold forth on an issue about which one feels keenly
SOAP to soft-soap someone
to flatter a person
SOCK to chop someone off at the socks
to stop someone’s proposals prematurely
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOCK</td>
<td>to pull one's socks up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to set out to improve or correct one's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inadequate behavior or performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SODOM</td>
<td>a Sodom and Gomorrah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a place of vice (Genesis 18:20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOFT</td>
<td>to have a soft spot for someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be very fond of a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOFT</td>
<td>to have a soft underbelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to have a weakness which can be exploited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOFT</td>
<td>to soft-pedal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to restrain oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOFT</td>
<td>to soft-soap someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to flatter a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOFTEN</td>
<td>to soften someone up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to make a person more favorably disposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to one's wishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOFTEN</td>
<td>to soften the blow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to take action to reduce the trauma of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bad news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOFTLY</td>
<td>speak softly and carry a big stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>be polite to your potential enemies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>but maintain an active and visible defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>capability (from a speech by Theodore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roosevelt in 1901)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLDIER</td>
<td>to be a brave soldier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be brave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLDIER</td>
<td>to soldier on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to carry on despite difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLOMON</td>
<td>to need the wisdom of Solomon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be faced with the need to make a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>difficult decision (1 Kings 3:16-28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMERSAULT</td>
<td>to turn a complete somersault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to reverse one’s established policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SON</td>
<td>favorite son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>person preferred by many people for some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SONG</td>
<td>nothing to make a song or dance about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unexciting or unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SONG</td>
<td>swan song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>last appearance before retirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SONG</td>
<td>to buy something for a song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to buy something very cheaply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SONG</td>
<td>to make a song and dance about something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to create a fuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SONG</td>
<td>to sing a particular song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to state particular views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOOTHE</td>
<td>soothing syrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>insincere expressions of sympathy or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>flattery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SORE</td>
<td>eyesore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extremely ugly object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SORE</td>
<td>to be a sight for sore eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be something welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SORE</td>
<td>to open up a festering sore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to upset a person by drawing attention to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a long-standing grievance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SORROW</td>
<td>to drown one's sorrows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to drink by way of solace and in an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>attempt to forget some misfortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUL</td>
<td>a soul brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a person of similar ideals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUL</td>
<td>a soul-searching exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an examination of the advantages and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disadvantages of a proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUL</td>
<td>heart and soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with great energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUL</td>
<td>soul-destroying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extremely boring and demotivating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUL</td>
<td>to bare one's soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>talkatively to give a revealing insight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>into oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUL</td>
<td>to be the life and soul of the party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be the prime enthusiast for a cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUL</td>
<td>to keep body and soul together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to keep alive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUND</td>
<td>to sound alarm bells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to give warning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOUND to sound the death knell of something
to indicate the impending end of something

SOUNDING to act as a sounding board
to give, on request, constructive criticisms of ideas tentatively held

SOUNDING to take a sounding
to ascertain people's views

SOUP to be in the soup
to be in great difficulties

SOUR that is just sour grapes
those are disparaging remarks made only because he is peeved and resentful at someone else's better fortune

SOUR to hit a sour note
to discover an unexpected flaw in an otherwise satisfactory piece of work

SOUR to turn sour
to become impracticable or unprofitable

SOUTH a South Sea bubble
an unrealistic financial venture which is bound to result in total loss

SOW one can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear
it is impossible to manufacture something of a high standard without appropriate raw materials

SOW to get the wrong sow by the ear
to reach an incorrect conclusion

SOW to reap as one has sown
to experience the consequences of one's own actions

SOW to sow seeds
to propagate ideas in the hope that they will be adopted

SOW to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind
to make bad mistakes and to suffer the even worse consequences

SOW to sow wild oats
to indulge in foolish behavior while a young adult

SPACE to get some breathing space
to get more time in which to accomplish something

SPADE to call a spade a spade
not to mince words

SPADE to do the spadework
to prepare

SPAIN a castle in Spain
an impracticable proposition

SPANNER to throw a spanner into the works
to cause an unexpected complication

SPARE to carry a spare tire
to be fat

SPARK to make sparks fly
to cause rapid activity to take place

SPARK to spark on all cylinders
to work extremely well

SPARTAN Spartan
tough and efficient, with a complete absence of the finer things of life

SPEAK speak softly and carry a big stick
be polite to your potential enemies but maintain an active and visible defense capability (from a speech by Theodore Roosevelt in 1901)

SPEAK speak of the devil
here is the person we were just discussing

SPEAK to speak one's mind
to express one's views frankly and forcefully

SPEAK to speak the same language
to have a good understanding and similar ideas

SPEAK to speak volumes for something
to place something in a favorable light

SPEARHEAD to spearhead something
to lead a movement
SPECTACLES to see something through rose-colored spectacles to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

SPECTER to raise the specter of something to draw attention to a worrying expectation of something

SPECTRUM spectrum wide range of different opinions or backgrounds

SPEED speed the plow! let us get on with this as fast as possible!

SPELL to break the spell to spoil the effect

SPELL to have a spell in the paddock to have leave of absence

SPELL to spell something out to explain something in detail

SPELLBINDING spellbinding fascinating to an audience

SPEND to spend a sleepless night to worry about something

SPIDER to be the center of the spider's web to control an operation which involves numerous and/or complex ingredients

SPIKE to spike someone's guns to cause something to become useless

SPILL it is no use crying over spilt milk lamenting over a disaster achieves nothing

SPILL to spill the beans to indiscreetly reveal sensitive information

SPIN tailspin very fast fall

SPIN to be a money spinner to produce large profits easily and quickly

SPIN to be in a flat spin to be in a state of high excitement

SPIN to spin a yarn to tell an amusing or unlikely story

SPIN to spin something out to prolong some matter

SPINE to send a cold shiver down someone's spine to horrify a person

SPIRIT kindred spirit persons with similar interests and eccentricities

SPIRIT the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak the body is not up to the demands made on it

SPIT spit it out! unburden yourself!

SPITE to cut one's nose off to spite one's face to act in pique in a way which harms only oneself

SPLASH to make a splash to create a sensation

SPLEEN to vent one's spleen on someone to demonstrate one's ill temper to a person

SPLICE to splice the main brace to serve an extra ration of rum

SPLIT to split hairs to draw absurdly fine distinctions

SPLIT to split one's side to be convulsed with laughter

SPOIL to spoil the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar to engage in a false economy (the current word "ship" is actually a mistake for the original word "sheep" and the tar refers to the treatment of wounds)

SPOIL too many cooks spoil the broth one leader is all that is required
SPOKE to put a spoke in someone’s wheel
to interfere with another person’s activity, so preventing its continuance

SPONGE to throw up the sponge to concede defeat

SPOON he must have a long spoon that sups with the devil
great care is needed when negotiating deals with disreputable parties

SPOON to be born with a silver spoon in one’s mouth
to be brought up by wealthy parents

SPOON to get the wooden spoon to come in gloriously last

SPOT a leopard cannot change his spots
each person is born with certain unalterable characteristics

SPOT the one bright spot on the horizon
the only hopeful aspect

SPOT to be a tender spot to be a subject on which a person is touchy

SPOT to have a blind spot about something
to fail to recognize the adverse aspects of something

SPOT to have a soft spot for someone
to be very fond of a person

SPOT to put someone on the spot to embarrass a person

SPOTLIGHT to steal the spotlight
to set out to be the center of attention

SPOTLIGHT to turn the spotlight on something
to draw public attention to something

SPRAT to throw a sprat to catch a mackerel
to risk a little in the hope of gaining much

SPREAD to spread one’s wings
to assert authority which has not yet been conferred by one’s superiors and for which one may not be ready

SPREAD to spread oneself thin
to attempt to do more than is feasible in the available time

SPREAD to spread the net more widely
to become more comprehensive

SPRING a spring cleaning
a thorough review occurring a long time after the previous one

SPRING to spring to mind
to suddenly occur to a person

SPRINGBOARD a springboard
a situation from which one intends to make a rapid advance

SPUR to spur someone on
to agitate a person into doing something

SPUR to win one’s spurs
to gain recognition after a period of effort (refers to the earning of a knighthood in battle)

SQUARE a square peg in a round hole
a person much more suitable for a position rather different from the one held

SQUARE four square
honest and reliable

SQUARE to go back to square one
to start all over again

SQUARE to try to square the circle
to attempt the impossible (refers to a classical problem in geometry, namely, to construct with a compass a square of the same area as a given circle)

SQUEAKY the squeaky wheel gets the most attention
those complaining the most loudly will get their problems sorted out first
| **SQUEEZE** |  to squeeze someone out to force a person to leave |
|  |  to squeeze the last drop out of something to get the maximum advantage out of some favorable situation |
| **SQUIB** |  a damp squib disappointingly ineffective action (refers to fireworks which fail to go off) |
| **STAB** |  a stab in the dark a sheer guess |
|  |  to stab someone in the back to deliberately and surreptitiously harm a person who regarded one as a friend |
| **STABLE** |  a Herculean cleaning of the stables a thorough revision of operating procedure (refers to Hercules, a mythical Greek hero who cleaned the stables of Augeas) |
| **STACK** |  to have the cards stacked against one to be faced with many difficulties frustrating a project |
|  |  to have the odds stacked against one to be faced with many difficulties frustrating a project |
| **STAGE** |  the stage is set something is about to happen |
|  |  to be center stage to have everyone’s attention |
|  |  to be on a world stage to be prominent in international affairs |
|  |  to stage-manage something to arrange how something happens |
|  |  to upstage someone to deprive another person of the glory which he would otherwise have enjoyed |
| **STAGING** |  a staging post a place where action is initiated |
| **STAKE** |  to raise the stake to increase the amount of potential gain or loss in a project |
|  |  to stake a claim to indicate one’s desire to obtain something |
| **STALEMATE** |  stalemate a final result in which neither party to a dispute is victorious |
| **STALK** |  a stalking horse an ostensible reason |
| **STAMP** |  only a postage stamp between them virtually equal or close together |
|  |  to put one’s own stamp on something to affect something with one’s own characteristic style |
|  |  to rubber-stamp something to endorse without considering the merits |
| **STAMPEDE** |  to stampede someone into something to pressure a person into taking some action |
| **STAND** |  if one can’t stand the heat one should stay out of the kitchen a person should not put himself in a position involving pressures with which he cannot cope (words attributed to Harry S. Truman) |
|  |  not to have a leg to stand on to have one’s arguments completely demolished or to be without acceptable excuse or explanation |
|  |  to be able to do something standing on one’s head to be able to do something very easily |
|  |  to know where one stands to know what one supports or how one is affected |
|  |  to make a last-ditch stand to make a brave effort to stave off final defeat |
STAND to make someone's hair stand on end
to give a person shocking news

STAND to stand in someone's way to prevent a person achieving his goal

STAND to stand in the breach to bear the brunt of criticisms

STAND to stand on one's own two feet not to require the help of others

STAND to stand on someone's shoulders to build upon another person's ideas

STAND to stand one's ground to maintain a stance in the face of opposition

STAND to stand out from the crowd to be noticeably better than one's competitors

STAND to stand over someone with a big stick to intimidate a person in order to get him to act in a particular way

STAND to stand up and be counted to publicly announce one's position on some issue

STAND to stand up on one's hind legs to exert one's authority

STANDARD a standard bearer a highly visible activist for a cause

STANDOFF a Mexican standoff a situation where neither of two parties is making a move

STANDSTILL a standstill an inability to proceed

STAR one can thank one's lucky stars one was extremely fortunate

STAR rising star person making good progress in his career

STAR to have stars in one's eyes (for emotional rather than rational reasons) to be ecstatic

STAR to shoot for the stars to be unrealistic

STARE to stare someone in the face (of a solution, etc.) to become obvious

START to have a head start to have an advantage over others

START to start from behind scratch to be faced with a handicap

START to start from scratch to commence something without the benefit of any past activity

START to start the ball rolling to commence and enthusiastically advance an activity involving people

START to start with a blank sheet of paper to commence an exercise without being bound by any established practices

STATE to be in a state of flux to be subject to continuous change

STATE to find out the state of play to ascertain the current position of some project

STAY if one can't stand the heat one should stay out of the kitchen a person should not put himself in a position involving pressure with which he cannot cope (words attributed to Harry S. Truman)

STAY to stay tuned to keep in touch for further information as it becomes available

STEAL to steal a march on someone to anticipate another person's actions and get in ahead

STEAL to steal someone's clothes to plagiarize another person's ideas

STEAL to steal someone's heart to cause a person to fall in love with one
STEAL to steal someone’s thunder
to take credit for another person’s
good work (refers to a dispute over
the copying of a machine invented by
a 17th-century dramatist to reproduce
the sound of thunder during a play)

STEAL to steal the show
to have the maximum appeal to those watching

STEAL to steal the spotlight
to set out to be the center of attention

STEAM full steam ahead!
get going as fast as possible!

STEAM to develop a head of steam
to gain momentum

STEAM to let off steam
to engage in noisy or robust activity
as a form of relaxation

STEAM to lose steam
to slow down

STEAM to run out of steam
to lose one’s energy and enthusiasm

STEAM under one’s own steam
without external help

STEAMROLL to steamroll something through
to use enormous force to achieve an
objective

STEEL to be a man of steel
to be a person with moral courage

STEEL to have nerves of steel
not to be easily frightened

STEEL to steel one’s heart against something
to determine that, notwithstanding one’s
natural compassion, something shall not happen

STEM to stem the hemorrhage
to put a stop to the financial losses of a project

STEM to stem the tide
to make progress against something

STEP a step in the right direction
the first in a series of measures designed to correct some problem

STEP a stepping stone
a means to an end

STEP by small steps
gradually

STEP step by step
gradually

STEP to follow in someone’s footsteps
to do as another person did

STEP to get in step with someone
to do as another person does

STEP to overstep the mark
to fail to observe the proprieties

STEP to step down
to retire from some position

STEP to step into the ring
to enter a competitive environment

STEP to step out of line
to infringe accepted rules of behavior

STEP to take a giant step forward
to make a significant advance

STEP to take a step backward
to move farther away from one’s goal

STEP to step on someone’s corns
to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility

STEP to step on someone’s toes
to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility

STEP to watch one’s step
to be on the lookout for danger or to set out to improve one’s behavior

STEW to be in a stew
to be in difficulties

STEW to stew in one’s juice
to suffer the adverse consequences of one’s acts or omissions
STICK a cobbler should stick to his last
every person should confine himself to activities for which he has been trained

STICK a stick-in-the-mud
an unenterprising person

STICK any stick to beat a dog
any excuse will do if it serves one’s purpose

STICK it sticks in my throat
I find it galling

STICK not to have the wherewithal to rub two sticks together
to be very poor

STICK some mud will stick
reputations will be hurt even after accusations are proved false

STICK speak softly and carry a big stick
be polite to your potential enemies but maintain an active and visible defense capability (from a speech by Theodore Roosevelt in 1901)

STICK sticks and carrots
disincentives and incentives in combination (refers to the handling of donkeys)

STICK the words stuck in my throat
I just could not get myself to say the intended words

STICK to be a good old stick
to be a kind and thoughtful person

STICK to be better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick
to be particularly welcome

STICK to be in a cleft stick
to be in a dilemma

STICK to be more than one can poke a stick at
to be more than can reasonably be handled

STICK to be on the losing end of the stick
to be worse off while the other party to a transaction becomes correspondingly better off

STICK to be unable to keep people away with a big stick
to be faced with a large crowd or much demand

STICK to get stuck into some problem
to attempt to solve a problem with great vigor

STICK to get stuck into someone
to castigate a person

STICK to give someone a bit of stick
to mildly criticize a person

STICK to hold the wrong end of the stick
to be completely mistaken about something

STICK to stand over someone with a big stick
to intimidate a person in order to get him to act in a particular way

STICK to stick a knife into someone
to act vindictively toward a person

STICK to stick one’s neck out
to have the courage of one’s convictions or to take a calculated risk

STICK to stick out a mile
to be very apparent

STICK to stick to one’s game
to confine oneself to activities in areas in which one has knowledge and expertise

STICK to stick to one’s guns
to continue to hold certain beliefs notwithstanding opposition by others

STICK to wield a big stick
to exert power

STICKY a sticky patch
a period fraught with difficulties
STICKY to be a sticky beak
to show excessive curiosity into matters not of one’s concern
STICKY to be on a sticky wicket
to face some difficulties
STICKY to come to a sticky end
to endure an unpleasant fate
STICKY to have sticky fingers
to be dishonest
STIFF a stiff upper lip
obstinate courage in the face of pain or adversity
STIFF stiff cheese!
circumstances which may be unwelcome but which will not be altered and in respect of which no great sympathy is felt
STILL still waters run deep
a person with a quiet manner may have a surprisingly great knowledge of a subject
STING to be the sting in the tail
to be the unexpected unpleasant conclusion
STIR to stir a finger
to make some minimum effort
STIR to stir a hand
to volunteer assistance
STIR to stir the possum
to set out to raise controversial issues
STIR to stir the pot
to set out to raise controversial issues
STIR to stir up a hornet’s nest
to take action which results in unpleasant side-effects
STITCH a stitch in time saves nine
preventive maintenance saves money in the long run
STITCH to have someone in stitches
to greatly amuse a person
STITCH to stitch up a deal
to successfully conclude a deal

STOCK lock, stock and barrel entirely
STOCK to be a blue-chip stock
to be of excellent quality
STOCK to take stock
to contemplate the alternatives
STOKO to stoke the fires
to provoke a violent reaction
STOMACH someone’s eyes are bigger than his stomach
a person is unrealistic
STOMACH to have butterflies in one’s stomach
a feeling of anxiety
STOMACH to have no stomach for something
to have no taste or fortitude for something
STONE a milestone
an achievement
STONE a stepping stone
a means to an end
STONE cornerstone
key ingredient
STONE people in glass houses should not throw stones
those who are less than perfect are foolish to criticize others
STONE the touchstone
the standard
STONE to draw blood from a stone
to do the impossible
STONE to have a heart of stone
to be unfeeling
STONE to kill some proposal stone dead
to abandon some proposal completely
STONE to kill two birds with one stone
to achieve a second objective in the course of achieving the first objective
STONE to leave no stone unturned
to be very thorough
STONE within a stone’s throw
very close

STONEWALLING stonewalling
deliberate obstruction or delaying tactics

STOOL to fall between two stools
not to fit neatly into either of two
available alternatives and waver be-
tween them

STOP a whistlestop tour
a hurried (especially ceremonial) visit
to many places

STOP heart-stopping
exciting

STOP the buck stops here
I accept full responsibility (sign on
the desk of Harry S. Truman when
president of the United States)

STOP to be stopped in one’s tracks
suddenly and unexpectedly to be
prevented from carrying on with a
project

STOP to come to a full stop
to completely cease activity

STOP to pull out all stops
to make maximum effort

STOP to stop up one hole in a sieve
to do something quite useless

STOP when the music stops
suddenly and soon (refers to an im-
mansent crisis leading to some resolu-
tion of a matter, as in a game of
musical chairs)

STORAGE to put something into
cold storage
to put something aside for dealing
with at some indeterminate future time

STORE to take over the store
to assume the management

STORM any port in a storm
anything which helps to avoid diffi-
culties is welcome

STORM the calm before the storm
the quiet period before an expected or
inevitable crisis

STORM there are black clouds on
the horizon
bad news is expected

STORM to barnstorm
to visit accompanied by a show of
force

STORM to be in the eye of the storm
to be at the center of a controversy

STORM to brainstorm
to pool thoughts in the course of a
session designed to generate fresh ideas
and especially to build upon the ideas
of others

STORM to create a storm
to kick up a fuss

STORM to ride out the storm
to come safely through some danger-
ous situation

STORM to run into a firestorm
to be faced with many protests

STORM to take someone by storm
to captivate an audience

STORM to weather the storm
to come safely through a crisis

STORMY to be a stormy petrel
a person who disturbs a pleasant state
of affairs by agitating for change

STORY a cock and bull story
an explanation which is completely
unbelievable and unacceptable

STORY a tall story
an interesting but untrue and unbel-
lievable tale

STRAIGHT a straight face
a facial expression which does not
reveal one’s thoughts in a humorous
situation

STRAIGHT a straight shooter
a person who is frank and outspoken

STRAIGHT straight from the
shoulder
bluntly
to be on the straight and narrow
be completely honest

to jump straight in at the deep end
do something without a proper lead in

to maintain a straight bat
be efficient

to strain at a gnat
be scrupulous about trifles

in dire straits
in great need

strait-laced
puritanical

to keep someone in a straitjacket
deny a person any discretionary powers at all

to strangle some discussion
cut off some unfinished discussion

a stranglehold
a firm grip on a commercial situation, effectively freezing out a competitor

to hit the straps
really get going

one can't make bricks without straw
one cannot achieve results in the absence of adequate resources

straws in the wind
unofficial preliminary indications of something likely to be formally revealed soon

the final straw
the latest step, which, when added to a large number of seemingly harmless previous steps, sets off a disaster resulting from the cumulative effect

to be a man of straw
have no assets while giving a contrary appearance

to buy straw hats in winter
buy in a depressed market when most other people are sellers

to clasp at straws
have a hopeless case but show unjustified optimism on noting minor positive features

to draw the short straw
be the one appointed to do something

mainstream
orthodox

to get on stream
now operate successfully following the end of a settling-in period

to swap horses in midstream
change direction during the course of a project

a one-way street
a flow of activity in only one direction

not to be in the same street as someone
not to be of comparable quality

the man in the street
the average citizen

there is blood in the streets
much damage has been done to a cause

the man in Queer Street
to be in debt

to be streets ahead
outperform one's competitors by a wide margin
STREET to be up one's alley
to be right within a person's expertise or area of interest

STREET to walk in off the street
to come without prior arrangement or notification

STRENGTH to be a tower of strength
to be a person who supports and comforts another

STRENGTHEN to strengthen someone's hand
to give a person additional authority or greater moral support or more facts to support his case

STRETCH to enter the home stretch
to commence the last stage

STREW to be on a path strewn with roses
to lead a very pleasant life

STRICtLY that is strictly for the birds
that is blatant and naive nonsense

STRIDE to hit one's stride
to settle down to some task

STRIDE to take something in one's stride
to cope with something easily

STRIKE it strikes me
it occurs to me

STRIKE to be thunderstruck
to be amazed

STRIKE to be within striking distance
to be fairly close

STRIKE to strike a blow
to resume work

STRIKE to strike a blow for some principle
to work toward the attainment of some principle

STRIKE to strike a chord
to sound familiar or recall something to mind

STRIKE to strike a responsive chord
to get a favorable reaction to a proposal

STRIKE to strike a snag
to encounter a difficulty

STRIKE to strike the roots of something
to work toward the destruction of something

STRIKE to strike gold
to have one's efforts suddenly rewarded by great success

STRIKE to strike pay dirt
to become successful

STRIKE to strike the right chord
to appeal successfully to someone's emotions

STRIKE to strike the right key
to find the appropriate solution

STRIKE to strike the right note
to make a good impression

STRIKE to strike while the iron is hot
to take advantage of a situation which cannot last

STRING to be tied to someone's apron strings
to be excessively influenced by a female

STRING to have a second string to one's bow
to have an additional qualification appropriate to the task

STRING to have strings attached
to be subject to conditions

STRING to hold the purse strings
to have control of expenditures

STRING to pull at one's heartstrings
to affect one emotionally

STRING to pull strings
to use one's special influence with those in a position to make favorable decisions which might otherwise not be forthcoming
STRING to tighten the purse strings
to reduce outlays

STRIPE to earn one's stripes
to deserve promotion

STROKE a master stroke
particularly brilliant action

STROKE with a stroke of the pen
by edict

STUFF to be hot stuff
to be skillful or very passionate

STUFFING to knock the stuffing out of someone
to completely demoralize a person

STUMBLE stumbling block
an impediment or difficulty preventing the easy completion of some project or a dilemma involving a moral issue

STUMPS until stumps are drawn
until the project ends (refers to cricket)

SUCK suck it and see
discover experimentally how something works

SUCK to suck someone in
to embroil an innocent party in an unethical enterprise

SUCK to suck the lemon dry
to get the maximum advantage out of some favorable situation

SUCK to teach one's grandmother how to suck eggs
to try to tell a much more experienced person something very obvious to him

SUDDEN sudden death
instantaneously or without phasing in

SUGAR to sugar the pill
to cause something to be more acceptable

SUIT one's long suit
one's main skills

SUIT to follow suit
to do the same as others

SUMMER one swallow does not make a summer
much further evidence is desirable before any action taken

SUN a place in the sun
a favorable situation

SUN everything under the sun
everything

SUN the sun has set on something
something has concluded

SUN to make hay while the sun shines
to utilize an opportunity before it disappears

SUP he must have a long spoon that sups with the devil
great care is needed when negotiating deals with disreputable parties

SUPPER to sing for one's supper
to carry out a task in order to receive a favor in return

SURE sure-fire
guaranteed

SURFACE on the surface
on the basis of a superficial first impression

SURFACE to only scratch the surface
to deal with only a small portion of a much larger whole

SWALLOW one swallow does not make a summer
much further evidence is desirable before any action taken

SWALLOW someone has swallowed a dictionary
a person uses excessively long words

SWALLOW to be a bitter pill to swallow
to be a great humiliation and disappointment which have to be endured

SWALLOW to be hard to swallow
not to be readily acceptable
SWALLOW to swallow one's pride
to take action despite the humiliating
nature of this course

SWALLOW to swallow the bait
to succumb to a temptation deliber-
ately put in one's way

SWALLOW to swallow the line
to accept as truth the story being
proffered

SWAMP to swamp someone
to overload a person

SWAN swan song
last appearance before retirement

SWAP to swap horses in midstream
to change direction during the course
of a project

SWARM to swarm out
to gather in large numbers

SWEAT blood, sweat and tears
hard work and much effort

SWEAT no sweat
this presents no difficulty

SWEAT to be in a cold sweat
to be afraid

SWEAT to sweat it out
to await one's fate calmly

SWEET to be in full swing
to be very active

SWEETEN to sweeten a deal
to offer some concessions or incentives

SWEETEN to sweeten the pot
to provide a few additional inducements

SWEETHEART a sweetheart deal
an agreement negotiated in private
without full regard to the interests of
those affected

SWELL a swelled head
an exaggerated idea of one's abilities
or status

SWIM it is a case of sink or swim
the attempt is worthwhile, despite the
risk of failure

SWIM to be in the swim
to be a member of a group knowing
what is going on

SWIM to swim against the tide
to take up a minority position

SWINE to cast pearls before swine
to confer valuable benefits on some-
one who neither recognizes nor ap-
preciates them

SWING the swing of the pendulum
the alternation of voter acceptance
between opposing political parties

SWING there is no room to swing
a cat
this place is very small (actually re-ers to a cat-o'-nine-tails)

SWING to be in full swing
to be very active

SWING to swing the lead
to cheat an employer by not working
while being paid to do so

SWING what one loses on the swings
one gains on the roundabouts
there are advantages and disadvan-
tages which offset each other

SWIPE to take a swipe at someone
to attempt to embarrass a person for
something that person has done

SWOOP in one fell swoop
all at the same time
SWORD to be a two-edged sword
to involve both advantages and disadvantages of similar significance
SWORD to cross swords with someone
to have a disagreement with another person
SWORD to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one
to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one
SWORD to hold a sword at someone's throat
to exert undue pressure on another person in an endeavor to achieve a result which would otherwise not be forthcoming
SYRUP soothing syrup
insincere expressions of sympathy or flattery
SYSTEM to be all systems "'go'
to go ahead as fast as possible

T
to a t
exactly
T to dot the i's and cross the t's
to be meticulous in completing the documentation for a transaction
TAB to keep tabs on something
to monitor something
TABLE to lay a proposal on the table
to make a proposal available for discussion or to adjourn discussion on a proposal for an indefinite period
TABLE to lay one's cards on the table
to be utterly frank and open or to honestly disclose one's position
TABLE to put money on the table
to back one's judgment in a tangible way or to demonstrate one's sincerity

TABLE to turn the tables on someone
to cause the relative positions of oneself and another person to be reversed
TACK to be on the wrong tack
to be using an incorrect procedure or policy
TACK to change tack
to alter one's direction
TACK to get down to brass tacks
to discuss the aspects which really matter
TACKLE to tackle someone head-on
to confront a person
TAIL bright-eyed and bushy-tailed
naive but enthusiastic
TAIL heads I win—tails you lose
whichever way this matter goes I will benefit at your expense
TAIL in two shakes of a duck's tail
in an instant
TAIL the tail end of something
the very end of something
TAIL the tail wagging the dog
a minor aspect with disproportionate effect on a major aspect
TAIL to be the sting in the tail
to be the unexpected unpleasant conclusion
TAIL to be unable to make head or tail of something
to be unable to understand how something functions or what something means
TAIL to get off one's tail
to stir oneself from one's inertia
TAIL to grab the devil by the tail
to face up to difficulties
TAIL to hang onto someone's coat-tails
to excessively rely on another person's initiatives
TAIL to have a tiger by the tail
to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized

TAIL to have one’s tail between one’s legs
to show great humility in the light of a backing down

TAIL to trail one’s coat-tails
to invite a quarrel

TAIL to wait two shakes of a lamb’s tail
to wait just a few moments

TAIL with his tail between his legs contritely

TAILEND tailedend Charlie
a person who habitually comes last

TAILOR to tailor something
to do something in a way which has regard to the specific needs or preferences of a particular person

TAILSPIN tailspin
very fast fall

TALE a telltale sign
a visible indication revealing true facts despite efforts at concealment

TALE an old wives’ tale
a traditionally-held theory without any scientific backing

TALE to tell tales out of school
to deliberately leak a secret

TALK talk of the devil
here is the person we were just discussing

TALK to talk shop
to discuss business or professional matters on a social occasion

TALK to talk turkey
to talk realistically

TALL a tall story
an interesting but untrue and unbelievable tale

TALL tall oaks from little acorns grow
even major enterprises have to have small beginnings (from “Lines written for a School Declamation” by David Everett)

TALL to be a tall order
to be an unreasonable expectation

TALL to cut tall poppies down to size
to humiliate haughty persons

TALLY to keep a tally
to keep a record (refers to a piece of wood with notches made on it to indicate a count)

TANGENT to go off at a tangent
to depart from the main matter under consideration and follow instead some other matter only marginally related to it

TANGLE a tangled web
a series of lies, especially with inconsistencies leading to exposure (from Sir Walter Scott’s MARMION)

TANGO it takes two to tango
some activities cannot be carried out single-handedly

TAP to be on tap
to be readily available on request

TAP to turn off the tap
to deny further access to supplies or information

TAPE red tape
excessively bureaucratic procedures

TAR to be tarred with the same brush
to be damned merely because of one’s association with another person

TAR to have a touch of the tarbrush
to be not quite a full-blood Caucasian
TAR to spoil the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar
to engage in a false economy (the current word “ship” is actually a mistake for the original word “sheep” and the tar refers to the treatment of wounds)

TARGET a moving target
an objective subject to constant revision

TARGET target
objective

TARGET to zero in on a target
to move directly toward one's objective

TARNISH to tarnish one’s image
to become less highly regarded

TASTE to be left with a nasty taste in one’s mouth
to be appalled or very disappointed at another person’s unethical behavior to one

TASTE to get a taste of one’s own medicine
to suffer from an initiative intended to affect only other persons

TAT tit for tat
reprisals

TATTER in tatters
utterly destroyed

TEA I would not do so-and-so for all the tea in China
I will never do so-and-so

TEA not to be someone’s cup of tea
to be outside a person’s expertise or area of interest

TEACH one cannot teach an old dog new tricks
people get irreversibly set in their ways

TEACH to teach one’s grandmother how to suck eggs
to try to tell a much more experienced person something very obvious to him

TEACH to teach someone a lesson
to inflict something unpleasant on a person in the hope that it will lead to a change in his behavior

TEACUP a tempest in a teacup
a controversy about a minor matter but one which looms large in the minds of the parties

TEAM a cricket team
eleven people

TEAR blood, sweat and tears
hard work and much effort

TEAR that’s torn it
that has foiled the proposal

TEAR to almost drive someone to tears
to present information designed to make another person express sympathy not warranted by the facts

TEAR to bore someone to tears
to greatly weary a person by dull and uninteresting conversation or by lack of action

TEAR to shed a quiet tear for something
to lament the passing of something

TEAR to shed crocodile tears
to be a hypocrite

TEAR to tear one’s hair out
to be agitated

TEAR to tear oneself away
to leave despite a great desire to stay

TEAR to tear someone apart
to ruthlessly destroy another person’s case

TEAR to tear something to ribbons
to damage something severely

TELEGRAPH to telegraph one’s punches
by one’s actions to give advance warning of one’s future plans

TELL a telltale sign
a visible indication revealing true facts despite efforts at concealment
TELL if I've told you once I've told you a thousand times
I express resentment at the need to constantly repeat some statement
TELL tell it to the marines
such nonsense is not believable
TELL to tell tales out of school
to deliberately leak a secret
TEMPEST a tempest in a teacup
a controversy about a minor matter but one which looms large in the minds of the parties
TEN to be only ten pence in the shilling
to be slightly stupid
TEN not to touch something with a ten-foot pole
to go out of one's way to avoid something
TENDER to be a tender spot
to be a subject on which a person is touchy
TENT to quietly fold up one's tent
to surreptitiously abandon a previously-cherished stance
TENTACLE tentacles
strong and unpleasant influence extending a long way from its base and in many directions
TENTERHOOK to be on tenterhooks
to anxiously await some result
TERRIBLE an enfant terrible
a person who raises pertinent but unpalatable issues (French, "little terror")
TEST a litmus test
an event which allows the outcome of future events to be predicted more accurately
TEST to be the acid test
to establish something beyond doubt
TEST to road test something
to try something out under real conditions
TEST to test the water
to try out an idea in a small way
TETHER to be at the end of one's tether
to be frustrated by a lack of knowledge, authority or patience
THAMES to set the Thames on fire
to do something noteworthy
THANK one can thank one's lucky stars
one was extremely fortunate
THEME variations on a theme
alternative approaches in similar vein
THERE to be neither here nor there
to be irrelevant or unimportant
THICK through thick and thin
regardless of any obstacles
THICK to be in the thick of things
to get involved at the center of some activity
THICK to come in thick and fast
to arrive quickly and in great volume
THICK to have a thick skin
to be impervious to criticism
THICK to have the hide of a rhinoceros
to be totally unaffected by and unresponsive to valid criticism
THICK to penetrate someone's thick skull
to make a person understand something difficult or acknowledge something unwelcome
THIMBLE a pea and thimble trick
a clever fraud committed in the presence of its victim without this being obvious at the time
THIN that argument is wearing a bit thin
that is a very weak case
THIN through thick and thin
regardless of any obstacles
THIN to be the thin edge of the wedge
by conceding a small point to create an undesirable precedent for much larger issues

THIN to be thin on the ground
to be scarce

THIN to produce something out of thin air
to get hold of something in circumstances where this seemed impossible

THIN to skate on thin ice
to act in disregard of obvious danger

THIN to spread oneself thin
to attempt to do more than is feasible in the available time

THIN to tread the thin line
cautiously to take action in circumstances where either too much or too little will cause difficulties

THIN to vanish into thin air
unexpectedly to disappear

THING to be in the thick of things
to get involved at the center of some activity

THINK one shudders to think what the outcome might be
there is great concern as to the outcome

THINK to put one's thinking cap on
to concentrate on finding a solution to a difficult problem

THINK to think twice before doing something
to consider with particular care

THINLY thinly-veiled
barely concealed

THIRD to give someone the third degree
to apply pressure while questioning closely a person under suspicion

THIRST to thirst for blood
to be eager for revenge

THOMAS a doubting Thomas
a person who refuses to believe claims in the absence of proof (John 20:25)

THORN a rose between two thorns
something beautiful in the midst of ugliness

THORN to be a thorn in someone’s flesh
to be a person whose persistent presence and righteous views annoy

THORN to wear one’s crown of thorns
to have one’s own difficulties (John 19:5)

THOUSAND a sixty-four thousand dollar question
a pertinent but very difficult question (refers to a TV quiz show in which an initial prize doubles with the successful answering of progressively more difficult questions)

THOUSAND a thousand and one many

THOUSAND if I’ve told you once I’ve told you a thousand times
I express resentment at the need to constantly repeat some statement

THREAD the thread
the connecting link of a set of arguments

THREAD to hang by a slender thread
to only just survive

THREE a three-card trick
a ruse used by a dishonest person in order to induce his victims to hand over some of their assets

THREE yes sir—yes sir—three bags full!
(in servile response to some request)
yes, very willingly!

THROAT cut-throat
highly competitive
THROAT it sticks in my throat
I find it galling

THROAT the words stuck in my throat
I just could not get myself to say the intended words

THROAT to be at each other's throats
to be always fighting

THROAT to cut one's own throat
to act in a way which damages one's own interests

THROAT to have a lump in one's throat
to feel emotional

THROAT to have someone by the throat
to claim victory over an opponent

THROAT to hold a knife at someone's throat
to exert undue pressure on another person in an endeavor to achieve a result which would otherwise not be forthcoming

THROAT to hold a sword at someone's throat
to exert undue pressure on another person in an endeavor to achieve a result which would otherwise not be forthcoming

THROAT to jump down someone's throat
to react angrily to the remarks of the other party to a conversation

THROAT to ram something down someone's throat
to pressure another person into accepting an idea with which he does not agree

THRONES the power behind the throne
a person exercising the real authority but without having the official right to do so (the antonym of "titular head")

THROUGH a breakthrough
success in overcoming resistance to a proposal

THROUGH to fall through
not to eventuate as expected

THROW people in glass houses should not throw stones
those who are less than perfect are foolish to criticize others

THROW to be the throw of a loaded die
to be an act of deceit

THROW to throw a blanket over a proposal
to refuse to proceed with a proposal

THROW to throw a cat among the pigeons
to cause consternation by revealing an unpleasant and unexpected fact

THROW to throw a long shadow
to have wide-spread ramifications

THROW to throw a pebble against the window
to gently draw attention to oneself

THROW to throw a spanner into the works
to cause an unexpected complication

THROW to throw a sprat to catch a mackerel
to risk a little in the hope of gaining much

THROW to throw brickbats at someone
to express displeasure with a person

THROW to throw down the gauntlet
to issue a challenge (refers to the glove worn by a knight)

THROW to throw dust into someone's eyes
to deceive a person by presenting inaccurate or misleading information

THROW to throw good money after bad
to waste further money in a vain attempt to recover money already lost
THROW to throw in one's hand
to give in or to give up

THROW to throw in the towel
to concede defeat

THROW to throw one's cap into the air
to celebrate some achievement

THROW to throw one's hat into the air
to express joy

THROW to throw one's weight about
to use one's real or imagined status in order to achieve certain results

THROW to throw out the baby with the bathwater
to discard a major benefit in the course of obtaining a comparatively minor advantage

THROW to throw someone a bone
to fob a person off with a symbolic but unimportant gesture

THROW to throw someone a few crumbs
to fob a person off with a few symbolic but unimportant concessions

THROW to throw someone in the shade
to surpass a person

THROW to throw someone off the scent
to deceive a person by giving out misleading indications

THROW to throw someone to the lions
to abandon a person

THROW to throw someone to the wolves
to expose a person to exploitation by more sophisticated persons

THROW to throw something into a shambles
to make something messy and useless

THROW to throw something out of the window
to completely reject an idea or proposal

THROW to throw something to the dogs
to sacrifice something

THROW to throw the book at someone
to prosecute a person with all the vigor allowed by law

THROW to throw up one's hands
to express disgust

THROW to throw up the sponge
to concede defeat

THROW within a stone's throw
very close

THUD to come down with a thud
to be suddenly disillusioned

THUMB a rule of thumb
a simple yet useful approximation

THUMB a thumbnail sketch
brief but pertinent details

THUMB someone's fingers are all thumbs
a person is clumsy with his hands

THUMB to be under someone's thumb
to be dominated by a person

THUMB to give a thumbs up
to approve or grant permission (refers to sign given by Roman emperor sparing a life)

THUMB to thumb one's nose at someone
to show one's contempt for someone in authority and to ostentatiously disregard his orders

THUMB to twiddle one's thumbs
not to be involved in any worthwhile activity

THUMP a tub thumper
a preacher who rants and raves

THUNDER to be thunderstruck
to be amazed
THUNDER to steal someone’s thunder
to take credit for another person’s good work (refers to a dispute over the copying of a machine invented by a 17th-century dramatist to reproduce the sound of thunder during a play)

THUNDERBOLT a thunderbolt
a surprise

TICK what makes someone tick
what causes a person to act as he does

TICKET just the ticket
just what is needed

TICKET that’s the ticket!
that is the proper thing to do

TICKET to write one’s own ticket
to set one’s own terms and conditions

TICKLE to be tickled pink
to be very pleased

TICKLE to tickle the Peter
to rob one’s employer

TICKLISH ticklish
awkward, requiring delicate handling

TIDE the tide has turned
conditions have changed

TIDE the tide is running in favor of some proposition
public opinion supports some proposition

TIDE to be caught by the tide
to be dealt with by something inevitable

TIDE to stem the tide
to make progress against something

TIDE to swim against the tide
to take up a minority position

TIDE to turn the tide
to reverse the direction of something

TIE to be tied down
to have responsibilities precluding alternative activities

TIE to be tied to someone’s apron strings
to be excessively influenced by a female

TIE to be tied up
to be engaged

TIE to tie in with something
to be consistent with something

TIE to tie someone’s hands
to prevent a person from acting as he sees fit

TIE to tie someone’s hands behind his back
to make it impossible for a person to act at all

TIE to tie something up
to finalize the arrangements for something

TIE to tie the knot
to marry

TIE to tie up the loose ends
to complete the minor outstanding items of some substantially finished project

TIGER a paper tiger
an empty threat

TIGER a toothless tiger
an authority which has been given totally inadequate powers for its task

TIGER to have a tiger by the tail
to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized

TIGHT a tight rein
strong controls

TIGHT a watertight contract
a contract without loopholes or escape clauses

TIGHT tight-fisted
stingy

TIGHT to be in a tight corner
to experience a crisis
TIGHT to be tight-lipped
  to keep confidences or to be uncom-
  municative
TIGHT to run a tight ship
  to manage an efficient organization
TIGHT to sit tight
  obstinately to do nothing
TIGHTEN to tighten one’s belt
  to lower one’s rate of spending
TIGHTEN to tighten the noose
  to get closer to inflicting defeat
TIGHTEN to tighten the purse strings
  to reduce outlays
TIGHTEN to tighten the screw
  to increase the moral and psychologi-
  cal pressure
TIGHTROPE to walk a tightrope
  to do something very dangerous
TILL to have one’s fingers in the till
  to steal from one’s employer
TILT to tilt at windmills
  to attack an imagined but nonexistent enemy (from Cervantes’ DON QUIXOTE)
TIME a stitch in time saves nine
  preventive maintenance saves money
  in the long run
TIME a time bomb
  a source of serious problems which are certain to surface later on
TIME he would not give one the time of day
  he is unwilling to help anybody
TIME if I’ve told you once I’ve told you a thousand times
  I express resentment at the need to constantly repeat some statement
TIME to live on borrowed time
  to live longer than expected
TIME to mark time
  to do nothing while awaiting develop-
  ments
TIN a little tin god
  a petty tyrant
TINKER not worth a tinker’s curse
  worthless
TINKER to tinker at the edges
  to make minor or cosmetic changes without affecting the substance
TIP it is on the tip of my tongue
  the right word has momentarily es-
  caped me
TIP to be the tip of the iceberg
  to be only a very small portion of a much larger but less obvious whole
TIP to cling on by one’s fingertips
  to have only a slender hold
TIP to have some subject at one’s fingertips
  to be very familiar with a subject
TIP to tip a bucket on someone
  to point out in a humiliating way another person’s faults
TIP to tip one’s hand
  to disclose details of one’s position
TIP to tip someone over the edge
  to cause a person to become mentally ill
TIP to tip the balance
  to provide further information or arg-
  ument which results in an issue, which could have been decided either way, being determined in a particular way
TIP to tip the scales
  to be a factor which in combination with other factors results in a particu-
  lar decision which would otherwise not have been reached
TIP to tiptoe around the difficulties
  to act as though the difficulties did not exist
TIRE to carry a spare tire
  to be fat
TISSUE only a tissue between them
  virtually equal or close together
TIT tit for tat reprisals

TITANIC to rearrange the deckchairs on the Titanic
to take some initiative which is quite useless because it does not take much greater change into account

TOAST to have someone on toast to be victorious over a person

TOE a toehold
an opportunity small in itself but with the potential to lead to bigger things

TOE to dig one's toes in
to become even more stubborn than at first

TOE to dip one's toe in the water
to gently explore an opportunity

TOE to keep someone on his toes
to induce a person to be efficient

TOE to tiptoe around the difficulties
to act as though the difficulties did not exist

TOE to toe the line
to conform

TOE to tread on someone's toes
to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility

TOKEN by the same token
by way of corroboration

TOM every Tom, Dick and Harry
just about everybody

TONE overtones
implied threats

TONGS to go hammer and tongs
to do something with great energy

TONGUE I could have bitten my tongue off
I wish that I had not made such a hurtful remark

TONGUE a slip of the tongue
incorrect words uttered accidently

TONGUE it is on the tip of my tongue
the right word has momentarily escaped me

TONGUE to feel the rough side of someone's tongue
to be verbally abused by a person

TONGUE to find one's tongue
to overcome one's shyness and speak

TONGUE to have a loose tongue
to speak foolishly or indiscreetly

TONGUE to have a sharp tongue
to speak one's mind in forceful language

TONGUE to have a silver tongue
to be eloquent

TONGUE to hold one's tongue
to keep quiet

TONGUE to keep a civil tongue in one's head
to be polite, especially under provocation

TONGUE to roll off the tongue
to be said very easily

TONGUE to set tongues wagging
to behave in a way which encourages scandal mongers

TONGUE to speak with forked tongues
to utter half-truths with the intention of misleading the listener

TONGUE tongue in cheek
full of irony

TONIC to be a tonic
to cheer someone up

TOOL tools
the means to do something

TOOTH a tooth for a tooth
retaliation (Exodus 21:24)

TOOTH one would give one's eye teeth for something
a person would very much like to achieve some objective
TOOTH teething trouble
problems in the early stages of a project

TOOTH to bare one's teeth
to imply threats

TOOTH to be armed to the teeth
to carry many weapons

TOOTH to be fed up to the back teeth
to be disgusted

TOOTH to be long in the tooth
to be old

TOOTH to believe in the tooth fairy
to be particularly gullible

TOOTH to cut one's teeth on something
to get one's first experience by doing something

TOOTH to escape by the skin of one's teeth
to only just avoid some disaster

TOOTH to fight tooth and nail
to strive very hard to win

TOOTH to get one's teeth into something
to tackle a task with enthusiasm

TOOTH to gnash one's teeth
to express frustration

TOOTH to go through something with a fine-tooth comb
to conduct an extremely thorough investigation

TOOTH to grit one's teeth
to get ready to suffer pain

TOOTH to hang on by the skin of one's teeth
to only just survive

TOOTH to have a sweet tooth
to be particularly fond of cakes and confectionery

TOOTH to have teeth
to be effective

TOOTH to kick someone in the teeth
to take action which demonstrates annoyance at or dislike of a person

TOOTH to lie through one's teeth
to tell blatant untruths

TOOTH to set someone's teeth on edge
to cause a person to feel unhappy at a situation

TOOTH to take the bit between one's teeth
to face up to a problem

TOOTHLESS a toothless tiger
an authority which has been given totally inadequate powers for its task

TOP off the top of one's head
based on experience but without detailed consideration

TOP the top dog
the person in the most powerful position

TOP to be at the top of the tree
to be a leading member of one's profession

TOP to be icing on top of the cake
to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario

TOP to be in top gear
to be making excellent progress

TOP to be on top of the world
to be very happy

TOP to be over the top
to be quite outrageous

TOP to blow one's top
to show anger (refers to a volcano)

TOP to score top points
to outwit other persons

TOP top drawer
first class

TORCH to carry a torch for someone
to act as an enthusiastic advocate of another person's cause
TORCH to hand on the torch
to pass on accumulated knowledge

TORPEDO to torpedo something
to make something ineffective

TORRENT a torrent of words
a rapid and uninterrupted outpouring of words

TOSS it is a toss-up
either alternative is equally acceptable

TOSS to argue the toss
to dispute a decision

TOSS to toss up
to decide on a fairly arbitrary basis

TOTEM to be at the bottom of the totem pole
to be in the most junior position in some hierarchy

TOUCH it was touch and go
there were considerable risks—the objective was achieved, but only just

TOUCH not to touch a hair on someone’s head
not to harm a person

TOUCH not to touch something with a ten-foot pole
to go out of one’s way to avoid something

TOUCH the Midas touch
attributes which cause a person’s ventures to be extremely profitable (refers to King Midas of Phrygia, who had the power to turn everything he touched into gold)

TOUCH the touchstone
the standard

TOUCH to have a touch of the tarbrush
to be not quite a full-blood Caucasian

TOUCH to lose one’s touch
to cease to be familiar with something

TOUCH to touch a nerve
to mention something which another person would rather pretend did not exist

TOUCH to touch wood
it is to be hoped that our good luck will not go away

TOUCHE touche
well said (French, “‘touched’”)

TOUR a Cook’s tour
a guided tour of inspection (refers to Thomas Cook, the travel company)

TOUR a whistlestop tour
a hurried (especially ceremonial) visit to many places

TOUR tour de force
feat of skill or strength (French, “‘feat of strength’”)

TOWEL to throw in the towel
to concede defeat

TOWER a tower of Babel
a noisy and confused assembly (Genesis 11)

TOWER to be a tower of strength
to be a person who supports and comforts another

TOWER to be in an ivory tower
to be immersed in theoretical considerations and ignorant of the practical realities (Song of Solomon 7:4)

TOWN the only game in town
the only event worthy of attention

TOWN to go to town
to spend lavishly

TOWN to paint the town red
to go on an exciting social outing

TRACE to kick over one’s traces
to become insubordinate

TRACK to be down the track
to be making progress

TRACK to be off the beaten track
to do unconventional things

TRACK to be off the track
to be irrelevant

TRACK to be on the wrong track
to be heading toward an incorrect solution
TRACK to be on track
to be making the scheduled progress

TRACK to be stopped in one's tracks
suddenly and unexpectedly to be prevented from carrying on with a project

TRACK to cover one's tracks
to hide the evidence of one's involvement

TRACK to go down a particular track
to make decisions aimed at a particular goal

TRACK to have a one-track mind
to keep coming back to one narrow topic of conversation

TRACK to keep track of something
to be completely aware of where something is and how it is functioning

TRACK to make tracks
to leave

TRACK track record
proven performance

TRADE a Jack of all trades
an amateur who can turn his hand to anything

TRADE horsetrading
tough negotiations

TRADE to make something one's trademark
to earn a reputation for maintaining some stance

TRAIL to blaze a trail
to be the first person to do something

TRAIL to trail one's coat-tails
to invite a quarrel

TRAIN to get on a gravy train
to take steps to become a recipient of benefits which are available but undeserved

TRAIN to miss the train
to fail to exploit an opportunity

TRAM to be on the wrong tram
to be completely mistaken as to the basic facts

TRAMPE to trample someone underfoot
by virtue of one's great power to treat a person's rights with contempt and not to give them proper consideration

TRANSFUSION to give something a blood transfusion
to give something new enthusiasm

TRANSPARENT transparent
(of behavior, etc.) to be easily seen as not genuine

TRAP a trap for young players
a good opportunity for the inexperienced or naive to make mistakes

TRAP to walk into a trap
to be tricked into doing something

TREACHEROUS to enter treacherous waters
to engage in an enterprise with risks which are not obvious

TREAD fools rush in where angels fear to tread
unsophisticated persons take unwise risks in circumstances where more knowledgeable persons would exercise caution

TREAD to tread a particular path
to take certain initiatives

TREAD to tread lightly
to be careful

TREAD to tread on someone's corns
to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility

TREAD to tread on someone's toes
to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility

TREAD to tread someone under foot
to oppress a person

TREAD to tread the thin line
cautiously to take action in circumstances where either too much or too little will cause difficulties
TREADMILL to be on a treadmill
to be involved in some unpleasant
ongoing activity which cannot readily
be stopped

TREASURE a treasure trove
a valuable discovery

TREAT to treat someone with kid
gloves
to handle a person with great discretion

TREATMENT the red-carpet
treatment
courtesies extended to a person to
make him feel important and welcome

TREE not to see the wood for the
trees
to overlook the general picture be-
cause of undue concentration on the
details

TREE to bark up the wrong tree
to reach an incorrect conclusion

TREE to be at the top of the tree
to be a leading member of one’s
profession

TREE to be up a gum tree
to be in difficulty or at the end of
one’s resources

TREE to be up a tree
to be perplexed or cornered

TREE to shake a tree
to do something in order to see what
will result

TREMBLE in fear and trembling
in a state of apprehension

TRENCH to be back in the trenches
to be made to carry out menial tasks

TRICK a pea and thimble trick
a clever fraud committed in the pres-
ence of its victim without this being
obvious at the time

TRICK a three-card trick
a ruse used by a dishonest person in
order to induce his victims to hand
over some of their assets

TRICK a whole bag of tricks
a series of articles or a series of
artificial devices

TRICK one cannot teach an old dog
new tricks
people get irreversibly set in their
ways

TRICK something has done the trick
something has achieved the desired
purpose

TRICK to be unable to take a trick
to be unable to achieve success in
anything

TRICK to play monkey tricks on
someone
to engage in discreditable behavior
affecting a person

TRICK to score a hat trick
to have three successive favorable
outcomes

TRICK to use every trick in the book
to try very hard and use every con-
ceivable argument

TRICKLE a trickle
a small amount, in gradual stages

TRIGGER to be trigger-happy
to be impetuous

TRIGGER trigger
factor responsible for certain events
occurring at that particular time

TRIM to trim one’s sails
to institute austerity

TRIM to trim the fat
to increase efficiency by reducing
outlays

TROJAN a Trojan horse
a trick (refers to a large gift horse full
of soldiers used to bring about the
fall of Troy, as described in Homer’s
ILIAD)

TROOPER to be a real trooper
to be a person willing to try anything
TROUBLE a troubleshooter
a person good at finding and then rectifying faults

TROUBLE teething trouble
problems in the early stages of a project

TROUBLE to fish in troubled waters
to profit from a disturbed situation

TROUBLE to plot a safe course through troubled waters
to make a plan which overcomes certain difficulties

TROUBLE to pour oil on troubled waters
to calm down a situation

TROUBLE to smell trouble
to perceive difficulties

TROUSERS to catch someone with his trousers down
to act when another person least expects it

TROUSERS to wear the trousers
to be the dominant party

TROVE a treasure trove
a valuable discovery

TROWEL to lay it on with a trowel
to flatter

TRUCK it fell off the back of a truck
(of goods) they were stolen; (of a politically sensitive document) it was leaked to me

TRUCK to have no truck with someone
to refuse to deal with a person

TRUE to show one's true colors
to disclose one's real character or beliefs

TRUE true blue
superbly loyal

TRUMP to hold the trump card
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

TRUMP to play the trump card
to make a final move, thereby defeating one's opponents

TRUMP to trump someone
to defeat a person

TRUMP to turn up trumps
to finish up better than expected or to experience unexpected good luck

TRUMPET to blow one's own trumpet
to modestly publicize one's own attributes

TRUMPET with a flourish of trumpets
triumphantly

TRUST a sacred trust
a moral obligation

TRY something would try the patience of Job
something is very vexatious (James 5:11)

TRY to try something on for size
to cheekily do something

TUB a tub thumper
a preacher who rants and raves

TUBE to go down the tube
to fail

TUCK to tuck something away in a drawer
to put something aside for the time being

TUESDAY every Pancake Tuesday
only on rare occasions (refers to Shrove Tuesday, when pancakes are traditionally eaten)

TUG a tug of war
a dispute in which each protagonist desires a different course of action

TUNE he who pays the piper calls the tune
a person contributing money or resources to a project is entitled to a say in its control
TUNE to be in tune with someone
to think on the same lines as another person

TUNE to change one’s tune
to alter one’s publicly-expressed views

TUNE to fine-tune something
to adjust something in order to bring it to perfection or to make it fit the circumstances in a much more appropriate fashion

TUNE to stay tuned
to keep in touch for further information as it becomes available

TUNE to tune in
to pay attention

TUNNEL to see the light at the end of the tunnel
to be close to finalizing a long exercise

TUNNEL tunnel vision
an extremely narrow and inflexible way of considering issues

TURF to be on one’s own turf
to engage in one’s own customary area of activity

TURK young Turks
members of an organization who hold ideas regarded as too revolutionary

TURKEY cold turkey
the sudden cessation of drugs to an addict

TURKEY to talk turkey
to talk realistically

TURN as soon as someone’s back was turned
at the moment it became possible to do something without a person’s knowledge

TURN he would turn in his grave
he would have been very surprised or displeased if he had known while still alive

TURN not to turn a hair
to remain composed

TURN the tide has turned
conditions have changed

TURN the wheel has turned
circumstances have changed

TURN the wheel has turned the complete circle
things are now back to where they were before

TURN the worm has turned
a previously compliant person is now exerting his personality

TURN to be a turn up for the books
to be a surprising development

TURN to do a U-turn
to reverse one’s thinking

TURN to know which way to turn
to know which strategy to adopt or where to seek assistance

TURN to leave no stone unturned
to be very thorough

TURN to turn a blind eye to something
to pretend something obvious does not exist (refers to action by Nelson when disregarding Admiralty signals)

TURN to turn a complete somersault
to reverse one’s established policy

TURN to turn an honest penny
to earn money out of odd jobs

TURN to turn around 180 degrees
to completely reverse a stance

TURN to turn back the clock
to have another opportunity to do something which should have been done already or to undo something which cannot be undone

TURN to turn green
to become very envious

TURN to turn handstands
to express great joy

TURN to turn off the tap
to deny further access to supplies or information
**TURN**
to turn one's back on someone
to decline to further assist or deal with a person

**TURN** to turn one's chips in
to convert one's assets or entitlements into cash

**TURN** to turn one's guns on someone
to criticize a person

**TURN** to turn one's hand to something
to tackle some project

**TURN** to turn over a new leaf
to reform

**TURN** to turn round
to reverse one's policy

**TURN** to turn someone on
to excite a person

**TURN** to turn something inside out
to examine something thoroughly

**TURN** to turn something on its ear
to reverse something

**TURN** to turn something on its head
to reverse something

**TURN** to turn something upside down
to greatly revolutionize something

**TURN** to turn sour
to become impractical or unprofitable

**TURN** to turn the corner
to commence being successful after initial failures

**TURN** to turn the heat on something
to intensify the investigation of some matter

**TURN** to turn the other cheek
to show that one has not been intimidated (Matthew 5:39)

**TURN** to turn the spotlight on something
to draw public attention to something

**TURN** to turn the tables on someone
to cause the relative positions of oneself and another person to be reversed

**TURN** to turn the tide
to reverse the direction of something

**TURN** to turn turtle
to capsize

**TURN** to turn up one's nose at something
to express one's disdain

**TURN** to turn up the heat on someone
to increase the pressure on a person

**TURN** to turn up trumps
to finish up better than expected or to experience unexpected good luck

**TURN** to turn white
to express shock at unexpected news

**TURNCOAT** a turncoat
a person changing sides (refers to the practice of mercenary soldiers switching to the winning side and displaying that side's colors by turning their coats inside out)

**TURTLE** to turn turtle
to capsize

**TWENTY** with 20/20 hindsight
with the benefit of knowing what happened

**TWICE** to think twice before doing something
to consider with particular care

**TWIDDLE** to twiddle one's thumbs
not to be involved in any worthwhile activity

**TWILIGHT** twilight zone
state of imperfect understanding

**TWIST** to twist someone around one's little finger
by charm to get one's way

**TWIST** to twist someone's arms
to coerce another person to do something against his will or better judgment
TWO a two-horse race
a contest between only two serious contestants

TWO for two pins I would do so-and-so
my tolerance is almost exhausted and I am very tempted to do so-and-so

TWO in two shakes of a duck's tail
in an instant

TWO it takes two to tango
some activities cannot be carried out single-handedly

TWO not to have the wherewithal
to rub two sticks together
to be very poor

TWO to be a two-edged sword
to involve both advantages and disadvantages of similar significance

TWO to be of two minds
to be undecided between two alternatives

TWO to have two bob each way
to equivocate

TWO to have two left feet
to be clumsy

TWO to kill two birds with one stone
to achieve a second objective in the course of achieving the first objective

TWO to knock two heads together
to make two persons come to their senses and deal with each other

TWO to put two and two together
to reach a conclusion by combining isolated pieces of information

TWO to take someone down a peg
or two
to point out to a person that he is not as good as he thinks he is

TWO to throw in one's two cents' worth
to modestly supply one's own facts or views

TWO to wait two shakes of a lamb's tail
to wait just a few moments

TWO two can play at that game
it is possible to retaliate

TWO two men and a dog
very few people

TWO two-faced
insincere

TWOPENNY a twopenny halfpenny outfit
a quite insignificant operation

U

U-TURN to do a U-turn
to reverse one's thinking

UGLY an ugly duckling
a person initially thought unintelligent who develops and becomes brilliant (refers to a cygnet in a brood of ducks in a children's story of that name by Hans Christian Andersen)

UGLY to rear its ugly head
to make an unwelcome appearance

UMBRELLA an umbrella
protection; or something all-embracing

UMBRELLA under the umbrella of
under the auspices of some organization

UNCHARTED to be in uncharted waters
to be the first to experience something

UNCLE Bob's your uncle
that solves the problem

UNDER to have the plug pulled out from under one
to have a successful activity destroyed by the actions of someone else

UNDERBELLY to have a soft underbelly
to have a weakness which can be exploited
| UNDERCURRENT | an undercurrent | a barely noticeable feeling of dissent in the community which is not being vocalized |
| UNDERDOG | underdog | object of sympathy (the antonym of “underdog effect” is “bandwagon effect”) |
| UNDERFOOT | to trample someone underfoot | by virtue of one’s great power to treat a person’s rights with contempt and not to give them proper consideration |
| UNDERMINE | to undermine someone’s position | to injure another person’s reputation and influence by unfair and secret tactics |
| UNDERMINE | to undermine something | to sabotage something |
| UNDERPLAY | to underplay some situation | to hold something in reserve |
| UNDERSCORE | to underscore something | to emphasize something |
| UNEARTH | to unearth something | to discover something after research |
| UNEASY | uneasy lies the head that wears a crown | responsibility involves some risks and some burdens (from Shakespeare’s HENRY IV) |
| UNHOLY | an unholy alliance | a working relationship for a nefarious purpose between unlikely partners |
| UNMASK | to unmask someone | to discover a person’s true identity |
| UNSCRAMBLE | to unscramble the omelette | to undo something which cannot be undone |
| UNSTUCK | he came unstuck | his plans did not work out |
| UNVEIL | to unveil something | to give details not previously available |
| UP | to be up and running | to be operative |
| UPHILL | to be pushing uphill | to face difficulties |
| UPHILL | to fight an uphill battle | to face difficulties or to have formidable opposition |
| UPHILL | to push water uphill | to foolishly attempt the impossible |
| UPPER | to gain the upper hand | to attain, after some effort, an advantage over another person |
| UPSET | to upset the applecart | to engage in conduct disturbing a peaceful state of affairs and thereby cause discomfort |
| UPSIDE | the upside | the advantage |
| UPSIDE | to turn something upside down | to greatly revolutionize something |
| UPSTAGE | to upstage someone | to deprive another person of the glory which he would otherwise have enjoyed |
| UPSTAIRS | to kick someone upstairs | to promote a person to a purely ceremonial position |
| USE | to use every trick in the book | to try very hard and use every conceivable argument |
| UTOPIAN | Utopian | ideally perfect (refers to the mythical island in Sir Thomas More’s UTOPIA) |

V

<p>| VACUUM | to fill a vacuum | to take advantage of an opportunity not acted on by others |
| VALUE | to take something at face value | (of alleged facts) to accept something without question or challenge |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Valve</strong></th>
<th><strong>Verse</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to act as a safety valve</td>
<td>to quote chapter and verse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be a procedure which allows persons with grievances to ventilate them in an orderly fashion</td>
<td>to authenticate the information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vanguard</strong></td>
<td><strong>Victory</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be at the vanguard of something</td>
<td>a Pyrrhic victory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be among the first to do something</td>
<td>a win which costs more than if there had been a loss (refers to the battle at which King Pyrrhus of Epirus defeated the Romans at Asculum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vanish</strong></td>
<td><strong>View</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to vanish into thin air</td>
<td>a bird’s-eye view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unexpectedly to disappear</td>
<td>a general overview or summary of a subject, emphasizing the major features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vapor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vine</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to have a fit of the vapors</td>
<td>hear on the grapevine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be horrified</td>
<td>to learn unofficially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Violet</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>variations on a theme</td>
<td>a shrinking violet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alternative approaches in similar vein</td>
<td>a shy person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vegetable</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vision</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to become a vegetable</td>
<td>tunnel vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to lose one’s mental and physical faculties</td>
<td>an extremely narrow and inflexible way of considering issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Veil</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vitriol</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thinly-veiled</td>
<td>to pour vitriol on something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barely concealed</td>
<td>to sharply criticize something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to draw a veil over something</td>
<td><strong>Voice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pointedly to avoid discussing something</td>
<td>to be a lone voice in the wilderness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to give details not previously available</td>
<td>to be the only person stating unpopular views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Veil</strong></td>
<td><strong>Volley</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under the veil of something</td>
<td>to raise one’s voice for some cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the pretext of something</td>
<td>to publicly advocate some cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vein</strong></td>
<td><strong>Volcano</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in another vein</td>
<td>to be sitting on a volcano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as an alternative way of looking at things</td>
<td>to be safe for the time being but exposed to the risk of a sudden great disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Velvet</strong></td>
<td><strong>Volte</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with an iron hand in a velvet glove</td>
<td>volte face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with a hard attitude made to seem soft</td>
<td>a reversal of previously-held beliefs (French, “a turning around”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vengeance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Venom</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to attack with a vengeance</td>
<td>deep-rooted venom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to attack strongly</td>
<td><strong>Vengeance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to rebound with a vengeance</td>
<td>to return to an issue with great enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to send a series of angry messages to someone</td>
<td><strong>Vent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to vent one’s spleen on someone</td>
<td>to demonstrate one’s ill temper to a person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### VOLUME

**to speak volumes for something**

to place something in a favorable light

**VOTE**

**to vote with one's feet**

to show one's displeasure by terminating an association

**VULTURE**

vulture

person benefiting from another's misfortune

---

### W

**WAG**

the tail wagging the dog

a minor aspect with disproportionate effect on a major aspect

**WAG**

**to set tongues wagging**

to behave in a way which encourages scandal mongers

**WAGON**

**to be on the water wagon**

to be teetotal

**WAIT**

**to wait for the other shoe to drop**

to await the seemingly imminent and inevitable (refers to a man undressing, disturbing a neighbor by dropping one shoe, then frustrating his expectation by putting the other shoe down gently)

**WAIT**

**to wait hand and foot on someone**

to accommodate a person's every real or imagined whim

**WAIT**

**to wait in the wings**

to be prepared to stay unobtrusive till the appropriate time for action arrives

**WAIT**

**to wait with bated breath**

to be excited in anticipation of some event

**WAKE**

in the wake of someone

following a person's example

**WAKE**

**to make noise enough to wake the dead**

to be excessively noisy

**WAKE**

**to wake up to something**

to realize a fact or its significance

---

### WALK

**WALK**

**take a long walk on a short pier**

go away, I want no dealings with you

**WALK**

**to walk a tightrope**

to do something very dangerous

**WALK**

**to walk all over someone**

to act in a way which completely disregards another person's sensibility

**WALK**

**to walk away from something**

to abrogate one's responsibilities in regard to some matter

**WALK**

**to walk away with a profit**

to achieve a profit on concluding a project

**WALK**

**to walk in off the street**

to come without prior arrangement or notification

**WALK**

**to walk into a trap**

to be tricked into doing something

**WALK**

**to walk on air**

to be joyful

**WALK**

**to walk the plank**

to face certain doom

**WALKOVER**

**a walkover**

an easy victory

**WALL**

Chinese walls

a system to ensure that different parts of some organization do not gain access to each other's confidential information

**WALL**

**I would love to be a fly on the wall**

I would love to hear what goes on

**WALL**

**a chink in the wall**

an opportunity to do something which otherwise could not be done

**WALL**

**to bang one's head up against a brick wall**

to fight an unwinnable case

**WALL**

**to be a crack in the wall**

to represent a small unintended opportunity which can be exploited
WALL to be up against a brick wall
to be unable to achieve anything because of intractable opposition or apathy
WALL to drive someone to the wall
to ruin a person
WALL to drive someone up the wall
to annoy another person by one’s actions
WALL to go to the wall
to become bankrupt
WALL to have one’s back to the wall
to be hard-pressed by creditors or opponents
WALL to nail someone to the wall
to outmaneuver another person
WALL to put a wall around someone
to stop a person associating with others
WALL to see the writing on the wall
to appreciate the inevitability of some event (Daniel 5)
WALL walls have ears
someone may be overhearing (words on wartime posters, reminding people of the existence of spies; may also refer to certain rooms in the Louvre, constructed so that conversations could be heard in other rooms)
WALL walls of Jericho
something seemingly solid but actually destructible (Joshua 6:20)
WAND to wave a magic wand
to direct affairs without the restraints of the real world
WANT to want something both ways
to desire two mutually exclusive objectives
WANT to want the best of both worlds
to unreasonably desire to get some advantage without incurring a corresponding disadvantage
WANT you want your head read
you should reconsider this matter

WAR a tug of war
a dispute in which each protagonist desires a different course of action
WAR the cold war
the unfriendly relations between the communist nations and the rest of the world
WAR to be on the warpath
to be on the lookout for faults which can be criticized
WARFARE paper warfare
an excessive amount of correspondence or red tape
WARHORSE a warhorse
an old soldier who likes to relive past wartime experiences
WARM a warm inner glow
satisfaction at some achievement
WARM to keep someone’s seat warm
to hold a position temporarily with a view to another person taking it over permanently in the near future
WARM to warm the cockles of someone’s heart
to delight a person
WARM to warm up
to get ready
WARM warm-hearted
affectionate or generous
WARRANT to sign one’s own death warrant
to foolishly do something which is inevitably bound to lead to utter disaster
WART warts and all
with the unfavorable features as well as the favorable ones (Oliver Cromwell’s direction to an artist painting his portrait)
WASH backwash
consequence
WASH hogwash
nonsense
WASH in the wash-up
when everything is finalized
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WASH</strong></th>
<th><strong>WATER</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| it will all come out in the wash | a backwater  
a place of little activity |
| the facts will emerge as work proceeds | a lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then  
much has happened since then |
| it won't wash | an argument holding water  
a debating point of substance |
| this explanation is not acceptable | come hell or high water  
regardless of the consequences |
| someone's brain needs washing | high water mark  
triumph |
| a person is very silly | still waters run deep  
a person with a quiet manner may have a surprisingly great knowledge of a subject |
| that washes with me | there is blood in the water  
something is likely to cause a person to go into a frenzy |
| I agree | to be a fish out of water  
to be in difficulty by virtue of being in a strange environment |
| to be all washed out | to be above water  
(of securities) to have a market value in excess of the cost price |
| to feel feeble | to be in deep water  
to be in great difficulty |
| to be eye wash | to be in hot water  
to be in trouble or to be in difficulty |
| to be nonsense | to be in smooth water  
to have no troubles |
| to wash one's dirty linen in public | to be in uncharted waters  
to be the first to experience something |
| to expose one's domestic difference | to be like water off a duck's back  
(of advice or criticism) to be completely rejected |
| to the world at large | to be on the water wagon  
to be teetotal |
| to wash one's hands of something | to be in hot water  
to be in trouble or to be in difficulty |
| to emphatically decline future responsibility | to be in smooth water  
to have no troubles |
| to wash one's dirty linen in public | to be in uncharted waters  
to be the first to experience something |
| to expose one's domestic difference | to be like water off a duck's back  
(of advice or criticism) to be completely rejected |
| to the world at large | to be on the water wagon  
to be teetotal |
| to wash one's hands of something | to be in hot water  
to be in trouble or to be in difficulty |
| to emphatically decline future responsibility | to be in smooth water  
to have no troubles |
| to wash one's hands of something | to be in uncharted waters  
to be the first to experience something |
| to emphatically decline future responsibility | to be like water off a duck's back  
(of advice or criticism) to be completely rejected |
| to wash one's hands of something | to be on the water wagon  
to be teetotal |
| to emphatically decline future responsibility | to be in hot water  
to be in trouble or to be in difficulty |
| to wash one's hands of something | to be in smooth water  
to have no troubles |
| to emphatically decline future responsibility | to be in uncharted waters  
to be the first to experience something |
| to wash one's hands of something | to be like water off a duck's back  
(of advice or criticism) to be completely rejected |
| to emphatically decline future responsibility | to be on the water wagon  
to be teetotal |
| to wash one's hands of something | to be in hot water  
to be in trouble or to be in difficulty |
| to emphatically decline future responsibility | to be in smooth water  
to have no troubles |
WATER to brave the water
to enter a venture with courage and
determination

WATER to cast one's bread upon
the waters
not to expect gratitude or recognition
for one's good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

WATER to dip one's toe in the water
to gently explore an opportunity

WATER to enter treacherous waters
to engage in an enterprise with risks
which are not obvious

WATER to fish in troubled waters
to profit from a disturbed situation

WATER to go through fire and water
to undertake all attendant risks

WATER to go to water
to succumb to pressure

WATER to just hold one's head
above water
to cope with problems but with little
margin to spare or to stay solvent

WATER to make one's mouth water
to excite desire

WATER to muddy the waters
to deliberately confuse an issue by
creating a diversion

WATER to plot a safe course
through troubled waters
to make a plan which overcomes cer-
tain difficulties

WATER to pour cold water on some
idea
to be unenthusiastic about some pro-
posal or scornful of its apparent
weakness

WATER to pour oil on troubled
waters
to calm down a situation

WATER to push water uphill
to foolishly attempt the impossible

WATER to shoot something out of
the water
to frustrate something

WATER to test the water
to try out an idea in a small way

WATER to water down something
to reduce the severe impact of some-
thing

WATER water will find its own level
people will reach an appropriate posi-
tion relative to others

WATER watering hole
hotel

WATERLOO to meet one's Waterloo
to receive a decisive defeat (refers to
Napoleon's fate at the Battle of Water-
loo)

WATERSHED a watershed
an occasion dividing two distinct phases
of activity

WATERTIGHT a watertight contract
a contract without loopholes or es-
cape clauses

WAVE a brainwave
a suddenly occurring bright idea

WAVE to be on the crest of a wave
to enjoy success which may not last

WAVE to cause waves
to disturb the status quo

WAVE to ride the wave
to be successful for the time being

WAVE to wave a finger at someone
to indicate mild displeasure at an-
other person's actions

WAVE to wave a flag for someone
to promote a person's cause

WAVE to wave a magic wand
to direct affairs without the restraints
of the real world

WAVELENGTH to be on the same
wavelength
to think on similar lines

WAVELENGTH to be on the wrong
wavelength
to be incorrect in one's thinking
WAY a half-way house
an intermediate position

WAY a one-way street
a flow of activity in only one direction

WAY no way!
definitely not!

WAY that is the way the chips fall
that is the actual situation

WAY there is more than one way to skin a cat
this can be achieved in a variety of acceptable ways

WAY to cut both ways
to involve both advantages and disadvantages of similar significance

WAY to go the way of all flesh
to die

WAY to have fifty cents each way
to equivocate

WAY to have two bob each way
to equivocate

WAY to know which way to turn
to know which strategy to adopt or where to seek assistance

WAY to laugh all the way to the bank
to appreciate one's good fortune

WAY to make headway
to make progress

WAY to pave the way
to prepare for something

WAY to resist something every inch of the way
to utterly resist something

WAY to rub someone up the wrong way
to annoy someone with actions failing to recognize his current mood

WAY to see which way the cat jumps
to await developments

WAY to see which way the wind is blowing
to establish the factors relevant to a situation

WAY to stand in someone's way
to prevent a person achieving his goal

WAY to want something both ways
to desire two mutually exclusive objectives

WAY to worm one's way in
to subtly insinuate oneself into a person's trust

WAYSIDE to fall by the wayside
to abandon and not complete what one set out to do

WEAK the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak
the body is not up to the demands made on it

WEAK the weakest link in the chain
the least efficient component in a project the overall efficiency of which is governed by the efficiency of the least efficient component

WEAK weak-kneed
unassertive or irresolute

WEALTH a wealth of something
a great quantity of something

WEAPON to use all the weapons at one's disposal
to utilize all available advantages

WEAR if the cap fits then wear it
if your circumstances correspond with those described then you must endure the consequences

WEAR that argument is wearing a bit thin
that is a very weak case

WEAR to have to wear something
to have to put up with something

WEAR to wear a hair shirt
to practice self-discipline

WEAR to wear one's crown of thorns
to have one's own difficulties (John 19:5)

WEAR to wear sackcloth and ashes
humbly to demonstrate repentance
WEAR to wear the trousers
to be the dominant party
WEAR uneasy lies the head that
wears a crown
responsibility involves some risks and
some burdens (from Shakespeare's
HENRY IV)
WEATHER a fair-weather friend
a person purporting to be a friend
who offers no support in difficult times
WEATHER to be under the weather
to be drunk or (less often) sick
WEATHER to keep a weather eye
out for something
to look out with particular care
WEATHER to make heavy weather
of something
to struggle excessively with a relatively simple task
WEATHER to run into heavy weather
to encounter difficulties
WEATHER to weather the storm
to come safely through a crisis
WEB a tangled web
a series of lies, especially with inconsistencies leading to exposure (from Sir Walter Scott's MARMION)
WEB to be the center of the spider's web
to control an operation which involves numerous and/or complex ingredients
WED to be wed to something
to be utterly dedicated to a proposal
WEDDING a shotgun wedding
a wedding held to ensure that an impending birth will be legitimate (refers to threats by the bride's father to kill the bridegroom)
WEDDING amalgamation
WEDGE to be the thin end of the wedge
by conceding a small point, to create an undesirable precedent for much larger issues
WEDGE to drive a wedge between two persons
to set out to cause two persons to confront each other
WEED to weed some group out
to get rid of some elements not meeting a desired standard
WEIGHT a heavyweight
a person of importance or influence
WEIGHT lightweight
uninfluential
WEIGHT to be a weight off one's mind
to be a great relief
WEIGHT to be worth one's weight in gold
to be very desirable
WEIGHT to carry weight
to be influential
WEIGHT to lend weight to something
to use one's influence in support of some cause
WEIGHT to pull one's weight
to do one's proper share of the work requiring to be done
WEIGHT to take a weight off someone's shoulder
to assist a person by relieving him of some responsibility
WEIGHT to throw one's weight about
to use one's real or imagined status in order to achieve certain results
WELL to go back to the well
to go to the original source

WEST to sink slowly in the west
to fail gradually

WET to be a wet blanket
to be a spoilsport

WET to be wet behind the ears
to be excessively naive and inexperienced

WET to get one's feet wet
to do the necessary but unpleasant or menial parts of a task

WETHER bell-wether
first indication

WHEAT to separate the wheat from the chaff
to distinguish between important and unimportant ingredients

WHEEL a big wheel
an important person

WHEEL fortune's wheel
the vicissitudes of life

WHEEL the squeaky wheel gets the most attention
those complaining the most loudly will get their problems sorted out first

WHEEL the wheel has turned
circumstances have changed

WHEEL the wheel has turned the complete circle
things are now back to where they were before

WHEEL the wheels are back under the bus
normal activity has been resumed

WHEEL the wheels fell off
the plan failed

WHEEL to be a fifth wheel
to be superfluous

WHEEL to be a small cog in a large wheel
to be a relatively unimportant person in a large organization

WHEEL to make the wheels go round
to cause something to happen

WHEEL to oil the wheels
to make things go smoothly

WHEEL to put a spoke in someone's wheel
to interfere with another person's activity, so preventing its continuance

WHEEL to put one's shoulder to the wheel
to make a strong effort

WHEEL to reinvent the wheel
to waste resources doing something already accomplished

WHEEL to set the wheels in motion
to institute appropriate action

WHEEL to wheel and deal
to energetically enter into commercial transactions of dubious propriety

WHEEL to wheel someone in
to bring a person along for a confrontation

WHEEL wheels within wheels
secret machinations

WHET to whet one's appetite
to arouse one's curiosity or interest

WHIP a whipping boy
a person made to suffer for the faults of others

WHIP to be a fair crack of the whip
to be just

WHIP to crack the whip
to exert one's authority

WHIP to have the whip hand
to be in control of a situation

WHIP to whip oneself into a lather
to become unduly excited

WHIRL to reap the whirlwind
to suffer the adverse consequences of a bad act
WHIRLWIND to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind
to make bad mistakes and to suffer the even worse consequences
WHISKER by a whisker
only just
WHISPER to hear a whisper
to learn a rumored hypothesis
WHISTLE a whistlestop tour
a hurried (especially ceremonial) visit to many places
WHISTLE bells and whistles
imaginative variations
WHISTLE to blow the whistle on someone
to report a person's improper behavior to the authorities or to publicize it
WHISTLE to whistle in the dark
to feign greater confidence than one really has
WHISTLE you can whistle for it
you wish in vain
WHITE a white elephant
an expensive and useless luxury (refers to gifts of sacred elephants by the King of Siam to persons then ruined by the expense of their upkeep)
WHITE a white knight
a party voluntarily coming to the assistance of another party at considerable cost to itself
WHITE a white lie
a false statement uttered in a good cause
WHITE in black and white
in writing, spelling out all the details
WHITE lily-white
honest and incorruptible
WHITE to be a black and white issue
to involve very clear distinctions
WHITE to show the white feather
to indicate cowardice (refers to cross-bred birds, not regarded as useful in cock fighting)
WHITE to turn white
to express shock at unexpected news
WHITE to white ant someone
to surreptitiously seek to destroy a person
WHITEWASH to whitewash
to exonerate when this is not warranted by the facts
WHOA from go to whoa
from start to finish (refers to the command given to horses)
WHOLE a whole bag of tricks
a series of articles or a series of artificial devices
WHOLE the whole box and dice
all relevant components
WHOLE to go the whole hog
to do something very thoroughly (refers to the close shearing of lambs)
WICKET to be on a sticky wicket
to face some difficulties
WIDE to be wide off the mark
to have a belief which is far removed from the true position
WIDE to give something a wide berth
to go out of one's way to avoid contact with a person
WIELD to wield a big stick
to exert power
WIFE an old wives' tale
a traditionally-held theory without any scientific backing
WILD a wild card
an unexpected development
WILD a wild goose chase
a foolish search for something which does not exist
WILD to be successful beyond one's wildest dreams
to be far more successful than one could have expected
WILD to sow wild oats
to indulge in foolish behavior while a young adult

WILD wildcat
(of a strike) unofficial; (of an oil well) drilled as a pure prospect; (of a financial scheme) very hazardous

WILD wild horses would not cause me to do something
I absolutely refuse to do something (refers to a form of torture)

WILDERNESS to be a lone voice in the wilderness
to be the only person stating unpopular views

WILDERNESS to be in the wilderness
to be out of office against one’s will

WILLING a willing horse
a cheerful worker

WILLING the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak
the body is not up to the demands made on it

WIN a breadwinner
a person earning by personal exertion the income of a household

WIN heads I win—tails you lose
whichever way this matter goes I will benefit at your expense

WIN to hold a winning hand
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

WIN to win by a long chalk
to win very conclusively

WIN to win hands down
to win very convincingly

WIN to win one’s spurs
to gain recognition after a period of effort (refers to the earning of a knighthood in battle)

WIN to win some rounds
to be partly successful

WIN to win the booby prize
to do worse than all others

WIN to win the prize in a canter
to win very easily

WIND something in the wind
something is going on secretly (this phrase uses the actual word “something”)

WIND straws in the wind
unofficial preliminary indications of something likely to be formally revealed soon

WIND the cold wind of change
the unpleasant realities of new circumstances

WIND to cast prudence to the winds
to cease being prudent

WIND to get wind of something
to hear rumors giving advance information

WIND to put the wind up someone
to alarm a person

WIND to reap the whirlwind
to suffer the adverse consequences of a bad act

WIND to sail against the wind
to oppose the views currently being held by others

WIND to sail close to the wind
to act in a very dangerous manner

WIND to scatter something to the four winds
to permanently get rid of something

WIND to see which way the wind is blowing
to establish the factors relevant to a situation

WIND to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind
to make bad mistakes and to suffer the even worse consequences
WIND to take the wind out of someone’s sails
  to upset a person by anticipating his actions or using arguments which he was proposing to use

WINDFALL windfall
  unexpected good fortune

WINDMILL to tilt at windmills
  to attack an imagined but nonexistent enemy (from Cervantes’ DON QUIXOTE)

WINDOW a window of opportunity
  an opportunity temporarily available

WINDOW to engage in window dressing
  to present figures in an artificially favorable light

WINDOW to fly out the window
  to be lost

WINDOW to throw a pebble against the window
  to gently draw attention to oneself

WINDOW to throw something out of the window
  to completely reject an idea or proposal

WING on a wing and a prayer
  without proper resources

WING to clip someone’s wings
  to reduce another person’s freedom to act as he thinks fit

WING to spread one’s wings
  to assert authority which has not yet been conferred by one’s superiors and for which one may not be ready

WING to take someone under one’s wing
  to protect a person

WING to wait in the wings
  to be prepared to stay unobtrusive till the appropriate time for action arrives

WINK a nod and a wink
  a sign that understanding has been reached in a matter which in the interest of discretion has not been discussed aloud

WINK a nod is the same as a wink to a blind horse
  fine distinctions are not appropriate here

WINK not to get a wink of sleep
  not to sleep at all

WINKLE to be a Rip van Winkle
  to be a person out of touch with current conditions (title of and character in a book by Washington Irving)

WINNER to be on a winner
  to have faith in, give support to and/or invest in a project which proves to be successful

WINTER to buy straw hats in winter
  to buy in a depressed market when most other people are sellers

WIPE to wash one’s hands of something
  to emphatically decline future responsibility

WIPE to wipe the floor with someone
  to inflict a humiliating defeat on a person

WIPE to wipe the slate clean
  to forgive past indiscretions

WIPE to wipe the smile off someone’s face
  to destroy a person’s complacency

WIPE wipe that smile off your face!
  treat this matter more seriously!

WIRE to be a live wire
  to be an enthusiast

WIRE to go haywire
  to refuse to function properly

WIRE to have one’s wires crossed
  to be mistaken about key facts

WISH a death wish
  the contemplation of action so foolish that it is likely to lead to utter disaster

WITCH a witchhunt
  an exercise seeking to find someone who can be blamed
WITH to be with it
to think on the same lines as the
current generation or to be fully
informed

WITHER to wither on the vine
by virtue of changed circumstances
or the effluxion of time to be no
longer relevant

WOLF a lone wolf
person who prefers to act without
involving others

WOLF to be a wolf in sheep’s
clothing
to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous
although masquerading as something
harmless (Matthew 7:15)

WOLF to cry “wolf”
to repeatedly raise an unjustified con-
cern with the result that one will be
ignored when the circumstances change

WOLF to keep the wolf from the
door
to avoid imminent trouble

WOLF to throw someone to the
wolves
to expose a person to exploitation by
more sophisticated persons

WONDER a nine-day wonder
an exciting event, but one which will
cease to arouse interest when the nov-
ety has worn off

WONDER gutless wonder
coward

WOOD neck of the woods
localized area

WOOD not to see the wood for the
trees
to overlook the general picture be-
cause of undue concentration on the
details

WOOD to be babes in the wood
to be excessively naive and inexper-
enced and thus ripe for exploitation

WOOD to be out of the woods
the previous difficulties have been
overcome

WOOD to get rid of the dead wood
to terminate the services of unsatis-
factory personnel

WOOD to touch wood
it is to be hoped that our good luck
will not go away

WOODEN to get the wooden spoon
to come ingloriously last

WOODPILE the nigger in the
woodpile
the factor spoiling an otherwise satis-
factory arrangement

WOODWORK to crawl out of the
woodwork
to turn up unexpectedly and in large
numbers

WOOL dyed in the wool
very loyal and partisan

WOOL to pull the wool over
someone’s eyes
to deceive or deliberately mislead an-
other person

WOOL to wrap someone in cotton
wool
to be overprotective toward a person

WOOL woolly-headed
slightly muddled

WORD a torrent of words
a rapid and uninterrupted outpouring
of words

WORD a word in someone’s ear
a confidential discussion

WORD from the word “go”
from the beginning

WORD mark my words
you will find out that I am right

WORD not to mince words
to speak bluntly

WORD the password is so-and-so
the main attraction is so-and-so
the word is out
it is now known

the words stuck in my throat
I just could not get myself to say the intended words

to eat one’s words
to retract

to echo someone’s words
to repeat another person’s views as though they were one’s own

to get words in edgeways
to manage to interrupt a conversation in order to put in a separate point of view

to put words into someone’s mouth
to attempt to get someone to say something in the particular terms drafted by another person

you took the words right out of my mouth
you have just said what I was about to say

a nasty piece of work
an unpleasant person

donkey work
necessary but uninspiring routine work

to do someone’s dirty work
to do something unethical on behalf of another person

to do the leg work
to carry out the tedious part of a project

to do the spadework
to prepare

to have one’s work cut out
to do something
it will be difficult to achieve something

to work hand in glove with someone
to work in close cooperation with a person or to be in collusion with a person to the detriment of others

be in the works
to be being dealt with

to get the works
to get the full treatment

to gum up the works
to cause an activity to be halted

to throw a spanner into the works
to cause an unexpected complication

it’s a small world
it is surprising to meet people one knows in unexpected places

be on top of the world
to be very happy

be out of this world
to be superb

carry the world on one’s shoulders
to resent being left to perform a huge task single-handedly (refers to Atlas, who was condemned to bear the heavens on his shoulders for leading the Titans against the gods)

get the worst of all worlds
to get a series of disadvantages without achieving any corresponding advantages

make a world of difference
to make a great deal of difference

se the world on fire
to do something particularly brilliant

want the best of both worlds
to unreasonably desire to get some advantage without incurring a corresponding disadvantage

why in the world?
why?

a bookworm
a person who likes reading and study
**WORM**

*a can of worms*

a heterogeneous collection of unexpected problems

*WORM* the early bird gets the worm

a person who acts ahead of others gets an advantage over them

*WORM* the worm has turned

a previously compliant person is now exerting his personality

*WORM* to worm one’s way in

to subtly insinuate oneself into a person’s trust

*WORSE* someone’s bark is worse than his bite

the harsh words belie the reality of mild action

**WORST** to get the worst of all worlds

to get a series of disadvantages without achieving any corresponding advantages

*WORTH* not to be worth one’s salt

not to be pulling one’s weight (refers to Roman soldiers being paid in salt—a practice giving rise to the modern word “salary”)

*WORTH* not worth a tinker’s curse

worthless

*WORTH* to be worth one’s weight in gold

to be very desirable

*WORTH* to throw in one’s six pennies’ worth

to modestly supply one’s own facts or views

*WORTH* to throw in one’s two-cents’ worth

to modestly supply one’s own facts or views

*WOUND* to charge like a wounded bull

to impose excessive prices (a play on words; not a simile)

*WOUND* to heal wounds

to affect a reconciliation

*WOUND* to lick one’s wounds

to adjust oneself to defeat

*WOUND* to open up an old wound

to take action which revives a long-standing grievance

*WOUND* to rub salt into someone’s wound

to deliberately make damage even worse

*WRAP* that wraps it up

that is the end

*WRAP* to be wrapped in something

to enjoy something

*WRAP* to keep under wraps

to keep confidential

*WRAP* to wrap someone in cotton wool

to be overprotective toward a person

*WRAP* to wrap up a deal

to bring a deal to a successful conclusion

*WRECK* to salvage something out of the wreck

to achieve some minor benefits out of a disastrous situation

*WRING* to wring one’s hands

to express despair

*WRIST* a slap on the wrist

a mild rebuke

*WRITE* nothing to write home about

unimpressive

*WRITE* to see the writing on the wall

to appreciate the inevitability of some event (Daniel 5)

*WRITE* to write one’s own ticket

to set one’s own terms and conditions

*WRONG* not to put a foot wrong

to behave impeccably

*WRONG* to back the wrong horse

to have faith in, give support to and/or invest in a project which proves to be unsuccessful
WRONG to bark up the wrong tree
to reach an incorrect conclusion

WRONG to be born on the wrong side of the blanket
to be illegitimate

WRONG to be on the wrong tack
to be using an incorrect procedure or policy

WRONG to be on the wrong track
to be heading toward an incorrect solution

WRONG to be on the wrong tram
to be completely mistaken as to the basic facts

WRONG to be on the wrong wavelength
to be incorrect in one’s thinking

WRONG to get off on the wrong foot with someone
to make an unfavorable initial impression on a person

WRONG to get out of bed on the wrong side
to be grumpy

WRONG to get the wrong sow by the ear
to reach an incorrect conclusion

WRONG to have hold of the wrong end of the pineapple
to be utterly mistaken

WRONG to hold the wrong end of the stick
to be completely mistaken about something

WRONG to rub someone up the wrong way
to annoy someone with actions failing to recognize his current mood

YARDSTICK a yardstick
a standard by which something is measured

YARN to spin a yarn
to tell an amusing or unlikely story

YEAR for donkey’s years
for a long time

YEAR from the year dot
from time immemorial

YELL to scream and yell
to protest violently

YEOMAN yeoman service
valuable assistance over a long time

YESTERDAY not to have been born
yesterday
not to be naive

YOUNG a trap for young players
a good opportunity for the inexperienced or naive to make mistakes

YOUNG an old head on young shoulders
experience, knowledge, and maturity in a young person

YOUNG it is on for young and old
the excitement has started

YOUNG the night is young
the project is only at a very early stage

YOUNG young Turks
members of an organization who hold ideas regarded as too revolutionary

Z

Z from a to z
from start to finish

ZERO to zero in on a target
to move directly toward one’s objective

180 to turn around 180 degrees
to completely reverse a stance

Y

YARD in one’s own backyard
in one’s own domain
ANIMALS

ALBATROSS to be an albatross around someone’s neck
to be a great burden (popularized by Coleridge’s ANCIENT MARINER)

ANIMAL there is no such animal that does not exist

ANIMAL to be a political animal to want to be in politics

ANT to white ant someone to surreptitiously seek to destroy a person

ASS to make an ass of oneself to act stupidly in public

BAIT to swallow the bait to succumb to a temptation deliberately put in one’s way

BARK someone’s bark is worse than his bite the harsh words belie the reality of mild action

BARK to bark up the wrong tree to reach an incorrect conclusion

BAT to have bats in the belfry to be mad

BAY to hold someone at bay to successfully resist an attacker

BEAK to be a sticky beak to show excessive curiosity into matters not of one’s concern

BEAST the nature of the beast the reality of the situation

BEAVER an eager beaver a person with great drive and enthusiasm even if this causes annoyance to others

BEAVER to beaver away to work diligently at some task

BEE to be a busy bee to work with great diligence

BEE to have a bee in one’s bonnet to have an obsession

BEELINE to make a beeline for something to go straight to something with great enthusiasm or to head for some goal by the most direct route

BETE to be someone’s bete noire to be a person whose ideas and actions cause upset and loathing in another person (French “black heart”)

BIRD a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush a benefit currently available is more valuable than a seemingly much larger benefit which may or may not be achieved in the future
BIRD  a bird's-eye view  
a general overview or summary of a  
subject, emphasizing the major features

BIRD  a little bird told me  
I heard from an unnamable informant  
(Ecclesiastes 10:20)

BIRD  birds of a feather flock together  
persons of like interests gather in the  
same place

BIRD  that is strictly for the birds  
that is blatant and naive nonsense

BIRD  the bird has flown  
the person sought is no longer about

BIRD  the early bird gets the worm  
a person who acts ahead of others  
gets an advantage over them

BIRD  to be a rare bird  
to be an unusual type of individual

BIRD  to have a bird brain  
to be stupid

BIRD  to kill two birds with one stone  
to achieve a second objective in the  
course of achieving the first objective

BIT  to champ at the bit  
to be impatient

BLOOD  to smell blood  
to divine imminent victory

BONE  a bone of contention  
the subject matter of violent disagree-
ment

BONE  the bare bones  
(of a story) nothing but the essential  
elements

BONE  to have a bone to pick  
the have a grievance which requires  
discussion

BONE  to throw someone a bone  
to fob a person off with a symbolic  
but unimportant gesture

BULL  a bull in a china shop  
a careless person likely to cause great  
damage

BULL  a cock and bull story  
an explanation which is completely  
unbelievable and unacceptable

BULL  to be a red rag to a bull  
to be something which makes a per-
son very angry and very excited (re-
fers to the erroneous belief that the  
color red, rather than the motion of  
waving, excites a bull)

BULL  to be within a bull’s roar of  
something  
to be very close to something

BULL  to charge like a wounded bull  
to impose excessive prices (a play on  
words; not a simile)

BULL  to hit the bull’s eye  
to make the correct decision

BULL  to take the bull by the horns  
to come to grips with the realities of  
a difficult problem

BUTT  to butt in  
uninvited to involve oneself in some-
one else’s conversation

BUTTERFLY  to have a butterfly  
mind  
not to concentrate on the matter on  
hand

BUTTERFLY  to have butterflies in  
one’s stomach  
a feeling of anxiety

BUZZ  to buzz off  
to go away

CALF  to kill the fatted calf  
to demonstrate welcome and forgive-
ness on a person’s return (Luke 15:23)

CAMEL  the straw which broke the  
camel’s back  
the latest step, which, when added to  
a large number of seemingly harm-
less previous steps, sets off a disaster  
resulting from the cumulative effect

CAT  a cat and dog existence  
a life full of frequent squabbles
CAT a cat may look at a king
don't give yourself airs!

CAT a copycat
a person who imitates another per-
son's ideas

CAT a game of cat and mouse
negotiations between two parties of
unequal bargaining power during which
the stronger makes some temporary
concessions to the weaker without,
however, affecting the latter's eventu-
al total defeat

CAT there is more than one way to
skin a cat
this can be achieved in a variety of
acceptable ways

CAT there is no room to swing a
cat
this place is very small (actually re-
fers to a cat-o'-nine-tails)

CAT to be a cat's paw
to be a person who is being used as a
tool by others

CAT to be the cat's pajamas
to have an exaggerated idea of one's
own importance

CAT to bell the cat
to do some dangerous but highly use-
ful mission (refers to a fable in which
none of the mice was willing to put a
warning bell on a cat)

CAT to kick the cat
to take out one's anger on some inno-
cent party

CAT to let the cat out of the bag
to reveal an embarrassing secret (re-
ers to the exposure of cheats at fairs,
attempting to pass a cat wrapped in a
sack off as a piglet)

CAT to rain cats and dogs
to rain heavily

CAT to see which way the cat jumps
to await developments

CAT to throw a cat among the
pigeons
to cause consternation by revealing
an unpleasant and unexpected fact

CAT when the cat is away the mice
will play
in the absence of supervision disci-
pline will be lax

CAT wildcat
(of a strike) unofficial; (of an oil
well) drilled as a pure prospect; (of a
financial scheme) very hazardous

CHAMELEON a chameleon
a person without character who changes
his stance all the time to reflect the
current circumstances

CHICKEN chicken and egg
two factors each of which results in
the other

CHICKEN chicken-hearted
showing little courage

CHICKEN the chickens are coming
home to roost
the consequences of past actions are
becoming obvious

CHICKEN to be chicken feed
to be small and unimportant

CHICKEN to count one's chickens
before they are hatched
to treat as fact the expected results of
a future proposal

CHOP to lick one's chops
to look forward to something with
pleasurable anticipation

COBWEB to blow the cobwebs away
to revive an old issue

COCK a cock and bull story
an explanation which is completely
unbelievable and unacceptable

COCK cock-eyed
stupid

COCOON in a cocoon
in a safe and isolated environment
COW a cash cow
a source of ready money

COW a milk cow
an easy and plentiful source of some desired benefit

COW a sacred cow
an institution so well established that it is virtually unalterable

COW to argue till the cows come home
to argue forever

CRAWL to crawl out of the woodwork
to turn up unexpectedly and in large numbers

CRESTFALLEN crestfallen
dejected

CROCODILE to shed crocodile tears
to be a hypocrite

CROW as the crow flies
by the shortest distance

CROW to eat crow
to accept a humiliating defeat

CUCKOO to be a cuckoo in the nest
to purport to be a member of a group of people although having no such right

CUCKOO to be in cloud cuckoo land
to be mad or to have unrealistic expectations

CUD to chew the cud
to reflect on something

DINOSAUR a dinosaur
a person with incredibly outmoded idea

DOG a cat and dog existence
a life full of frequent squabbles

DOG a dogfight
a small side-skirmish, especially between airplanes

DOG a lame dog
a person under some disadvantage needing attention and assistance

DOG a shaggy dog story
an amusing anecdote with an unexpected ending, often involving talking animals given certain human skills

DOG a sly dog
a person who is discreet about his weaknesses

DOG a watchdog
a person or organization monitoring behavior

DOG all the dogs are barking
this news is being widely disseminated

DOG any stick to beat a dog
any excuse will do if it serves one's purpose

DOG dog-eared
(of pages) well-thumbed

DOG dog-tired
tired out

DOG every dog has his day
good luck comes sooner or later

DOG every man and his dog
everybody

DOG love me—love my dog
if you accept me then you must also accept my associates

DOG not a dog's chance
no hope at all

DOG one cannot teach an old dog new tricks
people get irreversibly set in their ways

DOG the tail wagging the dog
a minor aspect with disproportionate effect on a major aspect

DOG the top dog
the person in the most powerful position
ANIMALS

**DOG** to be a dog in the manger
to spitefully deny something to others, notwithstanding its uselessness to oneself

**DOG** to be a dog's breakfast
to be a very messy arrangement

**DOG** to be a gay dog
to lead an idle life while flaunting the symbols of wealth

**DOG** to be in the doghouse
to be in disgrace

**DOG** to call off the dogs
to abandon an audit or other inquiry

**DOG** to give a dog a bad name
to malign a person

**DOG** to go to the dogs
to be ruined

**DOG** to have a hair of the dog that bit one
to drink more in an attempt to overcome the effects of alcohol already consumed

**DOG** to lead a dog's life
to be ill-treated

**DOG** to let sleeping dogs lie
to refrain from raising an issue which is not obviously requiring attention

**DOG** to rain cats and dogs
to rain heavily

**DOG** to throw something to the dogs
to sacrifice something

**DOG** two men and a dog
very few people

**DOG** underdog
object of sympathy (the antonym of "underdog effect" is "bandwagon effect")

**DOG** why keep a dog and bark oneself?
it is silly to pay for assistance and then do things personally

**DONKEY** donkey work
necessary but uninspiring routine work

**DONKEY** for donkey's years
for a long time

**DONKEY** to talk the hind leg off a donkey
to talk excessively

**DRAKE** to play ducks and drakes
not to treat the matter seriously

**DRONE** a drone
an idle person

**DROVE** people stayed away in droves
few people came

**DUCK** a lame duck
a person unable to fend for himself (a lame duck president - a president still in office but without influence because the commencement of his successor's term is imminent)

**DUCK** in two shakes of a duck's tail
in an instant

**DUCK** to be a dead duck
to have failed

**DUCK** to be a sitting duck
to be readily exploited

**DUCK** to be like water off a duck's back
(of advice or criticism) to be completely rejected

**DUCK** to play ducks and drakes
not to treat the matter seriously

**DUCKLING** an ugly duckling
a person initially thought unintelligent who develops and becomes brilliant (refers to a cygnet in a brood of ducks in a children's story of that name by Hans Christian Andersen)

**EAGLE** to have an eagle eye
to be able to notice small mistakes very readily

**EAR** to turn something on its ear
to reverse something

**EARMARK** to earmark
to allocate to a specific purpose
THEMATIC SECTION

ANIMALS

EGG to be a bad egg
to engage in dishonest behavior

ELEPHANT a rogue elephant
a person of vicious temper who acts in an undisciplined way

ELEPHANT a white elephant
an expensive and useless luxury (refers to gifts of sacred elephants by the King of Siam to persons then ruined by the expense of their upkeep)

ELEPHANT one looks for elephants in elephant country
one needs to search in the right place

EYE bright-eyed and bushy-tailed
naive but enthusiastic

FEATHER to make feathers fly
to cause trouble to those misbehaving

FEATHER to ruffle someone's feathers
to engage in behavior which irritates another person

FEATHER to show the white feather
to indicate cowardice (refers to cross-bred birds, not regarded as useful in cock fighting)

FEATHER to thrash with a feather
to award only a minor punishment for a very serious offense

FERRET to ferret something out
by diligent research to discover some secret

FETTER to fetter someone
to stop a person acting on his own initiative

FISH a queer fish
an unusual type of person

FISH an ocean full of fish
plenty of opportunity

FISH neither fish, flesh nor good red herring
unclassifiable by virtue of being neither one thing nor another (from Cervantes' DON QUIXOTE)

FISH that has nothing to do with the price of fish
that is quite irrelevant

FISH to be a big fish in a little pond
to be a person holding an important office but in an unimportant organization

FISH to be a cold fish
to be an unemotional person

FISH to be a different kettle of fish
to be something very dissimilar

FISH to be a fine kettle of fish
to be a terrible muddle

FISH to be a fish out of water
to be in difficulty by virtue of being in a strange environment

FISH to fish in troubled waters
to profit from a disturbed situation

FISHY to be fishy
to be suspicious

FLEA to send someone away with a flea in his ear
to give a person frank but unwelcome facts (refers to fleas trapped in the armor of ancient knights)

FLOCK flock
congregation in the charge of a religious official

FLY I would love to be a fly on the wall
I would love to hear what goes on

FLY a fly in the ointment
a flaw (refers to dead flies turning perfumes rancid) (Ecclesiastes 10:1)

FLY a fly-by-night operator
a confidence trickster

FLY someone can't hurt a fly
someone is very gentle and kindhearted

FLY there are no flies on someone
a person is alert

FLY to fly the coop
to grow up and become independent
FOLD the fold
the body of believers (refers to an
enclosure for sheep)

FOOT to put something back on its feet
to repair something

FOUR an opening wide enough to drive a coach and four through
an excellent opportunity

FOX a fox hole
space which is really too small for a person's needs or comfort

FROG to have a frog in one's throat
to be hoarse

FROG to leap frog something
to overtake something, with the likelihood of in turn being overtaken (refers to a game in which participants jump over each other in turn)

FUR to make the fur fly
to create a disturbance

GAME to be fair game
to be someone who can legitimately be attacked

GANDER what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander
arguments which apply in one case also apply in another

GNAT to strain at a gnat
to be scrupulous about trifles

GO from the word "go"
from the beginning

GOAT a scapegoat
a person unfairly blamed for something not his fault

GOAT to play the giddy goat
to act the fool

GOAT to separate the sheep from the goats
to distinguish between those with and without certain attributes (Matthew 25:32)

GOLDFISH to be in a goldfish bowl
to be very open to view

GOLDFISH what is this—a bunch of grapes or a bowl of goldfish?
surely you know what this is!

GOOSE a wild goose chase
a foolish search for something which does not exist

GOOSE to be too frightened to say "boo" to a goose
to be excessively shy

GOOSE to cook one's goose
to do something which backfires on one

GOOSE to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs
through excessive greed to destroy a very profitable enterprise

GOOSE what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander
arguments which apply in one case also apply in another

GRASSHOPPER since he was knee high to a grasshopper
since he was a very young child

HACKLE to raise someone's hackles
to make a person angry

HALCYON in Halcyon days
in past happier times (refers to the 14 days about the winter solstice when winds were calm and to the mythical bird said to breed in a floating nest at that time)

HAMSTRUNG to be hamstrung
to have limited freedom to act as one would wish

HARE first catch your hare
do things in logical order and after proper preparation (advice on how to cook a hare in Mrs. Beeton's celebrated COOK BOOK)

HARE hare-brained
wildly stupid
HARE to chase every hare
to be easily sidetracked
HARE to run with the hare and hunt
with the hounds
to keep in with two opposing sides
HARE to set a hare running
in order to achieve some desired ef-
tect to initiate some related activity
HARRNESS in harness
before retirement
HEAD to rear its ugly head
to make an unwelcome appearance
HEN a mother hen
an overly protective person
HEN hen-pecked
subject to domination by one’s wife
HERD to follow the herd
to do what most other people are
doing
HERRING to be a red herring
to be something designed to divert
attention away from the main question
HIDE to cover one's hide
provide excuses or take other eva-
sive action in an attempt to avoid the
adverse consequences of one's actions
HIDEBOUND hidebound
narrow-minded
HOG a road hog
an inconsiderate motorist
HOG to go the whole hog
to do something very thoroughly (re-
fers to the close shearing of lambs)
HOG to make a hog of oneself
to demonstrate greed
HOGWASH hogwash
nonsense
HOOT not to care a hoot
not to show the slightest concern or
enthusiasm
HORN the horns of a dilemma
the unpalatable alternatives between
which a choice must be made
HORN to lock horns with someone
to have an argument with another
person
HORN to pull one’s horns in
to retreat from previously stated views
HORSE I could eat a horse
I am very hungry
HORSE a Trojan horse
a trick (refers to a large gift horse full
of soldiers used to bring about the
fall of Troy, as described in Homer’s
ILIAD)
HORSE a dark horse
a person with unsuspected talents
HORSE a nod is the same as a wink
to a blind horse
fine distinctions are not appropriate
here
HORSE a stalking horse
an ostensible reason
HORSE a two-horse race
a contest between only two serious
contestants
HORSE a warhorse
an old soldier who likes to relive past
wartime experiences
HORSE a willing horse
a cheerful worker
HORSE hold your horses!
just wait a little!
HORSE horse sense
natural shrewdness
HORSE horsetrading
tough negotiations
HORSE it is horses for courses
some combinations work particularly
well
HORSE that is a horse of a very
different color
that is a much more acceptable propo-
sition
HORSE the horse and buggy days
long ago
HORSE to back the wrong horse
to have faith in, give support to and/or invest in a project which proves to be unsuccessful

HORSE to be off on one's hobby horse
to throw into conversation aspects of a subject in which one has a passionate interest

HORSE to be on one's high horse
to be excessively pompous

HORSE to drive a coach and horses through something
to demonstrate major errors in something

HORSE to flog a dead horse
to misguidedly do something patently useless

HORSE to frighten the horses
to scare people off by one's ill-considered tactics

HORSE to learn something from the horse's mouth
to get information from someone qualified to impart it

HORSE to look a gift horse in the mouth
to be suspicious about a benefit which has been volunteered

HORSE to put the cart before the horse
to do things in the wrong order

HORSE to shut the stable door after the horse has bolted
to take preventive action only after the relevant event

HORSE to swap horses in midstream
to change direction during the course of a project

HORSE wild horses would not cause me to do something
I absolutely refuse to do something (refers to a form of torture)

HORSEPLAY horseplay
boisterous and undignified behavior

HOUND to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds
to keep in with two opposing sides

HOUND to set the hounds baying
to excite the gossips by providing material which they can use

JACKAL to keep the jackals at bay
to pay one's creditors just sufficient to avoid repercussions

KID to treat someone with kid gloves
to handle a person with great discretion

KITTEN to have kittens
to be in a state of great dismay (refers to a superstition that certain acts would cause women to bear kittens instead of children)

LAMB a lamb led to slaughter
a naive person allowing himself to be exploited

LAMB one might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb
further action will not increase the adverse consequences already in train (refers to the stealing of both sheep and lambs being capital crimes under old English law)

LAMB sacrificial lamb
somebody unfairly made to suffer for the mistakes of others

LAMB to be mutton dressed up as lamb
to foolishly pretend to be younger

LAMB to wait two shakes of a lamb's tail
to wait just a few moments

LAP to lap it up
to enjoy the attention

LARK to rise with the lark
to get up early

LEASH to hold someone on a short leash
to give a person very little authority
THEMATIC SECTION

ANIMALS

LEECH leech
person taking undue advantage of others

LEOPARD a leopard cannot change his spots
each person is born with certain unalterable characteristics

LION the lion’s share
the biggest portion

LION to beard the lion in his den
to visit someone important at his headquarters

LION to put one’s head into the lion’s mouth
to recklessly expose oneself to great danger

LION to throw someone to the lions
to abandon a person

LIZARD flat out like a lizard
to be hard at work (a play on words, not a simile)

LYNX lynx-eyed
having acute vision

MACKEREL to throw a sprat to catch a mackerel
to risk a little in the hope of gaining much

MARE a mare’s nest
a discovery with illusory benefits

MAVERICK maverick
a person who likes to do things differently from other persons (refers to unbranded livestock)

MINNOW to miss the sharks while netting the minnows
to succeed in minor aspects but fail in the ones that really matter

MOLE to make mountains out of molehills
to treat a minor problem as though it were a major disaster

MONKEY monkey business
mischievous or underhand activity

MONKEY to play monkey tricks on someone
to engage in discreditable behavior affecting a person

MOTH moth-eaten
(of ideas, etc.) antiquated

MOTHBALL to mothball equipment
to put equipment on a “care and maintenance” basis

MOUSE a game of cat and mouse
negotiations between two parties of unequal bargaining power during which the stronger makes some temporary concessions to the weaker without, however, affecting the latter’s eventual total defeat

MOUSE mice have been here
intruders have entered this place

MOUSE to labor mightily and bring forth a mouse
to be quite ineffective

MOUSE when the cat is away the mice will play
in the absence of supervision discipline will be lax

NEST a nest egg
life savings

NEST to feather one’s own nest
to improperly arrange a transaction on behalf of others to one’s own financial advantage

NEST to foul one’s own nest
to disparage one’s home or workplace

NIT to nitpick
to criticize a person in respect of very minor matters

OSTRICH to be an ostrich
refuse to face up to an unpleasant truth (refers to the reputed habit of ostriches in danger)

OWL to be a night owl
to habitually go to bed late

OYSTER the world is one’s oyster
one has enormous scope for activity
PACK to be at the head of the pack
to be the best of many or the de facto leader

PACK to bring someone back to the pack
to make a person conform

PEARL a pearl
a thing of great excellence

PECK pecking order
order of seniority

PECKER to keep one’s pecker up
to stay cheerful

PERCH to knock someone off his perch
to displace a person from his leadership position in some competitive situation

PETREL to be a stormy petrel
a person who disturbs a pleasant state of affairs by agitating for change

PIG a guinea pig
a person on whom some new practice is tried out

PIG to buy a pig in a poke
to buy goods of unknown quality

PIGEON a pigeon pair
one son and one daughter as the sole offspring

PIGEON to be one’s pigeon
to be one’s area of responsibility

PIGEON to pigeon-hole
to put aside for further consideration in the distant future

PIGEON to throw a cat among the pigeons
to cause consternation by revealing an unpleasant and unexpected fact

PIGHEADED pigheaded
unduly obstinate

PITFALL pitfall
unsuspected danger

PLAGUE to be of plague proportions
to be great in number

PONY a show pony
a pompous person

POSSUM to play possum
to pretend that one is not present

POSSUM to stir the possum
to set out to raise controversial issues

PUP to sell someone a pup
to cheat a person in a transaction, especially by misrepresentation as to the true value of something

PURR to positively purr
(of a person) to be very pleased; (of an engine) to run very smoothly

PUSSY to pussyfoot around
to take ineffectual steps

RABBIT move over and let the greyhound see the rabbit
move over

RABBIT to pull a rabbit out of the hat
to produce an unexpected and seemingly miraculous but highly desirable solution

RAT a case of rats leaving a sinking ship
the desertion of an enterprise in anticipation of imminent failure

RAT rat race
pressures of modern living

RAT to smell a rat
to become suspicious

REIN a tight rein
strong controls

REIN to give rein to one’s fancy
to let one’s imagination have free scope

REIN to rein in something
to keep better control over something

RHINOCEROS to have the hide of a rhinoceros
to be totally unaffected by and unresponsive to valid criticism
THEMATIC SECTION

ANIMALS

ROBIN a round robin
(1) a series of checks from A to B, from B to C, from C to A, and so on, leaving all of them in the same net position as before

ROBIN a round robin
(2) a document signed by members of an organization which has the same effect as a resolution of a meeting

ROOST to rule the roost
to dominate

RUMINATE to ruminante
to ponder over a matter (lit., to chew the cud)

SHARK to miss the sharks while netting the minnows
to succeed in minor aspects but fail in the ones that really matter

SHEEP a black sheep
a disreputable member of an otherwise reputable group

SHEEP one might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb
further action will not increase the adverse consequences already in train (refers to the stealing of both sheep and lambs being capital crimes under old English law)

SHEEP to be a wolf in sheep's clothing
to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous although masquerading as something harmless (Matthew 7:15)

SHEEP to be home on the sheep's back
to be doing well

SHEEP to cast sheep's eyes at someone
to look at a person amorously

SHEEP to ride on the sheep's back
to benefit from the production of wool

SHEEP to separate the sheep from the goats
to distinguish between those with and without certain attributes (Matthew 25:32)

SHEEP to spoil the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar
to engage in a false economy (the current word "ship" is actually a mistake for the original word "sheep" and the tar refers to the treatment of wounds)

SHEEPISH sheepish
embarrassed, as though guilty

SHELL to retreat into one's shell
to become shy and introversive

SKIN a cleanskin
a person without a criminal record

SNAIL at a snail's pace
very slowly

SNAKE a game of snakes and ladders
a series of ups and downs

SNAKE a snake in the grass
a person of low character

SNAP to snap at someone's heels
a minor irritation to a person

SOW one can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear
it is impossible to manufacture something of a high standard without appropriate raw materials

SOW to get the wrong sow by the ear
to reach an incorrect conclusion

SPIDER to be the center of the spider's web
to control an operation which involves numerous and/or complex ingredients

SPRAT to throw a sprat to catch a mackerel
to risk a little in the hope of gaining much

SPUR to spur someone on
to agitate a person into doing something

SQUIB a damp squib
disappointingly ineffective action (refers to fireworks which fail to go off)
STAMPEDE to stampede someone into something
to pressure a person into taking some action

STICK sticks and carrots
disincentives and incentives in combination (refers to the handling of donkeys)

STING to be the sting in the tail
to be the unexpected unpleasant conclusion

STIR to stir up a hornet’s nest
to take action which results in unpleasant side-effects

SWALLOW one swallow does not make a summer
much further evidence is desirable before any action taken

SWARM to swarm out
to gather in large numbers

SWINE to cast pearls before swine
to confer valuable benefits on someone who neither recognizes nor appreciates them

TAIL bright-eyed and bushy-tailed
naive but enthusiastic

TAIL the tail end of something
the very end of something

TAIL to be the sting in the tail
to be the unexpected unpleasant conclusion

TAIL to get off one’s tail
to stir oneself from one’s inertia

TAIL to have one’s tail between one’s legs
to show great humility in the light of a back down

TAIL with his tail between his legs
contritely

TENTACLE tentacles
strong and unpleasant influence extending a long way from its base and in many directions

TIGER a paper tiger
an empty threat

TIGER a toothless tiger
an authority which has been given totally inadequate powers for its task

TIGER to have a tiger by the tail
to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized

TOOTH to bare one’s teeth
to imply threats

TOOTH to take the bit between one’s teeth
to face up to a problem

TRACE to kick over one’s traces
to become insubordinate

TRAMPLE to trample someone underfoot
by virtue of one’s great power to treat a person’s rights with contempt and not to give them proper consideration

TURKEY cold turkey
the sudden cessation of drugs to an addict

TURKEY to talk turkey
to talk realistically

TURTLE to turn turtle
to capsize

UNDERBELLY to have a soft underbelly
to have a weakness which can be exploited

VENOM venom
deep-rooted ill will

VULTURE vulture
person benefiting from another’s misfortune

WEB a tangled web
a series of lies, especially with inconsistencies leading to exposure (from Sir Walter Scott’s MARMION)

WETHER bell-wether
first indication
WHISKER by a whisker
only just

WHOA from go to whoa
from start to finish (refers to the command given to horses)

WING to clip someone's wings
to reduce another person's freedom to act as he thinks fit

WING to spread one's wings
to assert authority which has not yet been conferred by one's superiors and for which one may not be ready

WING to take someone under one's wing
to protect a person

WOLF a lone wolf
a person who prefers to act without involving others

WOLF to be a wolf in sheep's clothing
to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous although masquerading as something harmless (Matthew 7:15)

WOLF to cry "wolf"
to repeatedly raise an unjustified concern with the result that one will be ignored when the circumstances change

WOLF to keep the wolf from the door
to avoid imminent trouble

WOLF to throw someone to the wolves
to expose a person to exploitation by more sophisticated persons

WOOL dyed in the wool
very loyal and partisan

WORM a bookworm
a person who likes reading and study

WORM a can of worms
a heterogeneous collection of unexpected problems

WORM the early bird gets the worm
a person who acts ahead of others gets an advantage over them

WORM the worm has turned
a previously compliant person is now exerting his personality

WORM to worm one's way in
to subtly insinuate oneself into a person's trust

ART

ART to raise something to a fine art form
to become very clever at doing something

CANVAS to have a blank canvas
to be bereft of ideas

EXHIBITION to make an exhibition of oneself
to behave in a way which invites ridicule

MOSAIC a mosaic
something with a large number of different aspects to it

PAINT to paint a black picture
to state a set of unfavorable factors

PAINTING not to be an oil painting
to be ugly

PEDESTAL to put someone on a pedestal
to admire a person and regard him as more marvelous than is warranted

PERSPECTIVE to put something into perspective
to explain the background of something so that its significance in relation to other things can be better appreciated

PICTURE to balance the picture
to put the other side of the story or to quote facts in contradiction

PICTURE to change the whole picture
to alter the major assumptions on which some assessment was based

PICTURE to conjure up a picture
to use words to convey a vivid impression
BUILDINGS

PICTURE to have a clear picture of something
to have a good understanding of something

PICTURE to put someone in the picture
to fill a person in with the background of a situation

PICTURE to see the big picture
to have the vision and imagination enabling a project to be developed as part of a bigger whole

SKETCH a thumbnail sketch
brief but pertinent details

AVIATION

BAIL to bail out of something
to abandon an enterprise in anticipation of disaster

BALLOON to go down like a lead balloon
to receive a very cool reception

BALLOON when the balloon goes up
when the adverse facts come to light

EDGE to have a leading edge
to have an advantage

FLY a highflyer
an ambitious and/or successful person

FLY time flies
time passes very quickly, but if wasted can never be recovered (from Virgil’s GEORGICS)

FLY to fly by the seat of one’s pants
to act unprofessionally

FLY to fly high
to be ambitious

FLY to have to fly
to need to leave in order to reach the next destination quickly

FLY to let fly at someone
to attack a person with strong words

FLYING to achieve a flying start
to get operational very quickly

GROUND to get something off the ground
to take a project beyond its initial stages and make it operational

LAND to land something
to achieve something

PARACHUTE golden parachute
generous provisions in a remuneration package which come into play in certain circumstances

TAILSPIN tailspin
very fast fall

WING on a wing and a prayer
without proper resources

ZERO to zero in on a target
to move directly toward one’s objective

BUILDINGS

ARCHITECT to be the architect of something
to be the person devising something innovative

BACKYARD in one’s own backyard
in one’s own domain

BELFRY to have bats in the belfry
to be mad

BENCHMARK a benchmark
a standard by which something is measured

BLOWTORCH to apply the blowtorch to something
to totally destroy something

BLUEPRINT blueprint
a master plan for some activity or a model which others can copy

BOLT nuts and bolts
basic ingredients

BRICK it is London to a brick
it is virtually certain
THEMATIC SECTION

BUILDINGS

BRICK one can't make bricks without straw
one cannot achieve results in the absence of adequate resources

BRICK to be up against a brick wall
to be unable to achieve anything because of intractable opposition or apathy

BRICK to drop a brick
to make a sudden shattering and unexpected announcement

BRICKBATS to throw brickbats at someone
to express displeasure with a person

BRIDGE a lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then
much has happened since then

BRIDGE to be water under the bridge
to matter no longer

BRIDGE to bridge a gap
to fill a need or make up a shortfall

BRIDGE to bridge a gulf
to overcome a wide divergence in views

BRIDGE to build bridges
to work at improving relationships

BRIDGE to burn one's bridges
to do something irreversible

BRIDGE to cross a bridge only when one comes to it
to await the crystallization of a situation before sorting it out

BRUSH a broad brush approach
rough justice

BRUSH to be tarred with the same brush
to be damned merely because of one's association with another person

CARPET to be on the carpet
to be lectured in regard to one's alleged misdeeds

CASTLE a castle in Spain
an impracticable proposition

CEILING ceiling
upper permitted limit

CEMENT to cement a relationship
to do something in an endeavor to make a relationship permanent

CHISEL to chisel away at something
to reduce the size of something in a series of small stages

CLOSET to come out of the closet
to publicly admit one's homosexuality

CORNER to be around the corner
to be imminent

CORNER to be in a tight corner
to experience a crisis

CORNER to cut corners
to lower one's standards in order to complete something more quickly

DOOR a foot in the door
the opportunity to do business

DOOR never darken my door again
do not ever return

DOOR not to break someone's door down
to be quite unenthusiastic about someone's goods or services

DOOR one's door is always open
people can take their problems to one at any time

DOOR through the back door
unofficially or surreptitiously

DOOR to be out the door
to have one's position terminated

DOOR to beat a path to someone's door
to seek a person out in great numbers

DOOR to leave the door open
to issue a standing invitation for the resumption of some negotiations

DOOR to open up doors
to create opportunities
BUILDINGS

DOOR to put something at someone's door
to blame a person

DOOR to show someone the door
to ask a person to leave

DOOR to shut the door on someone
to deny another person a desired opportunity

DOOR to slam the door in someone's face
ostentatiously to refuse to have any dealings with a person

DOORSTEP on one's own doorstep
in one's own domain

DRAIN that is money down the drain
money has been wastefully lost on a failed project

DRAW back to the drawing board
the details need to be reconsidered

DRAW to be on the drawing board
to be being planned in detail

DRAWBRIDGE to pull up the drawbridge
to refuse to cooperate

DUST when the dust settles
when sufficient time has passed

EAVESDROP to eavesdrop
to deliberately listen to conversations to which one is not a party

FENCE on our side of the fence
in the group representing our vested interest

FENCE to be on the other side of the fence
to have an opposing point of view or position

FENCE to be over the fence
to be unreasonable

FENCE to mend fences
to achieve a reconciliation

FENCE to sit on the fence
to refuse to choose between two alternatives

FENCE to want to jump all one's fences at once
to be unrealistic

FLOOR to get in on the ground floor
to invest on very favorable terms

FLOOR to hold the floor
to dominate a conversation

FLOOR to wipe the floor with someone
to inflict a humiliating defeat on a person

FRAMEWORK framework
outline of a proposal, on which further details can be developed

FUSE to have a short fuse
to lose one's temper very readily

GARDEN everything in the garden
is lovely
everything is fine

GATE to close the gate
to deny an opportunity which was previously available

GATE to gatecrash a gathering
to attend a gathering without any right to be there

GATEPOST between you and me
and the gatepost
confidentially

GATEWAY gateway to something
method of achieving something

HALL liberty hall
a place where one is free to do as one wishes

HAMMER to go hammer and tongs
to do something with great energy

HOLE a square peg in a round hole
a person much more suitable for a position rather different from the one held

HOME charity begins at home
a person's first responsibility should be to his family
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Section</th>
<th>Buildings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOME</strong> to be too close to home</td>
<td>LOCK to lock someone into some arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be too near the truth to be welcome</td>
<td>to create an agreement which cannot be broken by one of the parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOME</strong> to keep the home fires burning</td>
<td><strong>MARBLE</strong> to be carved in marble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to maintain normal domestic activity</td>
<td>to be virtually unalterable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during the temporary absence of the breadwinner</td>
<td><strong>NAIL</strong> on the nail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSE</strong> a half-way house</td>
<td><strong>NAIL</strong> to hit the nail right on the head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an intermediate position</td>
<td>to astutely come to the correct conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSE</strong> people in glass houses should not throw stones</td>
<td><strong>NAIL</strong> to nail someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>those who are less than perfect are foolish to criticize others</td>
<td>to put the blame on a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSE</strong> to be on the house</td>
<td><strong>NAIL</strong> to nail something down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be free of cost</td>
<td>to tie up the loose ends of an arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSE</strong> to bring the house down</td>
<td><strong>NICHE</strong> to carve out a niche for oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to greatly amuse an audience</td>
<td>to deliberately create an opportunity to use one’s talents effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSE</strong> to eat someone out of house and home</td>
<td><strong>NICHE</strong> to find one’s niche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to ruin a person by eating all he has</td>
<td>to find the opportunity to use one’s talents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSE</strong> to put one’s house in order</td>
<td><strong>NOOK</strong> in every nook and cranny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fix up the deficiencies in one’s affairs</td>
<td>everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSEHOLD</strong> a household name</td>
<td><strong>NUT</strong> nuts and bolts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a very familiar name</td>
<td>basic ingredients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INN</strong> no room at the inn</td>
<td><strong>PAINT</strong> to paint oneself into a corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no room</td>
<td>to foolishly put oneself into a position from which escape is impossible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KITCHEN</strong> to get the rounds of the kitchen</td>
<td><strong>PAPER</strong> to paper over the cracks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(of a husband) to be subject to personal abuse by his wife</td>
<td>to institute extremely superficial and basically ineffective remedies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LADDER</strong> a game of snakes and ladders</td>
<td><strong>PATH</strong> path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a series of ups and downs</td>
<td>means of achieving an objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LADDER</strong> rungs up a ladder</td>
<td><strong>PATH</strong> slippery path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gradual steps to an ultimate goal</td>
<td>dangerous course of action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LADDER</strong> to be at the bottom of the ladder</td>
<td><strong>PATH</strong> to be on a path strewn with roses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be in the most junior position in some hierarchy</td>
<td>to lead a very pleasant life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEAD</strong> to swing the lead</td>
<td><strong>PATH</strong> to beat a path to someone’s door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cheat an employer by not working while being paid to do so</td>
<td>to seek a person out in great numbers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**BUILDINGS**

**THEMATIC SECTION**

**PATH** to block someone's path
to interfere with a person's opportunity to advance himself

**PATH** to cross someone's path
to meet another person by chance

**PATH** to lead someone up the garden path
to mislead a person by deliberately fallacious arguments

**PATH** to smooth the path for someone
to use one's influence to make arrangements so that a person's task will be easier or more readily accomplished

**PATH** to tread a particular path
to take certain initiatives

**PEG** a square peg in a round hole
a person much more suitable for a position rather different from the one held

**PENNY** the penny dropped
a person has just realized a fact which should have been obvious (refers to old-fashioned pay toilets)

**PILLAR** a pillar of some organization
a significant supporter of some organization

**PLUG** to have the plug pulled out from under one
to have a successful activity destroyed by the actions of someone else

**PUTTY** to be putty in someone's hands
to be far too easily influenced by another person

**RIVET** to be riveted to one's seat
to find the activity being watched very exciting and worthy of full attention

**ROCK** bedrock price
lowest possible price

**ROOF** the roof has fallen in
an enterprise has collapsed

**ROOF** to go through the roof
(of a person) to be very upset or (of prices) to escalate greatly

**ROOF** to hit the roof
to be very angry

**ROOF** to scream something from the rooftops
to communicate a message to a wide audience

**ROOF** under one roof
under the same management

**ROOM** there is no room to swing a cat
this place is very small (actually refers to a cat-o'-nine-tails)

**SCREW** to have a screw loose
to be mentally unbalanced

**SCREW** to tighten the screw
to increase the moral and psychological pressure

**SHINGLE** to hang up one's shingle
to go into business offering expert personal services

**SINK** everything but the kitchen sink
a lot of things

**SLEDGEHAMMER** to use a sledgehammer to crack a nut
to devote vastly more resources to a project than is warranted by all the circumstances

**STABLE** a Herculean cleaning of the stables
a thorough revision of operating procedure (refers to Hercules, a mythical Greek hero who cleaned the stables of Augeas)

**STEAMROLL** to steamroll something through
to use enormous force to achieve an objective

**STONE** cornerstone
key ingredient

**STONE** the touchstone
the standard
TACK to get down to brass tacks
to discuss the aspects which really matter

TAR to have a touch of the tarbrush
to be not quite a full-blood Caucasian

TONGS to go hammer and tongs
to do something with great energy

TOOLS tools
the means to do something

TOWER a tower of Babel
a noisy and confused assembly (Genesis 11)

TOWER to be a tower of strength
to be a person who supports and comforts another

TROWEL to lay it on with a trowel
to flatter

TUNNEL tunnel vision
an extremely narrow and inflexible way of considering issues

WALL Chinese walls
a system to ensure that different parts of some organization do not gain access to each other’s confidential information

WALL I would love to be a fly on the wall
I would love to hear what goes on

WALL a chink in the wall
an opportunity to do something which otherwise could not be done

WALL to be a crack in the wall
to represent a small unintended opportunity which can be exploited

WALL to drive someone to the wall
to ruin a person

WALL to drive someone up the wall
to annoy another person by one’s actions

WALL to go to the wall
to become bankrupt

WALL to have one’s back to the wall
to be hard-pressed by creditors or opponents

WALL to nail someone to the wall
to outmaneuver another person

WALL to put a wall around someone
to stop a person associating with others

WALL to see the writing on the wall
to appreciate the inevitability of some event (Daniel 5)

WALL walls have ears
someone may be overhearing (words on wartime posters, reminding people of the existence of spies; may also refer to certain rooms in the Louvre, constructed so that conversations could be heard in other rooms)

WALL walls of Jericho
something seemingly solid but actually destructible (Joshua 6:20)

WAY to pave the way
to prepare for something

WEDGE to be the thin end of the wedge
by conceding a small point to create an undesirable precedent for much larger issues

WHITEWASH to whitewash
to exonerate when this is not warranted by the facts

WINDMILL to tilt at windmills
to attack an imagined but non-existent enemy (from Cervantes’ DON QUIXOTE)

WINDOW a window of opportunity
an opportunity temporarily available

WINDOW to engage in window dressing
to present figures in an artificially favorable light

WINDOW to fly out the window
to be lost

WINDOW to throw a pebble against the window
to gently draw attention to oneself

WINDOW to throw something out of the window
to completely reject an idea or proposal
**YARDSTICK** a yardstick
a standard by which something is measured

**CARDS**

ACE to be within an ace of something
to be extremely close to something

ACE to have an ace up one's sleeve
to hold an impressive counter-argument in reserve

ACE to hold all the aces
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

BUCK the buck stops here
I accept full responsibility (sign on the desk of Harry S. Truman when President of the United States)

BUCK to pass the buck
in an uncooperative spirit to decline responsibility for a matter on the grounds that someone else more properly has responsibility for it

CARD a house of cards
an organization which gives a misleading impression of solidity

CARD a three-card trick
a ruse used by a dishonest person in order to induce his victims to hand over some of their assets

CARD a wild card
an unexpected development

CARD let the cards fall where they may
irrespective of what happens

CARD to have the cards stacked against one
to be faced with many difficulties frustrating a project

CARD to hold all the cards
to be assured of victory

CARD to hold one's cards close to one's chest
to keep one's plans and strategies secret

**CARD** to lay one's cards on the table
to be utterly frank and open or to honestly disclose one's position

**CARD** to play every card in the pack
to try very hard and use every conceivable argument

**CARD** to play one's cards right
to approach a matter sensibly

**CARD** to play the cards as they fall
to deal with problems as they arise

**CARD** to play the last card in the pack
to lower one's standards in a final desperate effort

**CARD** without any cards to play
without the means to achieve something

**DEALER** sharp dealer
person engaging in barely honest or mildly unethical practices

**HAND** to deal the final hand
to take steps which conclude a matter

**HAND** to disclose one's hand
to give away information regarding one's intention

**HAND** to force someone's hand
to take action causing another person to react

**HAND** to hold a winning hand
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

**HAND** to throw in one's hand
to give in or to give up

**HAND** to tip one's hand
to disclose details of one's position

**HANDS** to win hands down
to win very convincingly

**MISERE** to be a laid-down misère
to be very easily accomplished and/or to be certain of outcome (refers to the declaration in certain card games undertaking to win no tricks)
ODDS to have the odds stacked against one
to be faced with many difficulties frustrating a project

PACK to play the last card in the pack
to lower one's standards in a final desperate effort

PEG to be level pegging
(of contestants) to have little between them

POKER a game of poker
negotiations in which the parties try to bluff each other

POKER a poker face
a facial expression which does not reveal one's thoughts during negotiations

SHOWDOWN showdown
disclosure of certain pertinent facts

SUIT one's long suit
one's main skills

SUIT to follow suit
to do the same as others

TRICK to be unable to take a trick
to be unable to achieve success in anything

TRUMP to hold the trump card
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

TRUMP to play the trump card
to make a final move, thereby defeating one's opponents

TRUMP to trump someone
to defeat a person

TRUMP to turn up trumps
to finish up better than expected or to experience unexpected good luck

UNDERPLAY to underplay some situation
to hold something in reserve

CHESS to be a chess game
to be a complex exercise, requiring great skill

CHESSMASTER a chessmaster
a clever strategist

GAMBIT a gambit
an opening move in a competitive situation which involves short term losses in the expectation of long term gains

GAMBIT opening gambit
the first in a series of strategic moves (a tautological expression which also involves a misunderstanding of a technical chess term)

KNIGHT a white knight
a party voluntarily coming to the assistance of another party at considerable cost to itself

MOVE your move!
the next step is up to you

PAWN a pawn
a person of small importance who is manipulated by others

STALEMATE stalemate
a final result in which neither party to a dispute is victorious

CIRCUSES

AUNT an Aunt Sally
a person who can readily be singled out and criticized as the proxy for a group

BALL to have too many balls in the air
to attempt to do more than can be coped with

CARD to be on the cards
to be likely

CARD to have a card up one's sleeve
to secretly have information relevant to a transaction
CIRCUS to be a real circus
to be a highly disorganized affair

CONJURE to conjure up a picture
to use words to convey a vivid impression

CONJURE to conjure up something
to produce something in circumstances where this seemed impossible

HOOP to jump through hoops
to undergo some ordeal

LINE to tread the thin line
cautiously to take action in circumstances where either too much or too little will cause difficulties

MAGIC the magic moment
the perfect time

MAGIC there is no magic in that
that is quite ordinary

MERRY to be on a merry-go-round
to be sent from one bureaucrat to another

NET a safety net scheme
a scheme for dealing with the exceptional cases not covered by normal arrangements

PULL to pull a rabbit out of the hat
to produce an unexpected and seemingly miraculous but highly desirable solution

ROLLER a roller coaster ride
a series of successes followed by failures

SLEIGHT sleight of hand
deceit by trickery

SPOTLIGHT to turn the spotlight on something
to draw public attention to something

SWING what one loses on the swings
one gains on the roundabouts
there are advantages and disadvantages which offset each other

TIGHTROPE to walk a tightrope
to do something very dangerous

TRICK one cannot teach an old dog
new tricks
people get irreversibly set in their ways

TRICK something has done the trick
something has achieved the desired purpose

TRICK to score a hat trick
to have three successive favorable outcomes

TRICK to use every trick in the book
to try very hard and use every conceivable argument

WAND to wave a magic wand
to direct affairs without the restraints of the real world

CLOTHES

APRON to be tied to someone’s apron strings
to be excessively influenced by a female

BELT to get something under one’s belt
to achieve something

BELT to hit someone below the belt
to act unfairly toward another person

BELT to tighten one’s belt
to lower one’s rate of spending

BONNET to have a bee in one’s bonnet
to have an obsession

BOOT to be too big for one’s boots
to have an unwarranted belief as to one’s capabilities or status

BOOT to give someone the boot
to terminate a person’s appointment

BOOT to go in boots and all
to do something very roughly

BOOT to hang up one’s boots
to retire

BOOT to have one’s heart in one’s boots
to be terrified
THEMATIC SECTION

CLOTHES

BOOT to lick someone's boots
to show humility

BOOT to put the boot in
to reprimand a person

BOOT to quake in one's boots
to be afraid

BOOTSTRAP to be British to one's bootstraps
to be very demonstrative about one's Britishness

BOOTSTRAP to pull oneself up by one's bootstraps
to make a praiseworthy effort to better oneself unaided

BREECHES to be too big for one's breeches
to have an exaggerated idea of one's own importance

CAP a feather in one's cap
a meritorious personal achievement

CAP cap
upper permitted limit

CAP if the cap fits then wear it
if your circumstances correspond with those described then you must endure the consequences

CAP to cap a story
to tell an even funnier story than the one just told

CAP to earn a dunce's cap
to do something stupid

CAP to go cap in hand
to show humility while soliciting a favor

CAP to put one's thinking cap on
to concentrate on finding a solution to a difficult problem

CAP to set one's cap at someone
(of females) to try to attract a person as a marriage partner

CAP to throw one's cap into the air
to celebrate some achievement

CLOAK cloak and dagger activity
dead secret activity

CLOAK to cloak something
to disguise the true nature of something

CLOTHES to steal someone's clothes
to plagiarise another person's ideas

CLOTHING to be a wolf in sheep's clothing
to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous although masquerading as something harmless (Matthew 7:15)

COAT to cut one's coat according to the cloth
to accommodate oneself to limitations beyond one's control and to do the best in the circumstances

COAT to hang onto someone's coat-tails
to excessively rely on another person's initiatives

COAT to trail one's coattails
to invite a quarrel

COLLAR to be hot under the collar
to be very agitated

CUFF off the cuff
impromptu

DRESS first in best dressed
persons acting early will do better than latecomers

DRESS to dress someone down
to scold a person

GARTER I will have his guts for garters
I am extremely angry and dissatisfied with him

GAUNTLET to throw down the gauntlet
to issue a challenge (refers to the glove worn by a knight)

GLOVE the gloves are off
the challenge has been accepted

GLOVE to treat someone with kid gloves
to handle a person with great discretion
GLOVE to work hand in glove with someone
to work in close cooperation with a person or to be in collusion with a person to the detriment of others
GLOVE with an iron hand in a velvet glove
with a hard attitude made to seem soft
HAT I'll eat my hat if so-and-so happens
I do not believe that so-and-so will happen
HAT a peg to hang a hat on
something which provides a convenient or plausible excuse for some particular action
HAT at the drop of a hat
very readily
HAT not to just pick something out of a hat
to choose carefully, after weighing all the considerations
HAT to be old hat
to be a very widely-known fact
HAT to keep something under one's hat
to maintain a confidence
HAT to knock something into a cocked hat
to twist something so that its original form is hardly recognizable
HAT to pull a rabbit out of the hat
to produce an unexpected and seemingly miraculous but highly desirable solution
HAT to score a hat trick
to have three successive favorable outcomes
HAT to take one's hat off to someone
to be full of admiration for a person
HAT to talk through one's hat
to say things which demonstrate the speaker's ignorance of the subject
HAT to throw one's hat into the air
to express joy
HAT to wear a particular hat
to act in a particular capacity or for a particular vested interest
IRON to iron out something
to sort out a difficult problem
JACKET to keep someone in a strait-jacket
to deny a person any discretionary powers at all
KNICKERS to get one's knickers in a knot
to get unduly excited
LACE strait-laced
puritanical
LINEN to wash one's dirty linen in public
to expose one's domestic differences to the world at large
MANTLE to assume someone's mantle
to take over another person's role
MASK to unmask someone
to discover a person's true identity
PAJAMAS to be the cat's pajamas
to have an exaggerated idea of one's importance
PANTS a kick in the pants
an admonition
PANTS to bore the pants off someone
to weary a person by dull and uninteresting conversation
PANTS to catch someone with his pants down
to act when another person least expects it
PANTS to charm the pants off someone
to delight a person
PANTS to fly by the seat of one's pants
to act unprofessionally
PANTS to scare the pants off someone
to greatly frighten a person

PETTICOAT petticoat government
rule by women

PIN for two pins I would do so-and-so
my tolerance is almost exhausted and I am very tempted to do so-and-so

PIN not to care a pin for something
not to have the slightest interest in something

PIN pin money
an allowance to a wife for her personal use

PIN to be on pins and needles
to be very agitated

PINPOINT to pinpoint
to identify very precisely

POCKET not to live in each other's pockets
to each follow his own lifestyle

POCKET the hip pocket nerve
the assessment of issues by their financial effects on one

POCKET to be in someone's pocket
to be subject to undue influence by another person

POCKET to be out of pocket
to have been forced to spend money which cannot be recovered from others

POCKET to have deep pockets
to have large financial resources

POCKET to have money burning a hole in one's pocket
to be impatient to spend or invest available funds

POCKET to line one's pockets
to make, improperly and secretly, a profit out of some transaction

POCKET to put one's hands in one's pockets
to spend

PURSE one can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear
it is impossible to manufacture something of a high standard without appropriate raw materials

PURSE to button up one's purse
to refuse to spend money

PURSE to hold the purse strings
to have control of expenditure

PURSE to tighten the purse strings
to reduce outlays

SACKCLOTH to wear sackcloth and ashes
humbly to demonstrate repentance

SEAM to be bursting at the seams
to be very crowded

SEAM to come apart at the seams
(of an arrangement) to break down

SEW to sew something up
to negotiate a deal

SHIRT keep your shirt on!
relax!

SHIRT so-and-so would give one the shirt off his back
so-and-so is very generous

SHIRT to lose one's shirt
to make heavy financial losses

SHIRT to put one's shirt on something
to invest heavily in some speculative venture

SHIRT to wear a hair shirt
to practice self-discipline

SHOE to be in someone's shoes
to have another person's responsibility

SHOE to fill someone's shoes
to be a good successor

SHOE to wait for the other shoe to drop
to await the seemingly imminent and inevitable (refers to a man undressing, disturbing a neighbor by dropping one shoe, then frustrating his expectation by putting the other shoe down gently)
SHOELACE to pull oneself up by one's own shoelaces
to make a superhuman effort

SHOESTRING to do something on a shoestring
to do something with great economy

SKIRT to hide under someone's skirts
to let someone else take the consequences of one's actions

SLEEVE to have an ace up one's sleeve
to hold an impressive counter-argument in reserve

SLEEVE to keep something up one's sleeve
to secretly retain something in reserve for use in the future or at a later stage of negotiations

SLEEVE to laugh up one's sleeve
to laugh surreptitiously

SLEEVE to roll up one's sleeves
to get on with a job energetically

SLEEVE to wear one's heart on one's sleeve
to lack the reserve expected of one

SOCK to chop someone off at the socks
to stop someone's proposals prematurely

SOCK to pull one's socks up
to set out to improve or correct one's inadequate behavior or performance

STITCH a stitch in time saves nine
preventive maintenance saves money in the long run

STITCH to stitch up a deal
to successfully conclude a deal

THREAD to hang by a slender thread
to only just survive

TROUSERS to catch someone with his trousers down
to act when another person least expects it

TROUSERS to wear the trousers to be the dominant party

TRY to try something on for size
to cheekily do something

UMBRELLA an umbrella
protection; or something all embracing

UMBRELLA under the umbrella of some organization
under the auspices of some organization

UNVEIL to unveil something
to give details not previously available

VEIL thinly-veiled
barely concealed

VEIL to draw a veil over something
pointedly to avoid discussing something

VEIL under the veil of something
on the pretext of something

WASH it will all come out in the wash
the facts will emerge as work proceeds

WASH it won't wash
this explanation is not acceptable

WASH when the wash comes through the machine
in due course

WEAR that argument is wearing a bit thin
that is a very weak case

WEAR to have to wear something
to have to put up with something

COLORS

BLACK a black hole
an intermediate range of values producing anomalous results or a particularly obnoxious prison cell

BLACK a black sheep
a disreputable member of an otherwise reputable group

BLACK in black and white
in writing, spelling out all the details
BLACK the pot calling the kettle black
a person criticizing another person
without realizing his own even greater shortcomings

BLACK there are black clouds on the horizon
bad news is expected

BLACK things look black
there is little hope of success or prosperity or a favorable outcome

BLACK to be a black and white issue
to involve very clear distinctions

BLACK to be in someone’s black books
to be out of favor with a person

BLACK to be in the black
to have money

BLACK to blackball someone
to reject a person as unsuitable

BLACK to give someone a black look
to indicate one’s displeasure with a person

BLACK to have a black mark against one’s name
to have a tarnished reputation

BLACK to paint a black picture
to state a set of unfavorable factors

BLACK to paint someone black
to ruin a person’s reputation

BLUE a blueblood
a person of high birth (refers to the appearance of veins on the skin of members of some royal families)

BLUE between the devil and the deep blue sea
to be faced with two equally unpalatable alternatives which cannot both be avoided

BLUE blue ribbon
of superb quality (refers to the insignia of the Order of the Garter)

BLUE blue sky
supremely optimistic

BLUE blue-eyed boy
person shown unjustified favoritism

BLUE once in a blue moon
very rarely (refers to the volcanic eruption at Krakatoa in 1883 when volcanic dust caused the moon to appear blue)

BLUE to be a blue-chip stock
to be of excellent quality

BLUE to be a bolt from the blue
to be a totally unexpected event

BLUE to be in a blue funk
to be terrified

BLUE to come out of the blue
to be totally unexpected

BLUE to feel blue
to feel depressed

BLUE to go on till one is blue in the face
to argue for a long time

BLUE to have a blue fit
to be very agitated

BLUE to scream blue murder
to make serious allegations

BLUE true blue
superbly loyal

BROWN to be browned off
to be fed-up

COLOR that takes on added color
there are now further facts which alter the appearance of a matter

COLOR to see the color of someone’s money
to get evidence of the sincerity of a person’s proposal

GILD to gild the lily
(actually: to gild refined gold, to paint the lily) to do something patently unnecessary

GILT gilt-edged
very safe
COLORS

GOLD a golden opportunity
an unparalleled opportunity

GOLD silence is golden
it is better not to incriminate anyone

GRAY to be a gray area
to be in an undefined position straddling two or more possibilities

GREEN a green chum
an inexperienced person

GREEN distant fields look greener
activities of which one has no experience seem much easier than is really the case

GREEN to be green
to be naive

GREEN to give the green light
to grant permission

GREEN to have green fingers
to be good at gardening

GREEN to move on to greener pastures
to commence a new, better career

GREEN to turn green
to become very envious

PINK to be tickled pink
to be very pleased

PINK to look in the pink
to look well

PURPLE to be purple with rage
to be very angry

RED a red-letter day
an important occasion (refers to the color used to print saints' days on some calendars)

RED neither fish, flesh nor good red herring
unclassifiable by virtue of being neither one thing nor another (from Cervantes' DON QUIXOTE)

RED red-hot
highly exciting and desirable

RED red tape
excessively bureaucratic procedures

RED the red-carpet treatment
courtesies extended to a person to make him feel important and welcome

RED to be a red herring
to be something designed to divert attention away from the main question

RED to be a red rag to a bull
to be something which makes a person very angry and very excited (refers to the erroneous belief that the color red, rather than the motion of waving, excites a bull)

RED to be in the red
to owe money

RED to be left red-faced
to be embarrassed

RED to catch someone red-handed
to apprehend a person in the course of committing a crime

RED to get the red light
to be forbidden to do something

RED to paint the town red
to go on an exciting social outing

RED to see red
to become very angry

RED to see red lights flashing
to be conscious of the danger

ROSY to present a rosy picture
to state a set of favorable factors

SILVER every cloud has a silver lining
there are benefits even in seemingly adverse situations

WHITE a white elephant
an expensive and useless luxury (refers to gifts of sacred elephants by the King of Siam to persons then ruined by the expense of their upkeep)

WHITE a white knight
a party voluntarily coming to the assistance of another party at considerable cost to itself
THEMATIC SECTION

WHITE a white lie
a false statement uttered in a good cause

WHITE in black and white
in writing, spelling out all the details

WHITE lily-white
honest and incorruptible

WHITE to be a black and white issue
to involve very clear distinctions

WHITE to show the white feather
to indicate cowardice (refers to cross-bred birds, not regarded as useful in cock fighting)

WHITE to turn white
to express shock at unexpected news

WHITE to white ant someone
to surreptitiously seek to destroy a person

COMMERCE

ADD it adds up
it makes sense

BANK to laugh all the way to the bank
to appreciate one's good fortune

BANKRUPT to be bankrupt of ideas
to be bereft of ideas

BARGAIN to be more than one bargained for
to be more than one expected

BASKET to put something into the "too hard" basket
to defer consideration of a difficult issue

BLANK to give someone a blank check
to give another person unlimited delegated authority

BOOK to balance the books
to get one's own back

BUY I buy that
I accept that idea

BUY to buy into some argument
to seek to participate in some discussion

BUY to buy straw hats in winter
to buy in a depressed market when most other people are sellers

CENT to throw in one's two cents' worth
to modestly supply one's own facts or views

CHANGE to be shortchanged
to be given less than is due to one

COAL to carry coals to Newcastle
to do something ridiculously unnecessary

COIN the other side of the coin
the arguments for the opposite point of view

COIN to pay someone back in his own coin
to retaliate in kind

CUSTOMER a slippery customer
a shifty person

DIVIDENDS to show dividends
to be successful

HEDGE to be hedged around
(of a statement) to be surrounded by qualifications

I to dot the i's and cross the t's
to be meticulous in completing the documentation for a transaction

INK the ink is hardly dry
something intended to last a long time
is to be changed shortly after its establishment

IRON to give a cast-iron guarantee
to give a very secure undertaking to do something

LINE the bottom line
the conclusion which matters or the net effect of a series of developments

LINE to sign on the dotted line
to confirm one's agreement
LIST a shopping list
a catalogue of demands

MARK to make something one's trademark
to earn a reputation for maintaining some stance

MESSAGE to get the message
to understand the real import of what is being said

MITE not a mite
not at all (refers to a Flemish coin of small value)

MONEY not for love or money
definitely not

MONEY not to be made of money
not to be wealthy

MONEY to put one's money where one's mouth is
to back one's judgment by putting assets at risk

MONEY to see the color of someone's money
to get evidence of the sincerity of a person's proposal

PAPER to start with a blank sheet of paper
to commence an exercise without being bound by any established practices

PAR to be below par
to be less than the desired standard

PAY that has put paid to it
the project can no longer proceed

PAY to pay off
to be successful

PAY to pay something back with interest
to return a small favor with a bigger favor or to extract retribution of greater value than the circumstances warrant

PENN in for a penny—in for a pound
once something is commenced it ought to be finished; or if one is willing to take a small risk then one might as well take a bigger one

PENN to throw in one's six pennies' worth
to modestly supply one's own facts or views

PENN to turn an honest penny
to earn money out of odd jobs

PITCH to queer the pitch for someone
to spoil the opportunity a person has to do something

POUND in for a penny—in for a pound
once something is commenced it ought to be finished; or if one is willing to take a small risk then one might as well take a bigger one

PRE-EMPT to pre-empt some issue
to deliberately do something which has the effect of limiting the range of alternative approaches to a matter

PRICE to pay the price
to suffer the adverse consequences of one's acts or omissions

RAZOO not to have a brass razoo
to be very poor

SALE fire sale
a forced sale, realizing bargain prices

SELL to be sold on something
to be utterly dedicated to a proposal

SELL to sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage
through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)

SELL to sell someone down the river
to betray a person who has placed his trust in one
THEMATIC SECTION

CRIME

VALUE to take something at face value
(of alleged facts) to accept something without question or challenge

WEALTH a wealth of something
a great quantity of something

CRIME

FELONY to compound the felony
having already acted improperly to make matters worse (the misuse of a legal term: compounding a felony is the crime of agreeing for money not to prosecute a person for felony; in reality it is therefore an offense by a different person—not a second and worse offense by the original culprit)

HIJACK to hijack a debate
to involve oneself in the public discussion of some matter and turn that discussion to one’s advantage

MURDER to be sheer murder
to be extremely unpleasant or difficult; or to be an inglorious defeat

MURDER to get away with murder
to do something outrageous without penalty

MURDER to scream blue murder
to make serious allegations

PINCH penny-pinching
excessively mean

ROB to rob Peter in order to pay Paul
to fix up one grievance by causing another

ROBBERY daylight robbery
the charging of grossly excessive prices

ROBBERY highway robbery
the charging of grossly excessive prices

SHOTGUN a shotgun wedding
a wedding held to ensure that an impending birth will be legitimate (refers to threats by the bride’s father to kill the bridegroom)
### Death

**Throat**

*cut-throat*

highly competitive

**Death**

**Block**

*someone’s head is on the block*

a person is in danger of having his appointment terminated

**Blow**

*death blow*

incident which results in the destruction of something

**Body**

*over my dead body*

never

**Coffin**

*to be another nail in someone’s coffin*

to represent a further step toward someone’s downfall

**Corpse**

*to breathe life into a corpse*

to revive something moribund

*to chase a corpse*

to harp on something long ago resolved or a lost cause

**Dead**

*I wouldn’t be caught dead without some object*

I regard some object as very important

**Dead a dead letter**

a rule still in existence but no longer observed in practice

**Dead dead and buried**

(of some issue) definitely concluded, especially so long ago as to be nearly forgotten

**Dead drop dead!**

go away, I want no dealings with you

**Dead to be a dead duck**

to have failed

**Dead to cut someone dead**

to snub a person

**Dead to leave others for dead**

to be vastly superior

**Dead to make noise enough to wake the dead**

to be excessively noisy

**Dead to run into a dead end**

to get nowhere in an investigation

**Death a death wish**

the contemplation of action so foolish that it is likely to lead to utter disaster

**Death sudden death**

instantaneously or without phasing in

**Death to be in at the death**

to be present at the conclusion of something

**Death to be on one’s death bed**

(of an organization or a piece of equipment) to be about to cease functioning

**Death to be the kiss of death**

to be something intended to be helpful but resulting in total destruction

**Death to bore someone to death**

to greatly weary a person by dull and uninteresting conversation or by lack of action

**Death to die a natural death**

by virtue of changed circumstances or the effluxion of time to be no longer relevant

**Death to sign one’s own death warrant**

to foolishly do something which is inevitably bound to lead to utter disaster

**Death to slowly bleed to death**

to be heading in gradual steps toward total ruin

**Death to sound the death knell of something**

to indicate the impending end of something

**Deathknock on the deathknock**

at the last possible moment

**Die to be dying to do something**

to be extremely keen to do something

**Die to die hard**

not to give up easily

**Fatal to be fatal**

to be sufficient to destroy some proposal
FUNERAL that is your funeral!
that is the fate which you will have to suffer

GRAVE he would turn in his grave
he would have been very surprised or displeased if he had known while still alive

GRAVE to dig one's own grave
to take action which results in an unintended disaster for oneself

GRAVE to have one foot in the grave
to be dying

HANG one might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb
further action will not increase the adverse consequences already in train (refers to the stealing of both sheep and lambs being capital crimes under old English law)

KILL to be dressed to kill
to be more finely dressed than the occasion warrants

KILL to be in at the kill
to be present at the climatic finish to something

KILL to be killed in the rush
to be the supplier of something extremely popular

KILL to kill oneself laughing
to be greatly amused

KILL to kill some proposal stone dead
to abandon some proposal completely

KILL to kill the fatted calf
to demonstrate welcome and forgiveness on a person's return (Luke 15:23)

KILL to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs
through excessive greed to destroy a very profitable enterprise

MORTEM to conduct a postmortem on something
to review past actions with a view to learning lessons for the future (Latin, "after the death")

NOOSE to put one's head in the noose
to recklessly and unnecessarily expose oneself to great danger

NOOSE to tighten the noose
to get closer to inflicting defeat

SLAUGHTER a lamb led to slaughter
a naive person allowing himself to be exploited

EDUCATION

BOOK to take a leaf out of someone's book
to model oneself on another person

CANE to take a caning
to suffer the adverse consequences of one's acts or omissions

COPYBOOK to blot one's copybook
to spoil one's previously good reputation or record

DICTIONARY someone has swallowed a dictionary
a person uses excessively long words

DUNCE to earn a dunce's cap
to do something stupid

HOMEWORK to do one's homework
to thoroughly analyze an issue

LESSON to drive the lesson home
to take certain action which is unpleasant but which has the effect of registering a message

LESSON to learn a lesson
to benefit from one's experience

LESSON to teach someone a lesson
to inflict something unpleasant on a person in the hope that it will lead to a change in his behavior

SCHOOL to tell tales out of school
to deliberately leak a secret

SCHOOLBOY as every schoolboy knows
as is recognized by everyone
SPELL to spell something out
to explain something in detail

FARMING

AX the ax has fallen
it is now too late
AX to ax
to cancel
AX to have an ax to grind
to have a vested interest
AX to sharpen one’s ax
to get ready for a difficult task
AX where the ax falls
who gets terminated
BAG it is in the bag
the enterprise has succeeded
BARN to barnstorm
to visit accompanied by a show of force
BELL bell-wether
first indication
BLOCK to be a chip off the old block
to resemble one’s father
BUCKET to kick the bucket
to die
BULLDOZE to bulldoze some proposal through
to ensure the passage of some measure in complete disregard of criticism or opposition
CHIP that is the way the chips fall
that is the actual situation
CHIP when the chips are down
when all facts are known and taken into consideration
COTTON to be out of one’s cotton-picking mind
to act irrationally
COTTON to keep one’s cotton-picking fingers off something
not to interfere in something

EARTH a down-to-earth solution
a realistic solution

FIELD distant fields look greener
activities of which one has no experience seem much easier than is really the case

FLEECE to fleece someone
to cheat a person out of some asset

GROUND to clear the ground
to dispose of the preliminaries

HARVEST harvest
end result of labor

HAY to hit the hay
to go to sleep

HAYSTACK to find a needle in a haystack
to find something when the probability of finding it is very small

HOOK to get someone off the hook
to rescue a person from an embarrassing predicament

HOOK to let someone off the hook
to allow a person to escape the adverse consequences of his own actions

MILL it is all grist to the mill
this is useful but unexciting additional material

MILL run of the mill
normal or average

MILL the mills of God grind slowly
retribution may be delayed but is inevitable

MILL to put someone through the mill
to give a person practical experience

MOVER prime mover
person initiating and promoting a cause

OATS to sow wild oats
to indulge in foolish behavior while a young adult

PADDOCK to have a spell in the paddock
to have leave of absence
PASTOR pastor
religious official in charge of a congregation

PASTURE to move on to greener pastures
to commence a new, better career

PLOW speed the plow!
let us get on with this as fast as possible!

PLOW to plow new ground
to laboriously engage in an untried activity

PLOW to plow on
to methodically and painstakingly continue with an activity

PLOW to plow profits back
to retain profits in a business

PLOW to put one's hand to the plow
voluntarily to undertake some task (Luke 9:62)

PUMP to engage in pump priming
to spend public money with the aim of attracting parochial electoral support

REAP to reap as one has sown
to experience the consequences of one's own actions

REAP to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind
to make bad mistakes and to suffer the even worse consequences

REIN to give someone free rein
to confer complete discretion on another person

ROOST the chickens are coming home to roost
the consequences of past actions are becoming obvious

ROW to have a hard row to hoe
to be a difficult assignment

SHEPHERD to shepherd some group
to marshall the members of some group

SOW to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind
to make bad mistakes and to suffer the even worse consequences

SPADE to call a spade a spade
not to mince words

SPADE to do the spadework
to prepare

TALLY to keep a tally
keep a record (refers to a piece of wood with notches made on it to indicate a count)

TETHER to be at the end of one's tether
to be frustrated by a lack of knowledge, authority or patience

TRAP to walk into a trap
to be tricked into doing something

WHIP to be a fair crack of the whip
to be just

WHIP to crack the whip
to exert one's authority

WOOL woolly-headed
slightly muddled

APPLE a rotten apple
an isolated dishonest person in an otherwise honest group

APPLECART to upset the applecart
to engage in conduct disturbing a peaceful state of affairs and thereby cause discomfort

BACON to bring home the bacon
to be successful

BACON to save one's bacon
to escape harm

BAKE half-baked
not well thought out

BANANA a banana republic
a country with a poor economy
BARREL to really scrape the bottom of the barrel
to lower one’s standards because one is short of important or relevant issues

BEAN to be full of beans
to be very cheerful

BEAN to spill the beans
to indiscreetly reveal sensitive information

BEER not to be all beer and skittles
not to be all pleasant and easy

BEER to be small beer
to be quite unimportant

BEER to cry in one’s beer
to show remorse

BOIL it boils down to this
the essential features are as follows

BOTTLE a bottleneck
a factor obstructing an even flow

BOTTLE to be a full bottle on something
to be very knowledgeable

BREAD a bread and butter issue
a basic issue which is of importance to many people

BREAD a breadwinner
a person earning by personal exertion the income of a household

BREAD to be someone’s bread and butter
to be a person’s livelihood or to be a person’s everyday experience

BREAD to cast one’s bread upon the waters
not to expect gratitude or recognition for one’s good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

BREAD to know on which side one’s bread is buttered
to be aware of the important considerations

BREAD to put jam on someone’s bread
to make a good situation even better

BREAKFAST to be able to eat someone for breakfast
to be able to outwit a person very easily

BROTH too many cooks spoil the broth
one leader is all that is required

BUN a bunfight
a minor and relatively friendly skirmish

BUTTER a bread and butter issue
a basic issue which is of importance to many people

BUTTER a butter fingers
a person unable to catch and/or hold on to an object

BUTTER someone looks as if butter would not melt in his mouth
a person looks sweet and innocent

BUTTER to be someone’s bread and butter
to be a person’s livelihood or to be a person’s everyday experience

CAKE a share of the cake
a portion of the total available for distribution

CAKE that takes the cake
that is quite absurd or outrageous or excessively cheeky

CAKE to be a piece of cake
to be very easy or greatly to one’s liking

CAKE to be icing on top of the cake
to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario

CAKE to want to have one’s cake and eat it too
to want two mutually exclusive alternatives

CAN to carry the can for someone
to accept the blame for another person’s actions or inactions

CHEESE cheese paring
stingy
THEMATIC SECTION

FOOD AND DRINK

CHEESE stiff cheese!
circumstances which may be unwel-
come but which will not be altered
and in respect of which no great sym-
pathy is felt

CHEESE to be cheesed off
to be disgusted

CHESTNUT to pull someone’s
chestnuts out of the fire
to retrieve a situation

CHEW to bite off more than one can chew
to be overly ambitious and thus unre-
alistic as to one’s capabilities

CHEW to have something to chew on
to have firm facts on which to base a decision

CHIP to have had one’s chips
to have received all that is going to be forthcoming

COOK to be cooking with gas
to be fully operational

COOK to cook the books
fraudulently to maintain false records of financial transactions

COOKIE that is the way the cookie crumbles
that is the actual situation

CREAM to be cream on top of the milk
to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario

CREME creme de la creme
something quite superlative (French, “the cream of the cream”)

CRUMB to throw someone a few crumbs
to fob a person off with a few sym-

bolic but unimportant concessions

DINNER to be done like a dinner
to be defeated and humiliated

DOUGHNUT watch the doughnut—not the hole
look for the positive aspects

DRINK it is a long time between drinks
activity is occurring only very spas-
modically

DRINK to be meat and drink
to be very pleasurable

DROP to squeeze the last drop out of something
to get the maximum advantage out of some favorable situation

DRUG to be a drug on the market
to be in overplentiful supply

EAT I’ll eat my hat if so-and-so happens
I do not believe that so-and-so will happen

EAT to eat crow
to accept a humiliating defeat

EAT to eat one’s words
to retract

EAT to eat out of someone’s hands
to be unduly compliant

EAT you can eat your heart out
you are entitled to feel sad or jealous

EGG a nest egg
life savings

EGG as sure as eggs are eggs
with great certainty

EGG chicken and egg
two factors each of which results in the other

EGG not to put all one’s eggs in one basket
to spread one’s risks

EGG there are many ways to cook eggs
there are many ways to achieve an objective

EGG to be a curate’s egg
to be good only in parts (refers to an 1895 cartoon in PUNCH)

EGG to have egg on one’s face
to be embarrassed by the results of one’s own stupidity
EGG to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs
through excessive greed to destroy a very profitable enterprise

EGG to teach one's grandmother how to suck eggs
to try to tell a much more experienced person something very obvious to him

FAT the fat is in the fire
action with certain unstoppable consequences has now been initiated

FAT to chew fat
to eat and talk together

FAT to trim the fat
to increase efficiency by reducing outlays

FATTEN to kill the fatted calf
to demonstrate welcome and forgiveness on a person's return (Luke 15:23)

FEAST a movable feast
an event not customarily held on a set date

FEAST to be either feast or famine
to go from one extreme to the other

FISH to have more important fish
to fry
to have more important things to do

FLAVOR to be the flavor of the month
to be a commodity temporarily popular without a logical reason

FLESH one's pound of flesh
that which is due to one (from Shakespeare's MERCHANT OF VENICE)

FLESHPOT fleshpots
sumptuous living (Exodus 16:3)

FOOD food for thought
material for examination in one's mind

FOOD to take food out of the mouths of children
cruelly to deprive the needy

FRY out of the frying pan into the fire
from one bad situation to an even worse one

GEL to gel
to make sense

GRAVY to get on a gravy train
to take steps to become a recipient of benefits which are available but undeserved

HARD-BOILED hard-boiled
toughened by experience

HONEY a land of milk and honey
a country in which everything is in abundant supply

ICE to put something on ice
to put something aside for the time being

ICING to be icing on top of the cake
to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario

JAM money for jam
remuneration easily earned

JAM to be in a jam
to be in difficulties

JAM to just pick the plums out of the jam
to take only the very best items

JELLY to be set like a jelly
to be very well established

KITCHEN if one can't stand the heat one should stay out of the kitchen
a person should not put himself in a position involving pressures with which he cannot cope (words attributed to Harry S. Truman)

KNIFE before one can say "knife" very quickly

KNIFE one could have cut the atmosphere with a knife
those present were very tense
KNIFE the knives are out
there is an active campaign against
someone

KNIFE to be on a knife edge
to be in danger

KNIFE to hold a knife at someone’s
throat
to exert undue pressure on another
person in an endeavor to achieve a
result which would otherwise not be
forthcoming

KNIFE to sharpen the knives
to get ready for a concerted attack on
some principle

KNIFE to stick a knife into someone
to act vindictively toward a person

KOSHER to be kosher
to fulfill all requirements (refers to
food complying with all aspects of
Jewish religious law)

MANNA manna from heaven
unexpected benefits (Exodus 16:15)

MEAT to be easy meat
to be an opponent who is readily
outwitted

MEAT to be meat and drink
to be very pleasurable

MEAT to contain much meat
to contain much material worthy of
consideration

MILK a land of milk and honey
a country in which everything is in
abundant supply

MILK it is no use crying over spilt
milk
lamenting over a disaster achieves
nothing

MILK to be cream on top of the milk
to be an additional benefit in an al-
ready satisfactory scenario

MINCE not to mince words
to speak bluntly

MINCE to make mincemeat of
something
to devastate something

MUG a mug’s game
activity which wise persons would
eschew

MUTTON to be mutton dressed up
as lamb
to foolishly pretend to be younger

NUT someone is a hard nut to
\crack
it is very difficult to persuade a per-
son to do something

NUT to use a sledgehammer to crack
a nut
to devote vastly more resources to a
project than is warranted by all the
circumstances

OMELETTE one cannot make an
omelette without breaking eggs
the desired end dictates the means
even if they cause harm to others

OMELETTE to unscramble the
omelette
to undo something which cannot be
undone

P to watch one’s p’s and q’s
to be very careful (may refer to pints
and quarts of beer on a hotel slate or
to easily-confused printer’s type)

PANCAKE every Pancake Tuesday
only on rare occasions (refers to Shrove
Tuesday, when pancakes are tradition-
ally eaten)

PAPER only a cigarette paper
between them
virtually equal or close together

PARTY to come to the party
to agree to someone’s terms

PEANUT to earn peanuts
to get a reward which is far too small
in relation to the value of the services
rendered
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOOD AND DRINK</th>
<th>THEMATIC SECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PICKLE</strong></td>
<td>to be in a pickle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be in difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PICNIC</strong></td>
<td>to be no picnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be unpleasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PIE</strong></td>
<td>in apple pie order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in perfect order and condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PIE</strong></td>
<td>pie in the sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a hoped for result unlikely to be achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PIE</strong></td>
<td>to eat humble pie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to apologize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PIE</strong></td>
<td>to have a finger in the pie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to have an interest in a project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PIE</strong></td>
<td>to have one's fingers in many different pies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be engaged in a variety of separate activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLATE</strong></td>
<td>to bring a plate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to take food to a party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLATE</strong></td>
<td>to have too much on one's plate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be unable to cope with one's workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLATTER</strong></td>
<td>to serve something up to someone on a plate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to make something especially easy for a particular person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLUM</strong></td>
<td>to just pick the plums out of the jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to take only the best items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PORK</strong></td>
<td>to pork barrel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to spend taxpayers' money in one area in order to attract political support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POT</strong></td>
<td>one can't get a quart into a pint pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one cannot do the impossible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POT</strong></td>
<td>the pot calling the kettle black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a person criticizing another person without realizing his own even greater shortcomings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POT</strong></td>
<td>to keep the pot boiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to ensure that an issue stays current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POT</strong></td>
<td>to stir the pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to set out to raise controversial issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POT</strong></td>
<td>to sweeten the pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to provide a few additional inducements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POT</strong></td>
<td>to take pot luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to take whatever happens by chance to be available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POTTAGE</strong></td>
<td>to sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PUDDING</strong></td>
<td>the proof of the pudding is in the eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the success of a venture will be measured by its results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECIPE</strong></td>
<td>a recipe for disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a certain way of achieving disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ROAST</strong></td>
<td>a roasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a scolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SALT</strong></td>
<td>below the salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in a subordinate position (refers to the seating order at ancient Roman dining tables)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SALT</strong></td>
<td>not to be worth one's salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>not to be pulling one's weight (refers to Roman soldiers being paid in salt—a practice giving rise to the modern word &quot;salary&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SALT</strong></td>
<td>to be the salt of the earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be a person whose ordinary efforts benefit the community (Matthew 5:13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SALT</strong></td>
<td>to rub salt into someone's wound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to deliberately make damage even worse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SALT to take something with a grain of salt
to regard the facts in a statement with considerable skepticism

SAND the sands are running out
the time available for some action is nearly at an end

SANDWICH to be the ham in the sandwich
to be caught in the middle of a dispute between other parties

SAUCE what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander
arguments which apply in one case also apply in another

SAUSAGE a sausage machine
the turning out of large volumes without particular thought

SILVER to sell off the family silver
to sell off one's prized possessions

SMORGASBORD smorgasbord
a series of different items from which a number can be chosen (from the Swedish words for "butter," "goose" and "table")

SOUP to be in the soup
to be in great difficulties

SOUR to turn sour
to become impracticable or unprofitable

SPOON to be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth
to be brought up by wealthy parents

SPOON to get the wooden spoon
to come ingloriously last

STEW to be in a stew
to be in difficulties

STEW to stew in one's juice
to suffer the adverse consequences of one's acts or omissions

STORAGE to put something into cold storage
to put something aside for dealing with at some indeterminate future time

SUCK suck it and see
discover experimentally how something works

SUCK to suck the lemon dry
to get the maximum advantage out of some favorable situation

SUP he must have a long spoon that sups with the devil
great care is needed when negotiating deals with disreputable parties

SUPPER to sing for one's supper
to carry out a task in order to receive a favor in return

SWEET to be short and sweet
to be very brief and to the point

SWEETEN to sweeten a deal
to offer some concessions or incentives

SYRUP soothing syrup
insincere expressions of sympathy or flattery

TEA I would not do so-and-so for all the tea in China
I will never do so-and-so

TEA not to be someone's cup of tea
to be outside a person's expertise or area of interest

TEACUP a storm in a teacup
a controversy about a minor matter but one which looms large in the minds of the parties

TOAST to have someone on toast
to be victorious over a person

FURNITURE

BED a hotbed of crime
a place where crime flourishes

BED one has made one's bed and one will now have to lie on it
one has to bear the consequences of one's actions

BED to be on one's death bed
(of an organization or a piece of equipment) to be about to cease functioning
FURNITURE

BED to bed something down
to find a taker for something

BED to get out of bed on the wrong side
to be grumpy

BED to jump into bed with someone
to enter into a joint enterprise with another person

BED to put something to bed
to finally dispose of

BEDDING feather bedding
(in industrial relations) creating unnecessary jobs solely to increase employment; (in economics) assisting an inefficient industry by government grants or excessive tariff protection

BLANKET to be a wet blanket
to be a spoilsport

BLANKET to be born on the wrong side of the blanket
to be illegitimate

BLANKET to throw a blanket over a proposal
to refuse to proceed with a proposal

BOWL to be in a goldfish bowl
to be very open to view

CARPET the red-carpet treatment
courtesies extended to a person to make him feel important and welcome

CARPET to get a magic carpet ride to something
to be very fortunate in achieving some objective

CARPET to sweep something under the carpet
to pretend that some blemish does not exist

CENTERPIECE the centerpiece
(of a proposal) the highlight or the main ingredient

CHAIR to play musical chairs
to be a part of a general reshuffling of duties or functions which is not necessarily to everyone’s liking

CHEST to lock something up in the old oak chest
to put in a safe place and out of mind

CLOCK to turn back the clock
to have another opportunity to do something which should have been done already or to undo something which cannot be undone

CUPBOARD a skeleton in the cupboard
an unpleasant truth the knowledge of which has been deliberately suppressed

CUPBOARD the cupboard is bare
the wished-for resources are just not available

CURTAIN the iron curtain
the border between the communist nations and the rest of the world (from a speech by Sir Winston Churchill in 1946)

DECKCHAIR to rearrange the deckchairs on the Titanic
to take some initiative which is quite useless because it does not take much greater change into account

DOOR to knock on doors
to seek out opportunities to do business

DRAWER to tuck something away in a drawer
to put something aside for the time being

DRAWER top drawer
first class

FURNITURE to be part of the furniture
to be so familiar that one’s presence goes completely unnoticed

PAD to keep off someone’s pad
not to interfere with or compete against another person in his customary area of activity

PEG a peg to hang a hat on
something which provides a convenient or plausible excuse for some particular action
PEG off the peg
(of clothes) ready-made

PEG to take someone down a peg or two
to point out to a person that he is not as good as he thinks he is

PICTURE to paint a black picture
to state a set of unfavorable factors

PICTURE to present a rosy picture
to state a set of favorable factors

QUILT a patchwork quilt
a result arising from many uncoordinated inputs

RUG to pull the rug out from under someone
to unexpectedly withdraw support and in the process cause embarrassment

SEAT to be in the hot seat
to hold a position requiring one to answer criticism or accusations

SEAT to keep someone’s seat warm
to hold a position temporarily with a view to another person taking it over permanently in the near future

SHELF to be on the shelf
to be available for marriage

SHELVING to shelve some proposal
to abandon some proposal

SPRING a spring cleaning
a thorough review occurring a long time after the previous one

STOOL to fall between two stools
not to fit neatly into either of two available alternatives and waver between them

TABLE to lay a proposal on the table
to make a proposal available for discussion or to adjourn discussion on a proposal for an indefinite period

TABLE to turn the tables on someone
to cause the relative positions of oneself and another person to be reversed

GAMBLING

BET a good bet
a good proposition

BET to hedge one’s bets
to take action involving a cost but which is designed to reduce the possible adverse consequences of some activity

BET you bet! definitely!

BET you can bet your life on something
something is certain to happen

BLANK to draw a blank
to be unsuccessful

BOB to have two bob each way
to equivocate

BOOK to be a turn up for the books
to be a surprising development

CENT to have fifty cents each way
to equivocate

CHIP bargaining chips
benefits which can be conceded in negotiations in order to obtain some advantage

CHIP to turn one’s chips in
to convert one’s assets or entitlements into cash

DIE no dice
the proposal is totally unacceptable

DIE the die is cast
the course of action in train is irreversible

DIE the whole box and dice
all relevant components
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>GEOGRAPHY</strong></th>
<th><strong>THEMATIC SECTION</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIE</strong> to be the throw of a loaded die to be an act of deceit</td>
<td><strong>TAIL</strong> to be unable to make head or tail of something to be unable to understand how something functions or what something means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DRAW</strong> to be the luck of the draw to be a chance result</td>
<td><strong>TOSS</strong> it is a toss-up either alternative is equally acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEAD</strong> heads I win—tails you lose whichever way this matter goes I will benefit at your expense</td>
<td><strong>TOSS</strong> to argue the toss to dispute a decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEAD</strong> to be unable to make head or tail of something to be unable to understand how something functions or what something means</td>
<td><strong>TOSS</strong> to toss up to decide on a fairly arbitrary basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JACKPOT</strong> to hit the jackpot to be very lucky</td>
<td><strong>WHEEL</strong> fortune’s wheel the vicissitudes of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LONDON</strong> it is London to a brick it is virtually certain</td>
<td><strong>ABYSS</strong> to be close to the abyss to face imminent total destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LUCK</strong> to push one’s luck having already done well in something to then take risks which can prejudice everything</td>
<td><strong>AVALANCHE</strong> avalanche a great volume manifesting itself in a short time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ODDS</strong> that is over the odds that is unacceptable</td>
<td><strong>BEACH</strong> not to be the only pebble on the beach not to be the only available person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ODDS</strong> to be at odds with someone to disagree with a person</td>
<td><strong>BRINK</strong> to push someone over the brink by a small action to cause the absolute ruin (financially or emotionally) of someone already in peril</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ODDS</strong> to beat the odds to do better than could reasonably have been expected</td>
<td><strong>CAVE</strong> to cave in to yield to pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ODDS</strong> to pay over the odds to pay too much</td>
<td><strong>CHINA</strong> I would not do so-and-so for all the tea in China I will never do so-and-so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PUNT</strong> to take a punt to take a calculated risk</td>
<td><strong>CHINESE</strong> a Chinese puzzle a perplexing enigma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ROULETTE</strong> to play Russian roulette to take stupid risks</td>
<td><strong>CHINESE</strong> Chinese walls a system to ensure that different parts of some organization do not gain access to each other’s confidential information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SIX</strong> to be at sixes and sevens to be confused, concerned and undecided</td>
<td><strong>CLIFF</strong> to be a cliff-hanger to be very exciting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAKE</strong> to raise the stake to increase the amount of potential gain or loss in a project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THEMATIC SECTION

GEOGRAPHY

COAST the coast is clear
there are no observers to one’s activity around

CORNER from the four corners of the globe
from everywhere

COUNTRY one looks for elephants in elephant country
one needs to search in the right place

COURSE to runs its course
to come to a natural end

CURRENT an undercurrent
a barely noticeable feeling of dissent in the community which is not being vocalized

DAM the dam burst
the cumulative effect of many things caused a disaster

DAMASCUS to be on the road to Damascus
to see the error of one’s ways (Acts 9:3)

DISTANCE to keep one’s distance
to avoid familiarity

DOWNHILL to go downhill
to deteriorate

DRY to dry up
to cease

EARTH earth-shattering
very significant

EARTH how on earth?
just how?

EARTH to bring someone down to earth
to disillusion a person

EARTH to charge the earth
to impose very high prices

EARTH to move heaven and earth
to do everything possible

EARTH to promise the earth
to give extravagant assurances

EARTH to run someone to earth
to locate a person

ECHO to echo someone’s words
to repeat another person’s views as though they were one’s own

FOUNTAINHEAD fountainhead
source of all wisdom

GREEK I fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts
I am suspicious of generous behavior from traditional opponents (from Virgil’s AENEID, in reference to the Trojan horse)

GREEK something is all Greek to someone
something is incomprehensible to a person

GROUND to be on shaky ground
not to have strong arguments

GROUND to fall to the ground
to fail

GROUND to give ground
to make some concessions or to retreat or to concede some arguments

GROUND to go to ground
to become unavailable to those seeking a person

GROUND to have the high ground
to have an advantage in moral terms

GROUND to run someone to the ground
to discover the whereabouts of a person

GULF to bridge a gulf
to overcome a wide divergence in views

HERE to be neither here nor there
to be irrelevant or unimportant

HILL light on the hill
distant goal acting as an inspiration

HILL to be over the hill
to be old

HILL to head for the hills
to seek to escape one’s commitments

HIMALAYAN of Himalayan proportions
huge
HORIZON there are black clouds on the horizon bad news is expected

JUNGLE a jungle a place where everyone makes his own rules

LAKE you can jump in the lake I intend to take no notice whatsoever of you or your views

LAND to be in cloud cuckoo land to be mad or to have unrealistic expectations

LAND to be in the land of the living to be alive

LANDMARK a landmark ruling a decision marking a turning-point in the way a matter is approached

LANDSCAPE to be part of the landscape to be present and fully accepted without question

LANDSLIDE a landslide an electoral result involving victory or defeat by an unexpectedly large margin

LANE to go down memory lane to reminisce

LANGUAGE to speak the same language to have a good understanding and similar ideas

LEVEL to be on the level to be honest

LOSE you can get lost I intend to take no notice whatsoever of you or your views

MAINSTREAM mainstream orthodox

MAP to put some organization on the map to make the organization a force to be reckoned with

MARATHON marathon requiring great endurance (refers to the run to get aid during the battle of Marathon in 490 BC)

MECCA a Mecca for something a place at which supporters of something congregate

MEXICAN a Mexican standoff a situation where neither of two parties is making a move

MILE a milestone an achievement

MILE to be miles apart to have great philosophical differences

MILE to be miles away to have one’s mind on other matters

MILE to go the extra mile to work beyond the call of duty

MILE to miss something by a mile to be nowhere near one’s target

MILE to stick out a mile to be very apparent

MIRAGE mirage illusory benefit

MIRE to sink deeper into the mire to get into further difficulties

MOUNTAIN if the mountain will not come to Mahomet then Mahomet will go to the mountain on recognizing that one has insufficient power to effect one’s most desired solution, one decides to make do with the next best alternative

MUD to sink deeper into the mud to get into even greater difficulty

PATCH a sticky patch a period fraught with difficulties

PLACE a place in the sun a favorable situation

POND to be a big fish in a little pond to be a person holding an important office but in an unimportant organization
QUAGMIRE to be in a quagmire
   to be in great difficulty

RIVER the river found its mark
   equilibrium between two pressures has been achieved

RIVER to be a river of gold
   to be a source of ongoing great profitability

RIVER to sell someone down the river
   to betray a person who has placed his trust in one

ROME all roads lead to Rome
   all alternatives will have the same outcome

ROME when in Rome do as the Romans do
   it is best to conform to the local customs

SAMARITAN a good Samaritan
   a person going out of his way to do a kindness to others (Luke 10:33)

SAND shifting sands
   arguments which are constantly being changed

SLOUGH a slough of despond
   a feeling of hopelessness

SODOM a Sodom and Gomorrah
   a place of vice (Genesis 18:20)

SPAIN a castle in Spain
   an impracticable proposition

STONE a stepping stone
   a means to an end

STRAIT in dire straits
   in great need

STREAM to swap horses in midstream
   to change direction during the course of a project

STREET to be in Queer Street
   to be in debt

SWAMP to swamp someone
   to overload a person

THAMES to set the Thames on fire
   to do something noteworthy

TOP to blow one's top
   to show anger (refers to a volcano)

TOWN to go to town
   to spend lavishly

TOWN to paint the town red
   to go on an exciting social outing

TRACK to be down the track
   to be making progress

TRACK to be off the beaten track
   to do unconventional things

TRACK to be off the track
   to be irrelevant

TRACK to be on the wrong track
   to be heading toward an incorrect solution

TRACK to be on track
   to be making the scheduled progress

TRACK to be stopped in one's tracks
   suddenly and unexpectedly to be prevented from carrying on with a project

TRACK to cover one's tracks
   to hide the evidence of one's involvement

TRACK to go down a particular track
   to make decisions aimed at a particular goal

TRACK to have a one-track mind
   to keep coming back to one narrow topic of conversation

TRACK to keep track of something
   to be completely aware of where something is and how it is functioning

TRACK to make tracks
   to leave

TRICKLE a trickle
   a small amount, in gradual stages

TURK young Turks
   members of an organization who hold ideas regarded as too revolutionary
UPHILL to be pushing uphill
to face difficulties

UTOPIAN Utopian
ideally perfect (refers to the mythical island in Sir Thomas More's UTOPIA)

VOLCANO to be sitting on a volcano
to be safe for the time being but exposed to the risk of a sudden great disaster

WATER a backwater
a place of little activity

WATER come hell or high water
regardless of the consequences

WATER high water mark
triumph

WATER still waters run deep
a person with a quiet manner may have a surprisingly great knowledge of a subject

WATER to be above water
(of securities) to have a market value in excess of the cost price

WATER to be in deep water
to be in great difficulty

WATER to be in smooth water
to have no troubles

WATER to blow something out of the water
to destroy something

WATER to brave the water
to enter a venture with courage and determination

WATER to cast one's bread upon the waters
not to expect gratitude or recognition for one's good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

WATER to dip one's toe in the water
to gently explore an opportunity

WATER to enter treacherous waters
to engage in an enterprise with risks which are not obvious

WATER to fish in troubled waters
to profit from a disturbed situation

WATER to go through fire and water
to undertake all attendant risks

WATER to go to water
to succumb to pressure

WATER to muddy the waters
to deliberately confuse an issue by creating a diversion

WATER to plot a safe course through troubled waters
to make a plan which overcomes certain difficulties

WATER to pour cold water on some idea
to be unenthusiastic about some proposal or scornful of its apparent weaknesses

WATER to pour oil on troubled waters
to calm down a situation

WATER to push water uphill
to foolishly attempt the impossible

WATER to shoot something out of the water
to frustrate something

WATER to test the water
to try out an idea in a small way

WATER water will find its own level
people will reach an appropriate position relative to others

WATERLOO to meet one's Waterloo
to receive a decisive defeat (refers to Napoleon's fate at the Battle of Waterloo)

WATERSHED a watershed
an occasion dividing two distinct phases of activity

WATERTIGHT a watertight contract
a contract without loop-holes or escape clauses
WAVE to ride the wave
to be successful for the time being

WAY no way!
definitely not!

WAY to cut both ways
to involve both advantages and disadvantages of similar significance

WAY to know which way to turn
to know which strategy to adopt or where to seek assistance

WAY to want something both ways
to desire two mutually exclusive objectives

WAYSIDE to fall by the wayside
to abandon and not complete what one set out to do

WILDERNESS to be a lone voice in the wilderness
to be the only person stating unpopular views

WILDERNESS to be in the wilderness
to be out of office against one’s will

WIND to get wind of something
to hear rumors giving advance information

WOOD neck of the woods
localized area

WOOD to be babes in the wood
to be excessively naive and inexperienced and thus ripe for exploitation

WOOD to be out of the woods
the previous difficulties have been overcome

WORLD it’s a small world
it is surprising to meet people one knows in unexpected places

WORLD to be on top of the world
to be very happy

WORLD to be out of this world
to be superb

WORLD to carry the world on one’s shoulders
to resent being left to perform a huge task single-handedly (refers to Atlas, who was condemned to bear the heavens on his shoulders for leading the Titans against the gods)

WORLD to get the worst of all worlds
to get a series of disadvantages without achieving any corresponding advantages

WORLD to make a world of difference
to make a great deal of difference

WORLD to set the world on fire
to do something particularly brilliant

WORLD to want the best of both worlds
to unreasonably desire to get some advantage without incurring a corresponding disadvantage

WORLD why in the world? why?

GOVERNMENT

AMENDMENT to plead the Fifth Amendment
to refuse to answer an unwelcome question (refers to the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution, which provides protection against self-incrimination)

BAILIWICK to be in someone’s bailiwick
to be some other person’s responsibility

COURT to have a friend at court
a person with influence who is willing to use it on one’s behalf

CROWN the crowning point
the height of a person’s achievement

CROWN the jewel in someone’s crown
the most significant component
CROWN uneasy lies the head that wears a crown
responsibility involves some risks and some burdens (from Shakespeare’s HENRY IV)

DENMARK something is rotten in the state of Denmark
the situation is not correct (from Shakespeare’s HAMLET)

EMPIRE to engage in empire building
to set out to expand the size of the business or bureaucratic unit for which one is responsible, especially as a means of increasing one’s own importance

ESTATE the fourth estate
the press

FLAG to rally to the flag
to show support for a cause

HALL one can’t beat City Hall
the ordinary citizen is powerless against bureaucracy

HARD to put something into the ‘‘too hard’’ basket
to defer consideration of a difficult issue

KING a cat may look at a king
don’t give yourself airs!

KING to pay a king’s ransom
to pay a very large sum

KINGMAKER kingmaker
person engaging in behind-the-scenes activities to promote another person to a particular leadership position

LICENSE a license to print money
a lucrative government-conferred monopoly or privilege

MINT to charge a mint
to impose very high prices

PALACE a palace revolt
the overthrow of those in authority by their subordinates

ROYAL the royal road to success
the way of attaining success without effort

SCOT to get off scot free
to go unpunished (refers to an exemption from tax)

STONEWALLING stonewalling
deliberate obstruction or delaying tactics

THRONE the power behind the throne
a person exercising the real authority but without having the official right to do so (the antonym of ‘‘titular head’’)

HERALDRY

ESCUTCHEON to be a blot on someone’s escutcheon
to be a blemish on a person’s character

LEFT a left-handed compliment
a thinly-disguised insult

RIBBON blue ribbon
of superb quality (refers to the insignia of the Order of the Garter)

STANDARD a standard bearer
a highly visible activist for a cause

HISTORY

ALL warts and all
with the unfavorable features as well as the favorable ones (Oliver Cromwell’s direction to an artist painting his portrait)

BARREL to have someone over a barrel
to take advantage of someone’s weakened position in relation to oneself

BEDLAM bedlam
a scene of uproar (refers to the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, which was used as a lunatic asylum from 1547 onwards)
THEMATIC SECTION

HISTORY

BELOW below the salt
in a subordinate position (refers to the seating order at ancient Roman dining tables)

BOY a whipping boy
a person made to suffer for the faults of others

BURN to burn the midnight oil
to work late into the night

CANDLE not fit to hold a candle
to someone
greatly inferior to another person

CANDLE not to be worth the candle
to be too expensive in relation to the true value

CANDLE to burn the candle at both ends
to work excessively long hours

CONTINENTAL not to be worth a continental
to have no value (refers to currency notes)

CROSS to be a cross which one has to bear
to be a difficulty which one has to endure

CRUSADE a crusade
an aggressive campaign to achieve some political or social objective

FEATHER a feather in one's cap
a meritorious personal achievement

HOBSON Hobson's choice
no right at all to select (refers to Thomas Hobson, a horsekeeper in Cambridge, England, who offered customers seeking a change of horses a single beast on a “take it or leave it” basis)

INDIAN more chiefs than Indians
a disproportionately large number of supervisors

KNIGHT a knight in shining armor
a very helpful person

MEET to meet one's Waterloo
to receive a decisive defeat (refers to Napoleon's fate at the Battle of Waterloo)

NAME his name is mud
he completely lacks credibility (a play on the name of Dr. Samuel Mudd)

PALE to be beyond the pale
to be socially unacceptable, especially for unacceptable standards or behavior

PARTHIAN a Parthian shaft
a cutting remark made at the moment of departure (refers to missiles shot backward by flying Parthian horsemen)

PILLORY to put someone in the pillory
to hold a person up to ridicule for his beliefs

PYRRHIC a Pyrrhic victory
a win which costs more than if there had been a loss (refers to the battle at which King Pyrrhus of Epirus defeated the Romans at Asculum)

REARRANGE to rearrange the deckchairs on the Titanic
to take some initiative which is quite useless because it does not take much greater change into account

RIOT to read the Riot Act
to reprimand persons who are excessively noisy (refers to the police reading out to a rowdy crowd extracts from a law requiring its dispersement)

RUBICON to cross the Rubicon
to make an irreversible decision in regard to some commitment

SPARTAN Spartan
tough and efficient, with a complete absence of the finer things of life

TREADMILL to be on a treadmill
to be involved in some unpleasant ongoing activity which cannot readily be stopped
TURNCOAT a turncoat
a person changing sides (refers to the practice of mercenary soldiers switching to the winning side and displaying that side’s colors by turning their coats inside out)

WITCH a witchhunt
an exercise seeking to find someone who can be blamed

HUMAN BODY

APPETITE to whet one’s appetite
to arouse one’s curiosity or interest

ARM I would give my right arm for something
I am very keen to acquire something

ARM a shot in the arm
something to revive a person’s enthusiasm

ARM at arm’s length
between parties who are strangers bearing no special duty to each other and who have no financial or other relationship with each other (a legal term)

ARM to chance one’s arm
to take a great risk (refers to the stripes on the uniforms of non-commissioned officers)

ARM to cost an arm and a leg
to be excessively expensive

ARM to have a long arm
to have far-reaching power

ARM to lose one’s right arm
to lose some highly-valued assistance

ARM to twist someone’s arms
to coerce another person to do something against his will or better judgment

ARM with open arms
enthusiastically

ARMPIT to be in something up to one’s armpits
to be very deeply involved in something

BABE to be babes in the wood
to be excessively naive and inexperienced and thus ripe for exploitation

BABY to be left holding the baby
to be tricked into accepting responsibility for someone else’s problems

BABY to be one’s baby
to be one’s area of responsibility

BABY to throw out the baby with the bathwater
to discard a major benefit in the course of obtaining a comparatively minor advantage

BACK as soon as someone’s back was turned
at the moment it became possible to do something without a person’s knowledge

BACK back-breaking
overburdening

BACK behind someone’s back
in a way which deliberately conceals an activity from a person

BACK put your back into it!
work energetically!

BACK so-and-so would give one the shirt off his back
so-and-so is very generous

BACK to be able to do something with one hand behind one’s back
to be able to do something very easily

BACK to cover one’s back
to take precautions

BACK to engage in back biting
to criticize in an unfriendly manner

BACK to get off someone’s back
to leave a person alone to carry on without constant criticism

BACK to get one’s own back on someone
to extract revenge

BACK to get someone’s back up
to annoy or antagonize a person
BACK to have one's back to the wall
to be hard-pressed by creditors or opponents

BACK to make a rod for one's own back
to act in disregard of likely disadvantages for oneself

BACK to need to watch one's back
to find it necessary to take care in case others act against one's interests

BACK to pat oneself on the back
immodestly to congratulate oneself

BACK to pat someone on the back
to congratulate a person or to reassure a person

BACK to put one's back into something
to work hard at achieving some goal

BACK to ride on the back of someone
without effort to benefit from the prior efforts of others

BACK to scratch one another's backs
to help each other

BACK to see the back of someone
to know that a person is no longer involved in something

BACK to stab someone in the back
deliberately and surreptitiously harm a person who regarded one as a friend

BACK to tie someone's hands behind his back
to make it impossible for a person to act at all

BACK to turn one's back on someone
to decline to further assist or deal with a person

BACKBONE backbone
chief strength or character

BAREFACED barefaced
shameless

BELLY I've had a belly full
I have had enough of this

BELLY a fire in someone's belly
great enthusiasm

BEND to bend over backward to do something
to go to great trouble to accommodate another person's wishes

BITE hard-bitten
toughened by experience

BITE to be bitten
to be swindled

BITE to be bitten with something
to become very enthusiastic over something

BITE to bite
to respond predictively to a remark designed to provoke

BITE to bite someone's head off
to rudely express displeasure at some person

BITE to bite the bullet
to face up to the difficulties of a situation

BITE to bite the dust
to die

BITE to get only one bite at the cherry
to receive no further opportunity

BITE to start to bite
to start to be effective

BLIND the blind leading the blind
persons without the necessary skills for a task purporting to impart those skills to others

BLIND to be blind to something
to be unaware of some matter and its significance

BLINDLY to follow someone blindly
to follow a person unquestioningly

BLINKER to take one's blinkers off
to face reality

BLOOD a blueblood
a person of high birth (refers to the appearance of veins on the skin of members of some royal families)
**BLOOD**
- bad blood
- animosity
- blood, sweat and tears
  - hard work and much effort
- bloodshed
- retribution
- fresh blood
  - newly joined members of some organization
- full-blooded
  - vigorous
- hot-blooded
  - very passionate
- one's own flesh and blood
  - one's offspring
- there is blood in the streets
  - much damage has been done to a cause
- there is blood in the water
  - something is likely to cause a person to go into a frenzy
- there is blood on the floor
  - this has caused great anguish
- to be after someone's blood
  - to be keen to make a person the victim of an angry confrontation
- to be in someone's blood
  - to be something about which a person is very knowledgeable or keen
- to curdle one's blood
  - to be horrific
- to do something in cold blood
  - to be cruel without feeling any emotion about it
- to draw first blood
  - to get an advantage
- to give something a blood transfusion
  - to give something new enthusiasm
- to have blood on one's hands
  - to be the person responsible for someone else's predicament
- to introduce new blood
  - to recruit new members to some organization
- to let blood
  - to allow some harm as the price for achieving some greater benefit
- to make bad blood between two parties
  - to cause ill feeling between two parties
- to make someone's blood boil
  - to make a person very angry
- to see blood
  - to be very angry
- to thirst for blood
  - to be eager for revenge
- a bloodbath
  - catastrophic losses
- bloodletting
  - planned reductions
- at first blush
  - prima facie
- a body blow
  - a very damaging event
- to keep body and soul together
  - to keep alive
- to cut costs to the bone
  - to economize
- to feel something in one's bones
  - to suspect something without having any real evidence for it
- to get close to the bone
  - to cause discomfort by being accurate
- to make no bones about it
  - to be brutally frank
- to point the bone at someone
  - to accuse a person (actually, an Australian Aboriginal method of applying a curse)
**THEMATIC SECTION**

**HUMAN BODY**

**BONE**
- to put flesh and bone on something
- to supply details of a proposal previously revealed only in outline
- to work one's fingers to the bone
- to work very hard

**BONEHEADED**
- boneheaded
- stupid

**BOUNCE**
- to bounce back
- to resume a cheerful existence after some setback

**BOW**
- to bow down
- to succumb to pressure

**BRAIN**
- anyone with even half a brain
everyone
- someone's brain needs washing
- a person is very silly
- to have something on one's brain
to be obsessed with some notion
- to pick someone's brain
to get the benefit of another person's knowledge and experience

**BRAINCHILD**
- brainchild
- inspired original idea

**BRAINSTORM**
- to brainstorm
to pool thoughts in the course of a session designed to generate fresh ideas and especially to build upon the ideas of others

**BRAINWAVE**
- a brainwave
- a suddenly occurring bright idea

**BREATH**
- to be a breath of fresh air
to be a pleasant change from the past
- to draw a deep breath
to get ready for exertion or for emotional news
- to take one's breath away
to greatly surprise or astonish
- to wait with bated breath
to be excited in anticipation of some event
- to waste one's breath
to talk or request something without achieving anything

**BREATHE**
- to breathe easy
(following some crisis) to relax
- to get some breathing space
to get more time in which to accomplish something

**BROW**
- highbrow
- intellectual or cultural

**BROW**
- to knit one's brows
- to indicate one's displeasure

**BRUISE**
- to nurse one's bruises
- to face up to the consequences of defeat

**BUMP**
- to bump into someone
- to meet a person accidentally

**BUTT**
- to get up off one's butt
- to cease being apathetic

**CHEEK**
- cheek by jowl
close to each other
- to turn the other cheek
to show that one has not been intimidated (Matthew 5:39)
- tongue in cheek
- full of irony

**CHEER**
- the cheering could be heard a block away
- there was great rejoicing

**CHEST**
- to get something off one's chest
- to confess
CHEST to hold one's cards close to one's chest
to keep one's plans and strategies secret

CHILD a problem child
a source of unnecessary difficulty

CHIN to keep one's chin up
to maintain one's morale

CHIN to lead with one's chin
by one's brash behavior to virtually invite one's opponents to take action against one

CHIN to rub one's chin
to muse

CHIN to take it on the chin
to cheerfully accept a misfortune

COLD to leave someone cold
to fail to impress a person

CORD to cut the cord
to sever a connection (refers to the umbilical cord)

CORN to tread on someone's corns
to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility

CRADLE to be the cradle of something
to be the place where some idea was first nurtured

CRUCIFY to crucify someone
to unfairly do severe damage to a person's reputation or credibility

CRUSOE not to be Robinson Crusoe
to be one of a large number of people with a common problem (from Daniel Defoe's ROBINSON CRUSOE)

CRUTCH a crutch
an artificial non-permanent support

CRY a cry for help
a subconscious or indirect indication that a person is in need of psychological counselling

DADDY the daddy of them all
the progenitor

DREAM a pipedream
a fanciful notion, wished for but unlikely

DREAM to be successful beyond one's wildest dreams
to be far more successful than one could have expected

DREAM to dream up some story
to concoct a false story naively or maliciously

DREAM to have a dream run
to encounter no difficulties

EAR a word in someone's ear
a confidential discussion

EAR little pitchers have long ears
children have a tendency to overhear things

EAR to be all ears
to be very attentive

EAR to be music to one's ears
to be comments which one is very pleased to hear

EAR to be out on one's ear
to have one's services abruptly terminated

EAR to be up to one's ears in something
to be very deeply involved in something

EAR to be wet behind the ears
to be excessively naive and inexperienced

EAR to chew someone's ears
to force one's conversation on an unwilling listener

EAR to come out of one's ears
to be plentiful

EAR to come to someone's ears
to come to someone's attention

EAR to drag someone by the head and ears
to force a person to reveal the true facts
**EAR**
- to fall around one's ears
to collapse utterly
- to fall on deaf ears
to be totally disregarded
- to go in one ear and out the other
to leave no impression
- to have money flowing out of one's ears
to be very rich
- to have someone's ear
to have a person's attention
- to keep an ear to the ground
to be well informed as to current developments
- to keep one's ears open
to be on the lookout for useful information
- to lend someone an ear
to pay attention to a person
- to play it by ear
to develop one's strategy to always fit in with circumstances as they change from time to time
- to prick up one's ears
to suddenly start paying attention to a conversation in progress as a result of a half-heard phrase
- to send someone away with a flea in his ear
to give a person frank but unwelcome facts (refers to fleas trapped in the armor of ancient knights)
- walls have ears
someone may be overhearing (words on wartime posters, reminding people of the existence of spies; may also refer to certain rooms in the Louvre, constructed so that conversations could be heard in other rooms)
- were your ears burning?
we were discussing you
- with one's ears pinned back
chastened

**ELBOW**
- elbow grease
hard manual work
- more power to your elbow
may your praiseworthy efforts lead to success
- to be up to one's elbow in something
to be deeply involved in something
- to elbow someone out
to force a person out of some office and oneself into it

**ENFANT**
an enfant terrible
a person who raises pertinent but unpalatable issues (French, "terrible child")

**EYE**
a mote in someone's eye
a fault in another person which is trifling in comparison to an unrecognized major fault in oneself (Matthew 7:3)
a smack in the eye
a rebuff
all eyes are on something
everyone's attention is focused on something
an eye for an eye
retaliation (Exodus 21:24)
beauty is in the eye of the beholder
some things are matters for subjective judgments
blue-eyed boy
person shown unjustified favoritism
in someone's eyes
in a person's judgment
one-eyed
biased
someone's eyes are bigger than his stomach
a person is unrealistic
someone's eyes popped
a person expressed great surprise
**HUMAN BODY**

**THEMATICAL SECTION**

**EYE** to be a sight for sore eyes
to be something welcome

**EYE** to be all eyes
to observe very closely

**EYE** to be an eye opener
to be a surprise

**EYE** to be better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick
to be particularly welcome

**EYE** to be easy on the eye
to be visually attractive

**EYE** to be eye wash
to be nonsense

**EYE** to be in the public eye
to have one's every action subject to scrutiny by the community

**EYE** to be one in the eye for someone
to represent an unexpected and unwelcome defeat

**EYE** to be only a gleam in someone's eyes
to be a long way from final achievement

**EYE** to be the apple of someone's eye
to be a person of whom another person is proud

**EYE** to cast an eye over something
to look at something critically

**EYE** to catch someone's eye
to attract the attention of another person or to seek permission to address that person

**EYE** to clap eyes on something
to catch sight of something

**EYE** to cock one's eye at someone
to glance knowingly at a person

**EYE** to cry one's eyes out
to express great sadness at a situation

**EYE** to do someone in the eye
to cheat a person

**EYE** to have an eye for something
to appreciate the appearance of something

**EYE** to have eyes at the back of one's head
to know more of what is going on than is generally realized

**EYE** to have one's beady eyes on something
to await the chance to acquire something to which one is not properly entitled

**EYE** to have one's eyes glued to something
to concentrate on looking at something to the exclusion of other competing calls for attention

**EYE** to have stars in one's eyes
(for emotional rather than rational reasons) to be ecstatic

**EYE** to hit someone right between the eyes
to be brutally frank

**EYE** to keep a weather eye out for something
to look out with particular care

**EYE** to keep an eye on the ball
to monitor a fast-changing situation

**EYE** to keep one's eye on someone
to supervise a person or to monitor a person's activities and behavior

**EYE** to keep one's eye on something
to monitor a situation

**EYE** to keep one's eyes open
to be on the lookout for useful information

**EYE** to keep one's eyes open for something
to be on the lookout for an opportunity to do something

**EYE** to keep one's eyes peeled for something
to be on the constant lookout for something

**EYE** to make eyes at someone
to look at a person amorously
THEMATIC SECTION

HUMAN BODY

**EYE**

*to open someone's eyes to something*
to alert another person to the truth of something

*to pick the eyes out of something*
to choose the most valuable items from among a large number

*to pull the wool over someone's eyes*
to deceive or deliberately mislead another person

*to rub one's eyes*
to express astonishment

*to see eye to eye with someone*
to agree

*to see something with half an eye*
to sum up a matter instantly

*to see the color of someone's eyes*
to see how a person matches expectations or requirements

*to shut one's eyes to something*
to deliberately take no notice of something, especially in dereliction of one's duty

*to throw dust into someone's eyes*
to deceive a person by presenting inaccurate or misleading information

*to turn a blind eye to something*
to pretend something obvious does not exist (refers to action by Nelson when disregarding Admiralty signals)

*with an eye toward doing something*
with the intention that something particular be done

*with one's eyes wide open*
fully conscious of the ramifications

**EYEBALL**

*eyeball to eyeball*
confronting each other and taking account of each other's reactions

*to be up to the eyeballs in something*
to be very deeply involved in something

*to raise one's eyebrows*
to express one's utter astonishment

*to get an eyeful of something*
to see something impressive

*not to bat an eyelash*
to fail to express any surprise

*to hang on by the eyelids*
to have only a slender hold

*eyesore*

*extremely ugly object*

**FACE**

*a poker face*
a facial expression which does not reveal one's thoughts during negotiations

*a slap in the face*
a calculated insult or action amounting to a rebuke

*a straight face*
a facial expression which does not reveal one's thoughts in a humorous situation

*someone's face fell*
someone registered obvious disappointment

*to be left red-faced*
to be embarrassed

*to blow up in someone's face*
to rebound on a person

*to cut one's nose off to spite one's face*
to act in pique in a way which harms only oneself

*to do an about-face*
to reverse a previously enunciated policy

*to fall flat on one's face*
to make a bad error of judgment

351
FACE **to go on till one is blue in the face**
to argue for a long time

**FACE** **to have a long face**
to look miserable

**FACE** **to have egg on one’s face**
to be embarrassed by the results of one’s own stupidity

**FACE** **to hurl something in someone’s face**
to reproach a person in regard to something

**FACE** **to lose face**
to endure embarrassment by virtue of being defeated or having one’s errors found out

**FACE** **to present a happy face to the world**
bravely to gloss over one’s problems

**FACE** **to put a brave face on it**
to face adversity cheerfully

**FACE** **to put a new face on something**
to alter the way something should be regarded

**FACE** **to put one’s best face on something**
to focus on the positive features surrounding a basically disastrous situation

**FACE** **to save face**
to be allowed to keep one’s dignity despite having suffered a defeat or made an error

**FACE** **to set one’s face against something**
to oppose some matter

**FACE** **to show one’s face**
to put in an appearance

**FACE** **to slam the door in someone’s face**
ostentatiously to refuse to have any dealings with a person

**FACE** **stare someone in the face**
(of a solution, etc) to become obvious

**FACE** **to wipe the smile off someone’s face**
to destroy a person’s complacency

**FACE** **two-faced**
isincere

**FACE** **wipe that smile off your face!**
treat this matter more seriously!

**FACE** **you will laugh on the other side of your face**
you will regret this

**FALL** **they fell over themselves to do something**
they showed great keenness while doing something

**FINGER** **light-fingered**
good at stealing

**FINGER** **not to lay a finger on someone**
to refrain from hurting person

**FINGER** **not to lift finger to help someone**
to refuse to assist

**FINGER** **someone’s fingers are all thumbs**
a person is clumsy with his hands

**FINGER** **to burn one’s fingers**
to lose money through foolishness

**FINGER** **to gnaw one’s fingers to the bone**
to fret

**FINGER** **to have a finger in something**
to be involved in something

**FINGER** **to have a finger in the pie**
to have an interest in a project

**FINGER** **to have green fingers**
to be good at gardening

**FINGER** **to have itchy fingers**
to be impatient

**FINGER** **to have one’s fingers in many different pies**
to be engaged in a variety of separate activities

352
**THEMATIC SECTION**  
**HUMAN BODY**

**FINGER** to have one's finger in the till  
to steal from one's employer

**FINGER** to have one's fingers on the pulse  
to know what is going on

**FINGER** to have sticky fingers  
to be dishonest

**FINGER** to keep one's cotton-picking finger off something  
not to interfere in something

**FINGER** to keep one's fingers crossed  
to hope for a good outcome

**FINGER** to let something slip through one's fingers  
to allow something to escape from one's ownership or control

**FINGER** to point the finger at someone  
to accuse a person or allege some indiscretion on his part

**FINGER** to pull one's fingers out  
to get on with a job with alacrity

**FINGER** to put one's finger on something  
to identify the essential features of something

**FINGER** to stir a finger  
to make some minimum effort

**FINGER** to twist someone around one's little finger  
by charm to get one's way

**FINGER** to wave a finger at someone  
to indicate mild displeasure at another person's actions

**FINGER** to work one's fingers to the bone  
to work very hard

**FINGERNAIL** to hang on by one's fingernails  
to have only a slender hold

**FINGERTIP** to cling on by one's fingertips  
to have only a slender hold

**FINGERTIP** to have some subject at one's fingertips  
to be very familiar with a subject

**FIST** ham-fisted  
undiplomatic and clumsy

**FIST** hand over fist  
rapidly overtaking each other during progress toward a common goal

**FIST** hard-fisted  
stingy

**FIST** tight-fisted  
stingy

**FIST** to lose money hand over fist  
to lose money very fast and convincingly

**FIST** to make a good fist of something  
to be successful in a difficult task

**FIST** to rule with an iron fist  
to keep strict discipline

**FISTFUL** to hold out a fistful of dollars  
to offer money by way of inducement

**FIT** not to get along with someone in a fit  
not to get along with a person

**FIT** to have a blue fit  
to be very agitated

**FIT** to have a fit  
to be in a state of great agitation

**FIT** to have a fit of the vapors  
to be horrified

**FLANK** to expose one's flank  
to allow others to take advantage of one

**FLESH** one's own flesh and blood  
one's offspring

**FLESH** the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak  
the body is not up to the demands made on it
**FLESH** to be a thorn in someone's flesh
to be a person whose persistent presence and righteous views annoy

**FLESH** to be more than flesh can stand
to be more than a person can reasonably be expected to endure

**FLESH** to flesh out the skeleton
to supply the missing pertinent details

**FLESH** to go the way of all flesh
to die

**FLESH** to make someone's flesh creep
to frighten a person with something horrific

**FLESH** to put flesh and bone on something
to supply details of a proposal previously revealed only in outline

**FLESH** to see someone in the flesh
to see someone in person

**FOOT** a foot in the door
the opportunity to do business

**FOOT** itchy feet
a desire to travel

**FOOT** nimble-footed
quick to change the direction of one's activities when circumstances warrant

**FOOT** not to let grass grow under one's feet
not to let inertia or delay spoil something

**FOOT** not to put a foot wrong
to behave impeccably

**FOOT** the boot is on the other foot
the real facts are the other way round

**FOOT** to be at one's feet
to be in the immediate vicinity

**FOOT** to be quick on one's feet
to cleverly take advantage of a situation

**FOOT** to be rushed off one's feet
to be rushed

**FOOT** to bind someone hand and foot
to completely limit a person's freedom to act

**FOOT** to catch someone flat-footed
to embarrass a person in the course of his making mistakes or being unprepared

**FOOT** to cut the ground from under someone's feet
to unexpectedly withdraw support and in the process cause embarrassment or to demolish a person's case

**FOOT** to drag one's feet
to perform unduly slowly

**FOOT** to fall on one's feet
surprisingly to succeed despite difficulties

**FOOT** to fall over one's own feet
to be very clumsy

**FOOT** to find one's feet
to develop one's skills

**FOOT** to get back on one's feet
to recover from an illness or some other setback

**FOOT** to get cold feet
to become scared

**FOOT** to get off on the wrong foot with someone
to make an unfavorable initial impression on a person

**FOOT** to get one's feet wet
to do the necessary but unpleasant or menial parts of a task

**FOOT** to go hot foot
to do something fast

**FOOT** to have feet of clay
to be vulnerable (Daniel 2:33)

**FOOT** to have one foot in the grave
to be dying

**FOOT** to have one's feet firmly on the ground
to know what one is doing
FOOT to have one's feet in both camps
to have good relations with two opponents

FOOT to have one's foot on something
to be about to acquire something or to be able to acquire something

FOOT to have the ball at one's feet
to have unlimited opportunity

FOOT to have two left feet
to be clumsy

FOOT to jump in feet first
to take a calculated risk

FOOT to put one's best foot forward
to make a special effort

FOOT to put one's feet up
to relax

FOOT to put one's foot down
to exert one's authority and insist on something

FOOT to put one's foot in it
to make a foolish mistake

FOOT to put one's foot in one's mouth
to say something foolish

FOOT to put someone on the back foot
to cause a person to adopt a lower profile

FOOT to run someone off his feet
to keep a person very busy on some physical task

FOOT to shoot oneself in the foot
to act in a foolish way and thus harm one's own cause

FOOT to stand on one's own two feet
not to require the help of others

FOOT to start off on the right foot
to commence an operation with great care to do it correctly

FOOT to sweep someone off her feet
to cause a person to lose all discernment

FOOT to tread someone under foot
to oppress a person

FOOT to vote with one's feet
to show one's displeasure by terminating an association

FOOT to wait hand and foot on someone
to accommodate a person's every real or imagined whim

FOOTHOLD to gain a foothold
to achieve a position from which further advances can readily be made

FOOTLOOSE footloose and fancyfree
unmarried and without any romantic attachments

FOOTPRINT without leaving any footprints
without making any impression

FOOTSTEP to follow in someone's footsteps
to do as another person did

FROWN to frown on something
to disapprove of some matter

GALL gall
impudence

GIANT a giant
a person whose ability and achievements exceed that of most other people

GRIN to grin and bear it
to suffer adversity cheerfully

GRIP to come to grips with some problem
to be on the way to solving a problem

GUT a gut feeling
a belief based purely on intuition and unsupported by facts or evidence

GUT gutless wonder
coward
GUT something has no guts in it
something has no real value to it
GUTFUL to have had a gutful
to be disgusted
GUTS I will have his guts for garters
I am extremely angry and dissatisfied with him
GUTS to kick someone in the guts
to take action needlessly hurtful to another person
HAIR hair-raising
scary
HAIR not to touch a hair on someone's head
not to harm a person
HAIR not to turn a hair
to remain composed
HAIR to a hair
exactly
HAIR to be within a hair's breadth of something
to be extremely close to something
HAIR to get someone by the short and curly hairs
to have domination over a person
HAIR to keep one's hair on
to remain calm in a crisis
HAIR to keep out of someone's hair
to let another person get on with his work in his own way
HAIR to let one's hair down
to relax
HAIR to make someone's hair curl
(of news) to give someone a shock
HAIR to make someone's hair stand on end
to give a person shocking news
HAIR to split hairs
to draw absurdly fine distinctions
HAIR to tear one's hair out
to be agitated
HAND a backhanded compliment
a polite expression seemingly of praise but really intended as an insult
HAND a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
a benefit currently available is more valuable than a seemingly much larger benefit which may or may not be achieved in the future
HAND a left-handed compliment
a thinly-disguised insult
HAND at first hand
personally
HAND hand over fist
rapidly overtaking each other during progress toward a common goal
HAND high-handed
overbearing
HAND on the one hand
putting one side of the proposition
HAND one's right-hand man
one's chief aide
HAND single-handedly
without help from other persons
HAND sleight of hand
deceit by trickery
HAND the hand of fate
chance
HAND the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing
one section of a large bureaucracy does not realize that another section is simultaneously doing something inconsistent
HAND to accept something with both hands
to accept something eagerly
HAND to be able to do something with one hand behind one's back
to be able to do something very easily
HAND to be able to lay one's hands on something
to be able to locate something
HAND to be at hand
to be in the vicinity, ready to help
HAND to be in hand
to be under control
HAND to be in someone's hands
to be being dealt with by someone with the necessary authority

HAND to be out of someone's hands
to be up for decision by a different person

HAND to be putty in someone's hand
to be far too easily influenced by another person

HAND to bind someone hand and foot
to completely limit a person's freedom to act

HAND to bite the hand that feeds one
to show ingratitude

HAND to catch someone red-handed
to apprehend a person in the course of committing a crime

HAND to eat out of someone's hands
to be unduly compliant

HAND to gain the upper hand
to attain, after some effort, an advantage over another person

HAND to get one's hands dirty
to do the necessary but unpleasant or menial parts of a task

HAND to get out of hand
to get out of control

HAND to give someone a free hand
to authorize a person to act as he sees fit

HAND to give someone a hand
to assist a person

HAND to go cap in hand
to show humility while soliciting a favor

HAND to go down on one's hands and knees to someone
with great humility to ask a favor of a person

HAND to grab some opportunity with both hands
to seize some opportunity with great enthusiasm

HAND to handpick someone
to carefully choose a person for his individual attributes

HAND to have a fight on one's hands
to encounter resistance or opposition to a proposal

HAND to have a hand in something
to be one of the participants in some project

HAND to have blood on one's hands
to be the person responsible for someone else's predicament

HAND to have clean hands
to be innocent or to act ethically

HAND to have one's hands full
to be fully occupied

HAND to have the whip hand
to be in control of a situation

HAND to hold someone's hand
to give detailed on-the-job training and supervision

HAND to hold the power to do something in the hollow of one's hand
to have the right to make crucial decisions

HAND to join hands with someone
to cooperate with a person

HAND to keep one's hands in
to engage in activities which reinforce skills which one has previously acquired

HAND to lay one's hands on something
to acquire something

HAND to lend a hand
to assist

HAND to live from hand to mouth
being in poor financial circumstances, to survive with little by way of safety margin
HAND to lose money hand over fist to lose money very fast and convincingly
HAND to play right into someone's hands to act so as to give a person an unintended advantage
HAND to put one's hand to the plow voluntarily to undertake some task (Luke 9:62)
HAND to put one's hand up to identify oneself
HAND to put one's hands in one's pockets to spend
HAND to rub one's hands with glee to express great satisfaction
HAND to rule with an iron hand to keep strict discipline
HAND to sit on one's hands deliberately to do nothing
HAND to stir a hand to volunteer assistance
HAND to strengthen someone's hand to give a person additional authority or greater moral support or more facts to support his case
HAND to take something in hand to assume control over something
HAND to throw up one's hands to express disgust
HAND to tie someone's hands to prevent a person from acting as he sees fit
HAND to tie someone's hands behind his back to make it impossible for a person to act at all
HAND to try one's hand at something to attempt a new activity, especially by way of experiment

HAND to turn one's hand to something to tackle something
HAND to wait hand and foot on someone to accommodate a person's every real or imagined whim
HAND to wash one's hands of something to emphatically decline future responsibility
HAND to work hand in glove with someone to work in close cooperation with a person or to be in collusion with a person to the detriment of others
HAND to wring one's hands to express despair
HAND with a heavy hand in an oppressive fashion
HAND with a high hand arrogantly (Exodus 14:8)
HAND with an iron hand in a velvet glove with a hard attitude made to seem soft
HAND with an open hand generously
HANDFUL a handful a small number
HANDFUL to be a handful to be difficult to manage
HANDSHAKE a golden handshake a large payment in connection with or as an inducement to retirement
HANDSTAND to turn handstands to express great joy
HANG to give someone enough rope to hang himself to give a person the opportunity to do something which is likely to get him into severe trouble
### THEMATIC SECTION

#### HUMAN BODY

**HEAD**

- *a hothead*
  - an impetuous person
- *a swelled head*
  - an exaggerated idea of one’s abilities or status
- *an old head on young shoulders*
  - experience, knowledge and maturity in a young person
- *hard-headed*
  - realistic
- *head first*
  - precipitately
- *head over heels*
  - topsy-turvy
- *heads will roll*
  - transgressors will be punished
- *level-headed*
  - rational
- *not to touch a hair on someone’s head*
  - not to harm a person
- *off the top of one’s head*
  - based on experience but without detailed consideration
- *pull your head in!*
  - do not interfere in this!
- *someone’s head is on the block*
  - a person is in danger of having his appointment terminated
- *that is on your head*
  - you will have to accept responsibility for that
- *there is a big question mark hanging over someone’s head*
  - there are considerable doubts about a person’s competence, integrity or suitability
- *to bang one’s head up against a brick wall*
  - to fight an unwinnable case
- *to be able to do something standing on one’s head*
  - to be able to do something very easily
- *to be head and shoulders above the rest*
  - to be significantly more capable than others
- *to be off one’s head*
  - to be crazy
- *to be over someone’s head*
  - to be beyond a person’s ability to understand
- *to beat each other over the head*
  - to be always fighting
- *to belt someone over the head*
  - to override someone’s views or arguments
- *to bite someone’s head off*
  - to rudely express displeasure at someone
- *to bury one’s head in the sand*
  - to refuse to face up to an unpleasant truth (refers to the reputed habit of ostriches in danger)
- *to come to a head*
  - to reach culmination
- *to confront someone head-on*
  - to confront a person
- *to drag someone by the head and ears*
  - to force a person to reveal the true facts
- *to eat one’s head off*
  - to eat excessively
- *to fall head over heels in love*
  - to fall very much in love
- *to get one’s head blown off*
  - to be very soundly abused
- *to give someone his head*
  - to let a person do as he wants to
HEAD to go off one's head
to lose one's temper

HEAD to go over someone's head
to bypass lower levels of authority and approach someone more senior instead

HEAD to go to someone's head
to cause a person to get an exaggerated idea of his abilities or status

HEAD to hang one's head
to be ashamed of oneself

HEAD to have a cloud hanging over one's head
there is doubt as to one's future

HEAD to have a head start
to have an advantage over others

HEAD to have a threat hanging over one's head
to fear some intimated unpleasant action

HEAD to have eyes at the back of one's head
to know more of what is going on than is generally realized

HEAD to have one's head in the clouds
to be unrealistic

HEAD to have one's head screwed on straight
to be shrewd

HEAD to have rocks in the head
to be mentally unbalanced

HEAD to hold a gun at someone's head
to put pressure on a person to make a particular decision regardless of his desires in the matter

HEAD to hold one's head high
to stay unruffled and to maintain one's dignity despite attempts by others to embarrass

HEAD to just hold one's head above water
to cope with problems but with little margin to spare or to stay solvent

HEAD to keep a civil tongue in one's head
to be polite, especially under provocation

HEAD to keep a cool head
to stay calm and rational in a crisis

HEAD to keep a level head
to stay calm and rational in a crisis

HEAD to keep one's head
to remain calm in a crisis or to unexpectedly retain an elected or appointed position

HEAD to keep one's head down
to work very diligently

HEAD to kick heads in
to demonstrate annoyance at or dislike of certain persons

HEAD to knock an idea on the head
to utterly reject a proposal

HEAD to knock two heads together
to make two persons come to their senses and deal with each other

HEAD to laugh one's head off
to greatly enjoy something

HEAD to let one's head go
to do as one wants to

HEAD to let one's heart rule one's head
to act on emotion rather than on reason

HEAD to lose one's head
to become confused

HEAD to need something like a hole in the head
to be landed with a completely undesired problem

HEAD to need to have one's head read
to be foolish

HEAD to promote someone over the heads of others
to promote a person to a position more senior than that held by some persons previously outranking him
**THEMATIC SECTION**

**HUMAN BODY**

**HEAD**

to pull one's head in
to retreat from a previously held stance

to put one's head in the noose
to recklessly and unnecessarily expose oneself to great danger

to put one's head into the lion's mouth
to recklessly expose oneself to great danger

to put one's head on the block
to have the courage of one's convictions

to put one's head together
to confer and pool ideas

to scratch one's head
to be amazed or puzzled

to scream one's head off
to scream very loudly

to shake one's head
to indicate disbelief or wonder or disapproval

to snap someone's head off
to speak to a person aggressively

to tackle someone head-on
to confront a person

to turn someone's head
to cause a person to get an exaggerated idea of his abilities or status

uneasy lies the head that wears a crown
responsibility involves some risk and some burdens (from Shakespeare's *Henry IV*)

woolly-headed
slightly muddled

you want your head read
you should reconsider this matter

**HEADACHE**
a headache
a cause for worry

**HEADWAY**
to make headway
to make progress

**HEALTH**
to get a clean bill of health
after proper investigation to be found not wanting

to hear a whisper
to learn a rumored hypothesis

cold-hearted
unferocious or mean or unmoved

from the bottom of one's heart
very sincerely

half-hearted
unenthusiastic

hard-hearted
unsympathetic

heart and soul
with great energy

heart failure
a shock

heart-stopping
exciting

one's heart bleeds for someone
one feels truly sad for a person's fate

one's heart is not in some cause
one has little enthusiasm for some cause

one's heart sank
one realized the extent of some disaster

open-hearted
cordial

this does my heart good
I rejoice at this

to be close to one's heart
to be a project on which one is very keen

to be in good heart
to be brave in adversity

to be of good heart
to be brave in adversity
**HEART** to be someone after one's own heart
to be a person who shares one's beliefs

**HEART** to break someone's heart
to act in a way causing great upset to another person

**HEART** to eat one's heart out
to suffer bitterly

**HEART** to give someone heart
to cause a person to cheer up

**HEART** to have a change of heart
to form a new view in place of a strongly-held previous view

**HEART** to have a heart
to have compassion

**HEART** to have a heart of gold
to have a generous disposition

**HEART** to have a heart of oak
to be brave

**HEART** to have a heart of stone
to be unfeeling

**HEART** to have a heart-to-heart talk
to have a confidential discussion on a highly personal matter

**HEART** to have one's heart in one's boots
to be terrified

**HEART** to have one's heart in one's mouth
to be startled

**HEART** to have one's heart in something
to be enthusiastic about and committed to a cause

**HEART** to have one's heart in the right place
to have a well-developed social conscience

**HEART** to have one's heart set on something
to be very keen to achieve something

**HEART** to know something in one's heart of hearts
to know something while reluctant to admit it, even to oneself

**HEART** to let one's heart rule one's head
to act on emotion rather than on reason

**HEART** to lose heart
to cease being enthusiastic

**HEART** to pour one's heart out to someone
to inflict one's woes on another person

**HEART** to pull at one's heart strings
to affect one emotionally

**HEART** to search one's heart
to have misgivings

**HEART** to steal someone's heart
to cause a person to fall in love with one

**HEART** to steel one's heart against something
to determine that, notwithstanding one's natural compassion, something shall not happen

**HEART** to take heart from something
to be encouraged by something

**HEART** to take something to heart
to learn to appreciate the significance of something or to be much saddened by something

**HEART** to warm the cockles of someone's heart
to delight a person

**HEART** to wear one's heart on one's sleeve
to lack the reserve expected of one

**HEART** warm-hearted
affectionate or generous

**HEART** with a heavy heart
in sorrow

**HEART** with a sinking heart
with growing despondency
HEART you can eat your heart out you are entitled to feel sad or jealous

HEARTACHE heartache sadness

HEARTBREAK heartbreak despair

HEARTBURN heartburn regret at some non-achievement

HEEL head over heels topsy-turvy

HEEL to be hot on the heels of something to closely follow something

HEEL to be someone's Achilles' heel to represent a weakness in an otherwise strong position (refers to the Greek warrior who was the hero of Homer's ILIAD)

HEEL to bring someone to heel to make a person conform

HEEL to cool one's heels to be kept waiting

HEEL to dig one's heels in to become even more stubborn than at first

HEEL to drag one's heels to perform unduly slowly

HEEL to fall head over heels in love to fall very much in love

HEEL to kick one's heels to be kept waiting

HEEL to snap at someone's heels to be a minor irritation to a person

HEEL well-heeled rich

HEMORRHAGE to stem the hemorrhage to put a stop to the financial losses of a project

HIDE to want someone's hide to be keen to penalize a person

HINDSIGHT with 20/20 hindsight with the benefit of knowing what happened

HIP to shoot from the hip to speak frankly and openly

HIT to hit someone hard to greatly affect a person emotionally or to cost a person a lot of money

HOP to catch someone on the hop to take a person by surprise

ITCH to be itching to go to be highly enthusiastic and keen to start

JAUNDICED jaundiced affected by jealousy

JAW someone's jaw dropped someone registered obvious disappointment, incredulity or shock

JOWL cheek by jowl close to each other

JUGULAR to go for the jugular to attempt to destroy something completely

JUMP to be for the high jump to be threatened with a reprimand and punishment

JUMP to get the jump on someone to get an advantage over a person

JUMP to jump at the opportunity to enthusiastically take immediate advantage of a good chance

JUMP to jump for joy to express great satisfaction

JUMP to jump to a conclusion to infer something without proper consideration

JUMP to jump to attention to show respect

JUMP to jump up and down to show excitement or anger or frustration
HUMAN BODY THEMATIC SECTION

JUMP to want to jump all one's fences at once
to be unrealistic

KICK I could kick myself
I regret that I acted thus

KICK a kick in the pants
an admonition

KICK to be alive and kicking
to be in good form

KICK to kick a man when he is down
to take unfair advantage of a person already in difficulty

KICK to kick in
to contribute financially

KICK to kick some proposal around
to examine a proposal from all angles

KICK to kick someone around
to abuse a person

KICK to kick someone out
to expel a person

KICK to kick someone upstairs
to promote a person to a purely ceremonial position

KNEE a knee-jerk reaction
a response made instantaneously and without any proper consideration

KNEE since he was knee high to a grasshopper
since he was a very young child

KNEE to be cut off at the knees
to have a pet project aborted

KNEE to beg on bended knees
to request in great earnestness

KNEE to force someone onto his knees
to inflict a humiliating defeat on a person

KNEE to go down on one's hands and knees to someone
with great humility to ask a favor of a person

KNEE weak-kneed
unassertive or irresolute

KNUCKLE to rap someone over the knuckles
to admonish a person

LAP to drop into one's lap
to turn up fortuitously

LAP to dump something in someone's lap
to impose some responsibility on another person

LATHER to get a lather up
to get unduly excited

LEAN to lean on someone
to utilize the support of another person or to pressure another person to do something against his inclination

LEAP by leaps and bounds
with surprisingly fast progress

LEAP to leap at an idea
to accept a suggestion enthusiastically

LEAP to leap in
to commence an activity without considering the wisdom of doing so or the best way to proceed

LEG not to have a leg to stand on
to have one's arguments completely demolished or to be without acceptable excuse or explanation

LEG to be on one's last legs
to be nearly worn out

LEG to cost an arm and a leg
to be excessively expensive

LEG to do the leg work
to carry out the tedious part of a project

LEG to give someone a leg up
to give a person some assistance

LEG to have a leg in
to have an opportunity which has the potential to lead to bigger things

LEG to pull someone's leg
to tell a false but plausible story as an act of humor
LEG to shake a leg
to hurry up

LEG to stand up on one’s hind legs
to exert one’s authority

LICK to lick one’s chops
to look forward to something with
pleasurable anticipation

LICK to lick someone’s boots
to show humility

LICK to lick something into shape
to make something presentable and
effective

LIE to lie low
to stay inconspicuous

LIE to take something lying down
to accept a disadvantage without protest

LIFE I cannot for the life of me
I just cannot

LIFE not on your life
definitely not

LIFE to be the life and soul of the
party
to be the prime enthusiast for a cause

LIFE to save someone’s life
to be of great help to a person

LIFE/BLOOD the lifeblood
the main or essential ingredient; or
the person or factor instilling enthusi-
asm

LIP a stiff upper lip
obstinate courage in the face of pain
or adversity

LIP to be tight-lipped
to keep confidences or to be uncom-
municative

LIP to bite one’s lip
to control one’s anger

LIP to pay lip service to some rules
to disregard some rules in practice
while acknowledging them in words

LIP to seal one’s lips
to keep a confidence

LISTEN a listening post
a place where information of strategic
value can be collected

LIVER lily-livered
cowardly

LOIN to gird up one’s loins
to get ready for action

LOOK to look at someone sideways
to silently and politely indicate one’s
disapproval

MAN every man and his dog
everybody

MAN he is your man
he conforms to an ideal

MAN one man’s meat is another
man’s poison
people’s taste differ

MAN to be one’s own man
to approach every issue in a totally
objective manner

MAN to separate the men from the
boys
to distinguish between those with and
without certain skills

MAN two men and a dog
very few people

MIND a thought in the back of one’s
mind
an undeveloped idea

MIND in one’s mind’s eye
using a vivid imagination

MIND it is mind over matter
one’s resolve to overcome suffering
will succeed

MIND that has taken a load off my
mind
I am relieved

MIND the mind boggles
this is astonishing

MIND to be a weight off one’s mind
to be a great relief
MIND to be of two minds
to be undecided between two alterna-
tives

MIND to be of one mind
(of several people) to be agreed

MIND to be out of one’s
cotton-picking mind
to act irrationally

MIND to broaden someone’s mind
to expose a person to a greater variety
of experiences and interests than he
had previously

MIND to change one’s mind
to alter the views which one had
previously formed

MIND to cross one’s mind
to occur to one

MIND to drive someone out of his
mind
to cause great worry to a person

MIND to give someone a piece of
one’s mind
to abuse another person

MIND to have a mind of one’s
own
not to be easily influenced

MIND to have a one-track mind
to keep coming back to one narrow
topic of conversation

MIND to have an open mind
to be willing to assess evidence on its
merits and without prejudging it

MIND to have half a mind to do
something
to be tempted or mildly inclined to do
something

MIND to know one’s mind
to form and adhere to an opinion

MIND to make up one’s mind
to reach a conclusion after contem-
plating a matter

MIND to prey on one’s mind
(of a problem) to keep worrying one

MIND to put someone’s mind at rest
to reassure a person

MIND to slip one’s mind
to be overlooked or forgotten

MIND to speak one’s mind
to express one’s views frankly and
forcefully

MIND to spring to mind
to suddenly occur to a person

MOHICAN the last of the Mohicans
to be the last of a group (refers to a
near extinct tribe of American Indian)
(title of a novel by James Fenimore
Cooper)

MOTHERHOOD a motherhood
statement
a statement so obvious and uncontro-
versial as not to be worth making
(such as “motherhood is a good
thing”)

MOUTH hard-mouthed
uncontrollable

MOUTH mealy-mouthed
not at all forceful in debate

MOUTH out of the mouths of babes
(as indiscreetly revealed) the truth

MOUTH someone looks as if butter
would not melt in his mouth
a person looks sweet and innocent

MOUTH to be a big mouth
to lack discretion in one’s conversation

MOUTH to be born with a silver
spoon in one’s mouth
to be brought up by wealthy parents

MOUTH to be down in the mouth
to be depressed

MOUTH to be left with a nasty taste
in one’s mouth
to be appalled or very disappointed at
another person’s unethical behavior
to one
MOUTH to foam at the mouth
to show anger
MOUTH to have one's heart in one's mouth
to be startled
MOUTH to keep one's mouth shut
not to discuss some matter
MOUTH to live from hand to mouth
being in poor financial circumstances, to survive with little by way of safety margin
MOUTH to make one's mouth water
to excite desire
MOUTH to put one's foot in one's mouth
to say something foolish
MOUTH to put one's money where one's mouth is
to back one's judgment by putting assets at risk
MOUTH to put words into someone's mouth
to attempt to get someone to say something in the particular terms drafted by another person
MOUTH to shoot one's mouth off
to speak without thinking
MOUTH to take food out of the mouths of children
cruelly to deprive the needy
MOUTH you took the words right out of my mouth
you have just said what I was about to say
MUSCLE to flex one's muscles
to exert one's personality or powers
MYOPIA myopia
the inability to appreciate an argument (lit., short-sightedness)
NAIL to bite one's fingernails
to anxiously await a decision
NAIL to fight tooth and nail
to strive very hard to win
NAIL to hang on by one's nails
to have only a slender hold
NAVEL to contemplate one's navel
to be introspective
NECK a millstone round someone's neck
a great burden
NECK at a break-neck pace
very fast
NECK it is neck or nothing
a desperate effort is called for
NECK neck and neck
(of contestants) with little between them
NECK to be a pain in the neck
to be an unpleasant person or to be a nuisance
NECK to be an albatross around someone's neck
to be a great burden (popularized by Coleridge's ANCIENT MARINER)
NECK to be up to one's neck in something
to be very deeply involved in something
NECK to break one's neck to do something
to be particularly keen
NECK to breathe down someone's neck
to cause annoyance to another person by remaining in his vicinity or by supervising him too closely; or to be narrowly behind another person in some competitive situation
NECK to cop it in the neck
to suffer a severe disaster
NECK to save someone's neck
to come to the rescue of a person
NECK to send a chill down someone's neck
to be worrying news
NECK to stick one's neck out
to have the courage of one's convictions or to take a calculated risk

NERVE the hip pocket nerve
the assessment of issues by their financial effects on one

NERVE to get on someone's nerves
by one's behavior to cause annoyance to a person

NERVE to have a nerve
to be impudent

NERVE to have nerves of steel
not to be easily frightened

NERVE to lose one's nerve
to abandon, out of fear, a decision to do something

NERVE to touch a nerve
to mention something which another person would rather pretend did not exist

NIGER the nigger in the woodpile
the factor spoiling an otherwise satisfactory arrangement

NIGHTMARE a nightmare
an unpleasant experience

NOD a nod and a wink
a sign that understanding has been reached in a matter which in the interests of discretion has not been discussed aloud

NOD to get the nod
to receive approval

NOSE hard-nosed
tough in negotiations

NOSE to be no skin off someone's nose
not to matter to a person

NOSE to be on the nose
(of a proposal or scheme) to be accurate

NOSE to bite someone's nose off
to speak to a person aggressively

NOSE to cut one's nose off to spite one's face
to act in pique in a way which harms only oneself

NOSE to escape by the skin of one's nose
to only just avoid some disaster

NOSE to follow one's nose
to act intuitively

NOSE to get a bloody nose
to suffer an undignified rebuff

NOSE to get up someone's nose
to irritate a person

NOSE to have a good nose for business
to be able to identify profitable business situations

NOSE to keep one's nose clean
to act with circumspection and honesty despite temptation to do otherwise

NOSE to keep one's nose out of something
not to meddle in something

NOSE to keep one's nose to the grindstone
to work with particular diligence

NOSE to lead someone by the nose
to induce another person to comply with one's wishes

NOSE to look down the nose at something
to treat a matter with obvious contempt

NOSE to pay through the nose
to pay an excessive price

NOSE to poke one's nose into something
to interfere

NOSE to poke one's nose outside
to venture outside

NOSE to put someone's nose out of joint
to upset another person
THEMATIC SECTION

HUMAN BODY

NOSE to rub someone's nose in it
to humiliate a person by highlighting something embarrassing to him

NOSE to take a nosedive
to suddenly and unexpectedly fall steeply

NOSE to take something on the nose
to meekly accept a rebuff

NOSE to thumb one's nose at someone
to show one's contempt for someone in authority and to ostentatiously disregard his orders

NOSE to turn up one's nose at something
to express one's disdain

NOSE under someone's nose
in a person's immediate area of responsibility or in circumstances where he should have known something

NUDGE to give something a nudge forward
to give modest encouragement to something

OLD it is on for young and old
the excitement has started

PALM to grease someone's palms
to bribe a person

PALPABLE palpable readily understandable

PARALYZE to paralyze something
to bring something to a standstill

PAS faux pas
something indiscreet or offending social conventions (French, "false step")

PEOPLE to be unable to keep people away with a big stick
to be faced with a large crowd or much demand

PIECE to have a piece of someone
to vent one's frustration on a person

PROFILE profile description

PULL to pull oneself together
to cease acting without purpose or enthusiasm

PULSE to have one's fingers on the pulse
to know what is going on

PUNCH not to pull any punches
to be brutally frank

PUSH to push someone around
to exercise, in an obnoxious manner, one's superiority over another person

REEL to leave someone reeling
to leave a person in a state of shock

RUB to rub someone up the wrong way
to annoy someone with actions failing to recognize his current mood

RUN to run around in circles
to engage in excited but useless activity

RUN to run with something
to take advantage of some current development

SCALP to be after someone's scalp
to be keen to penalize a person

SCAR to scar someone
to leave a person permanently grieving

SCENT to throw someone off the scent
to deceive a person by giving out misleading indications

SCREAM to scream and yell
to protest violently

SENSE a sixth sense
intuition (refers to the five senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch)

SHADOW to be in someone's shadow
to be unable to exert one's personality because of association with a more important person

SHAVE to be a close shave
to be a narrow escape
SHORTSIGHTED to be shortsighted
not to recognize the likely consequences

SHOULDER a shoulder to cry on
sympathy

SHOULDER a shoulder to lean on
sympathy

SHOULDER an old head on young shoulders
experience, knowledge and maturity
in a young person

SHOULDER shoulder to shoulder
in close proximity

SHOULDER straight from the shoulder
bluntly

SHOULDER to be head and shoulders above the rest
to be significantly more capable than others

SHOULDER to carry the world on one's shoulders
to resent being left to perform a huge task single-handedly (refers to Atlas, who was condemned to bear the heavens on his shoulders for leading the Titans against the gods)

SHOULDER to give someone the cold shoulder
to ostentatiously ignore a person

SHOULDER to have a chip on one's shoulder
to unreasonably resent something

SHOULDER to have broad shoulders
to be able to cope well with responsibility

SHOULDER to need to look over one's shoulder
to be subject to attack which is not obvious

SHOULDER to put a burden on someone's shoulders
to impose responsibilities on a person

SHOULDER to put one's shoulder to the wheel
to make a strong effort

SHOULDER to rub shoulders with someone
to mingle with a person

SHOULDER to shoulder the blame
to accept the blame

SHOULDER to shrug one's shoulders
to indicate that one does not know or care or that one is unable or unwilling to assist

SHOULDER to stand on someone's shoulders
to build upon another person's ideas

SHOULDER to take a weight off someone's shoulder
to assist a person by relieving him of some responsibility

SHOULDER to work shoulder to shoulder
to work with united effort

SHOUT to be all over bar the shouting
to be virtually finished

SHRUG to shrug something off
to indicate that one is unable or unwilling to do something

SHUDDER one shudders to think
what the outcome might be
there is great concern as to the outcome

SIDE to get on someone's right side
to make a good impression on a person

SIDE to split one's side
to be convulsed with laughter

SIGH to heave a sigh a relief
to express satisfaction at the achievement of a solution to a difficult problem

SIT to sit on someone
to repress a person

SIT to sit pretty
to be comfortably off
SIT to sit tight
obstinate to do nothing

SKELETON a skeleton in the cupboard
an unpleasant truth the knowledge of which has been deliberately suppressed

SKELETON to flesh out the skeleton
to supply the missing pertinent details

SKIN to be no skin off someone’s nose
not to matter to a person

SKIN to get under someone’s skin
to annoy another person through stupidity

SKIN to have a thick skin
to be impervious to criticism

SKIN to nearly jump out of one’s skin
to receive a fright

SKIN to save one’s skin
to get off safely

SKULL to penetrate someone’s thick skull
to make a person understand something difficult or acknowledge something unwelcome

SLEEP not to lose any sleep over something
not to worry about some matter

SLEEP to go to sleep
to become inactive

SLEEP to sleep on one’s rights
to fail to exercise some entitlement within a reasonable period

SLEEP to spend a sleepless night
to worry about something

SMELL something smells
something is suspicious

SMELL to run something on the smell of an oil rag
to run something very economically and efficiently

SMELL to smell out something
to discover something by careful investigation

SMELL to smell trouble
to perceive difficulties

SNEEZE that is not to be sneezed at
that is so significant that it should not be rejected

SORE to open up a festering sore
to upset a person by drawing attention to a long-standing grievance

SPINE to send a cold shiver down someone’s spine
to horrify a person

SPIT spit it out! unburden yourself!

SPLEEN to vent one’s spleen on someone
to demonstrate one’s ill temper to a person

SPOT to be a tender spot
to be a subject on which a person is touchy

SPOT to have a blind spot about something
to fail to recognize the adverse aspects of something

SPOT to have a soft spot for someone
to be very fond of a person

SPREAD to spread oneself thin
to attempt to do more than is feasible in the available time

STAND to know where one stands
to know what one supports or how one is affected

STAND to stand out from the crowd
to be noticeably better than one’s competitors

STAND to stand up and be counted
to publicly announce one’s position on some issue
STEP a step in the right direction
the first in a series of measures designed to correct some problem
STEP by small steps gradually
STEP step by step gradually
STEP to get in step with someone
to do as another person does
STEP to take a giant step forward
to make a significant advance
STEP to take a step backward
to move farther away from one’s goal
STEP to watch one’s step
to be on the lookout for danger or to set out to improve one’s behavior
STICK to give someone a bit of stick
to mildly criticize a person
STITCH to have someone in stitches
to greatly amuse a person
STOMACH someone’s eyes are bigger than his stomach
a person is unrealistic
STOMACH to have butterflies in one’s stomach
a feeling of anxiety
STOMACH to have no stomach for something
 to have no taste or fortitude for something
STRANGLEHOLD a stranglehold
a firm grip on a commercial situation, effectively freezing out a competitor
STRIDE to hit one’s stride
to settle down to some task
STRIDE to take something in one’s stride
to cope with something easily
SUCK to suck someone in
to embroil an innocent party in an unethical enterprise
SUCK to teach one’s grandmother how to suck eggs
to try to tell a much more experienced person something very obvious to him
SWALLOW someone has swallowed a dictionary
a person uses excessively long words
SWALLOW to be a bitter pill to swallow
to be a great humiliation and disappointment which have to be endured
SWALLOW to be hard to swallow
not to be readily acceptable
SWALLOW to swallow one’s pride
to take action despite the humiliating nature of this course
SWALLOW to swallow the line
to accept as truth the story being proffered
SWEAT blood, sweat and tears
hard work and much effort
SWEAT no sweat
this presents no difficulty
SWEAT to be in a cold sweat
to be afraid
SWEAT to sweat it out
to await one’s fate calmly
TASTE to get a taste of one’s own medicine
to suffer from an initiative intended to affect only other persons
TEAR blood, sweat and tears
hard work and much effort
TEAR to almost drive someone to tears
to present information designed to make another person express sympathy not warranted by the facts
TEAR to bore someone to tears
to greatly weary a person by dull and uninteresting conversation or by lack of action
THEMATIS SECTION

HUMAN BODY

TEAR to shed a quiet tear for something
to lament the passing of something

TEAR to tear someone apart
to ruthlessly destroy another person’s case

THINK to think twice before doing something
to consider with particular care

THROAT it sticks in my throat
I find it galling

THROAT the words stuck in my throat
I just could not get myself to say the intended words

THROAT to be at each other’s throats
to be always fighting

THROAT to cut one’s own throat
to act in a way which damages one’s own interests

THROAT to have a lump in one’s throat
to feel emotional

THROAT to have someone by the throat
to claim victory over an opponent

THROAT to hold a knife at someone’s throat
to exert undue pressure on another person in an endeavor to achieve a result which would otherwise not be forthcoming

THROAT to hold a sword at someone’s throat
to exert undue pressure on another person in an endeavor to achieve a result which would otherwise not be forthcoming

THROAT to jump down someone’s throat
to react angrily to the remarks of the other party to a conversation

THROAT to ram something down someone’s throat
to pressure another person into accepting an idea with which he does not agree

THUMB a rule of thumb
a simple yet useful approximation

THUMB a thumbnail sketch
brief but pertinent details

THUMB someone’s fingers are all thumbs
a person is clumsy with his hands

THUMB to be under someone’s thumb
to be dominated by a person

THUMB to give a thumbs up
to approve or grant permission (refers to sign given by Roman emperor sparing a life)

THUMB to twiddle one’s thumbs
not to be involved in any worthwhile activity

TICKLE to be tickled pink
to be very pleased

TICKLE to tickle the Peter
to rob one’s employer

TICKLISH ticklish
awkward, requiring delicate handling

TOE a toehold
an opportunity small in itself but with the potential to lead to bigger things

TOE to dig one’s toes in
to become even more stubborn than at first

TOE to dip one’s toes in the water
to gently explore an opportunity

TOE to keep someone on his toes
to induce a person to be efficient

TOE to tiptoe around the difficulties
to act though the difficulties did not exist

TOE to toe the line
to conform
TOE to tread on someone's toes
to upset another person by interfering
in his area of responsibility

TONGUE I could have bitten my
tongue off
I wish that I had not made such a
hurtful remark

TONGUE a slip of the tongue
incorrect words uttered accidentally

TONGUE it is on the tip of my
tongue
the right word has momentarily es-
caped me

TONGUE to feel the rough side of
someone's tongue
to be verbally abused by a person

TONGUE to find one's tongue
to overcome one's shyness and speak

TONGUE to have a loose tongue
to speak foolishly or indiscreetly

TONGUE to have a sharp tongue
to speak one's mind in forceful lan-
guage

TONGUE to have a silver tongue
to be eloquent

TONGUE to hold one's tongue
to keep quiet

TONGUE to keep a civil tongue in
one's head
to be polite, especially under provoca-
tion

TONGUE to roll off the tongue
to be said very easily

TONGUE to set tongues wagging
to behave in a way which encourages
scandal mongers

TONGUE to speak with forked
tongues
to utter half-truths with the intention
of misleading the listener

TONGUE tongue in cheek
full of irony

TOOTH a tooth for a tooth
retaliation (Exodus 21:24)

TOOTH one would give one's eye
teeth for something
a person would very much like to
achieve some objective

TOOTH teething trouble
problems in the early stages of a
project

TOOTH to be armed to the teeth
to carry many weapons

TOOTH to be fed up to the back
teeth
to be disgusted

TOOTH to be long in the tooth
to be old

TOOTH to cut one's teeth on
something
to get one's first experience by doing
something

TOOTH to escape by the skin of
one's teeth
to only just avoid some disaster

TOOTH to fight tooth and nail
to strive very hard to win

TOOTH to get one's teeth into
something
to tackle a task with enthusiasm

TOOTH to gnash one's teeth
to express frustration

TOOTH to grit one's teeth
to get ready to suffer pain

TOOTH to hang on by the skin of
one's teeth
to only just survive

TOOTH to have a sweet tooth
to be particularly fond of cakes and
confectionery

TOOTH to have teeth
to be effective

TOOTH to kick someone in the teeth
to take action which demonstrates an-
noyance at or dislike of a person
TOOTH to lie through one’s teeth
   to tell blatant untruths

TOOTH to set someone’s teeth on edge
   to cause a person to feel unhappy at a situation

TOUCH the touchstone
   the standard

TOUCH to lose one’s touch
   to cease to be familiar with something

TOUCHE touche
   well said (French, “touched”)

TREAD to tread lightly
   to be careful

TURN to turn around 180 degrees
   to completely reverse a stance

TURN to turn round
   to reverse one’s policy

VEIN in another vein
   as an alternative way of looking at things

VISION tunnel vision
   an extremely narrow and inflexible way of considering issues

VOICE to be a lone voice in the wilderness
   to be the only person stating unpopular views

VOICE to raise one’s voice for some cause
   to publicly advocate some cause

WAKE to wake up to something
   to realize a fact or its significance

WALK to take a long walk on a short pier
   go away, I want no dealings with you

WALK to walk away with a profit
   to achieve a profit on concluding a project

WALK to walk on air
   to be joyful

WART warts and all
   with the unfavorable features as well as the favorable ones (Oliver Cromwell’s direction to an artist painting his portrait)

WEIGHT to pull one’s weight
   to do one’s proper share of the work requiring to be done

WEIGHT to throw one’s weight about
   to use one’s real or imagined status in order to achieve certain results

WINK a nod and a wink
   a sign that understanding has been reached in a matter which in the interests of discretion has not been discussed aloud

WINK not to get a wink of sleep
   not to sleep at all

WOUND to heal wounds
   to affect a reconciliation

WOUND to lick one’s wounds
   to adjust oneself to defeat

WOUND to open up an old wound
   to take action which revives a long-standing grievance

WOUND to rub salt into someone’s wound
   to deliberately make damage even worse

WRIST a slap on the wrist
   a mild rebuke

YOUNG it is on for young and old
   the excitement has started

LAW

ACT to read the Riot Act
   to reprimand persons who are excessively noisy (refers to the police reading out to a rowdy crowd extracts from a law requiring its dispersion)

BAIL to bail someone out
   to render assistance to someone unable to help himself
CASE to make a Federal case out of something
to attach far too much significance to a trivial issue

COMPOUND to compound the felony
having already acted improperly to make matters worse (the misuse of a legal term: compounding a felony is the crime of agreeing for money not to prosecute a person for felony; in reality it is therefore an offense by a different person—not a second and worse offense by the original culprit)

COURT to laugh something out of court
to ridicule a proposition as having no basis whatsoever

COURT to put oneself out of court
to disqualify oneself from being considered for something

DOCK to be in the dock
to need to defend one’s stance

HANG not to be a hanging matter
to be only a minor mistake

JURY the jury is still out
no decision has yet been made or the public has not yet given an indication of its views

LAW to lay down the law
to be officious

LEADING a leading question
a very pertinent question (the misuse of a legal term, which actually means a question so framed as to suggest the answer)

MORTGAGE to have a mortgage on something
to have a moral claim in regard to a matter

MORTGAGE to mortgage the future
to get benefits now but at a cost in due course

SENTENCE to be sentenced to some fate
to be condemned by circumstances to endure some fate

T to dot the i’s and cross the i’s
to be meticulous in completing the documentation for a transaction

MANUFACTURE

BALANCE to tip the balance
to provide further information or argument which results in an issue, which could have been decided either way, being determined in a particular way

BOILER not to bust one’s boiler
not to exert oneself unduly

BRONZE to be cast in bronze
to be virtually unalterable

BUTTON to hit the panic button
to act hastily and irrationally

BUTTON to press a button
to make something happen

CHAIN the weakest link in the chain
the least efficient component in a project the overall efficiency of which is governed by the efficiency of the least efficient component

CHAIN to drag the chain
to perform unduly slowly

COBBLER a cobbler should stick to his last
every person should confine himself to activities for which he has been trained

COG to be a small cog in a large wheel
to be a relatively unimportant person in a large organization

COMB to go through something with a fine-tooth comb
to conduct an extremely thorough investigation
CUT to be at the cutting edge of something
to be in a position where important decisions need to be made
CUT to be cut and dried
to be well settled or long established
CUT to cut one's coat according to the cloth
to accommodate oneself to limitations beyond one's control and to do the best in the circumstances
FIRE to add fuel to the fire
to make a bad situation worse
GOODS to deliver the goods
to achieve the objective
GRINDSTONE to keep one's nose to the grindstone
to work with particular diligence
HALLMARK a hallmark
a standard (refers to the official assay mark on gold and silver, originally put on at the Goldsmith's Hall)
IRON to have a cast-iron case
to be absolutely assured of victory in legal proceedings
IRON to have other irons in the fire
to have the opportunity to do something else as an alternative
IRON to strike while the iron is hot
to take advantage of a situation which cannot last
LINCHPIN linchpin
essential feature central to a project
LOGJAM a logjam
a stoppage of activity caused by input in greater volume than allowed for
MACHINERY to be a well-oiled piece of machinery
to be functioning very satisfactorily
MAKE ready-made
easily fabricated or available without difficulty
MOLD to be cast in someone's mold
to take after another person
PIPELINE a pipeline to someone
an intermediary used as a means of communicating ideas to a person
PIPELINE to be in the pipeline
to be being dealt with
POT a melting pot
a country where people with different ethnic backgrounds over time merge into one nation
POT to go back into the melting pot
to be up for reconsideration ab initio
PRESS to be hot off the press
to be the latest news
PRESSURE to apply pressure on someone
to induce a person to do something which he would otherwise not do by implying adverse consequences if he does not cooperate
PRINT to fill in the fine print
to provide the precise details in respect of something presently existing in broad outline only
P to watch one's p's and q's
to be very careful (may refer to pints and quarts of beer on a hotel slate or to easily-confused printer's type)
SACK to get the sack
to be dismissed (refers to the bag of tradesmen's tools)
SAFETY safety margin
allowance for miscalculations
SEAL a seal of approval
confirmation that something is satisfactory
SIFT to sift
to closely examine the evidence or a set of facts with a view to attaching different significance as appropriate to each of the various components
SKIN there is more than one way
to skin a cat
this can be achieved in a variety of
acceptable ways
SPARK to make sparks fly
to cause rapid activity to take place
SPIN to be a money spinner
to produce large profits easily and
quickly
SPIN to spin something out
to prolong some matter
STEEL to be a man of steel
to be a person with moral courage
STEEL to have nerves of steel
not to be easily frightened
SYSTEM to be all systems "go"
to go ahead as fast as possible
TAILOR to tailor something
to do something in a way which has
regard to the specific needs or prefer-
ences of a particular person
TENTERHOOK to be on tenterhooks
to anxiously await some result
THREAD the thread
the connecting link of a set of argu-
ments
TINKER not worth a tinker's curse
worthless
TUNE to fine-tune something
to adjust something in order to bring
it to perfection or to make it fit the
circumstances in a much more appro-
priate fashion
VALVE to act as a safety valve
to be a procedure which allows per-
sons with grievances to ventilate them
in an orderly fashion
WHEEL a big wheel
an important person
WHEEL to be a small cog in a
large wheel
to be a relatively unimportant person
in a large organization
WHEEL to oil the wheels
to make things go smoothly
WHEEL to set the wheels in motion
to institute appropriate action
WHEEL wheels within wheels
secret machinations
WIRE to be a live wire
to be an enthusiast
WIRE to go haywire
to refuse to function properly
WOOL to pull the wool over
someone's eyes
to deceive or deliberately mislead an-
other person
WORKS to be in the works
to be being dealt with
WORKS to get the works
to get the full treatment
WORKS to gum up the works
to cause an activity to be halted
WORKS to throw a spanner into the
works
to cause an unexpected complication
YARN to spin a yarn
to tell an amusing or unlikely story

METEOROLOGY
AIR a feeling in the air
a premonition held by many people
AIR to be a breath of fresh air
to be a pleasant change from the past
AIR to clear the air
to remove any possible misunder-
standings
AIR to leave something up in the air
to continue with an unresolved problem
AIR to pluck figures out of the air
to continue with an unresolved problem
AIR to produce something out of thin
air
to get hold of something in circum-
stances where this seemed impossible
AIR to vanish into thin air
unexpectedly to disappear
ATMOSPHERE atmosphere
psychological environment
THEMATIC SECTION
METEOROLOGY

ATMOSPHERE in a rarefied atmosphere
in ignorance of the real world

BOLT to be a bolt from the blue
to be a totally unexpected event

BREEZE it's a breeze
it is easy

CLIMATE climate
commercial environment

CLOUD every cloud has a silver lining
there are benefits even in seemingly adverse situation
CLOUD there are black clouds on the horizon
bad news is expected
CLOUD to be in cloud cuckoo land
to be mad or to have unrealistic expectations
CLOUD to be on cloud nine
to be very happy
CLOUD to be under a cloud
to be under suspicion or to be out of favor
CLOUD to cast a cloud over something
to spoil the pleasure of an occasion
CLOUD to cloud one's mind
to allow irrelevant or extraneous factors to affect one's impartiality or judgment
CLOUD to have a cloud hanging over one's head
there is doubt as to one's future
CLOUD to have one's head in the clouds
to be unrealistic
COLD a cold day in hell
never
COLD to come in out of the cold
to be welcomed into a group

COLD to leave someone out in the cold
to deny a desired objective to a person

DARK to be in the dark
to be uninformed

DAWN a false dawn
an incident giving rise to unjustified hope
DAWN to be the dawn of a new day
to be the start of a different regime

DRAFT to feel the draft
to experience unfavorable conditions

DROUGHT to break a drought
to resume supplies after an interval

EVE to be on the eve of something
to occur just before some event

FLASH in a flash
in an instant

FLOODGATE to open up the floodgates
to take action which will have massive consequences

FOG to be in a fog
to be in a state of confusion

FOGGY not to have the foggiest notion
to know nothing at all about the subject

ICE to break the ice
to take the initiative in starting discussions

ICE to cut no ice with someone
to have little effect on a person

ICE to skate on thin ice
to act in disregard of obvious danger

LIGHTNING a lightning rod
a person who attracts trouble to himself

MOON once in a blue moon
very rarely (refers to the volcanic eruption at Krakatoa in 1883 when volcanic dust caused the moon to appear blue)
METEOROLOGY

THEMATIC SECTION

MOON to be over the moon
to be very excited

MOONLIGHT a moonlight flit
an escape from creditors

MOONSHINE moonshine
unrealistic ideas

RAIN it never rains but it pours
crises often occur together

RAINBOW to chase rainbows
to be quite unrealistic

RAINBOW to seek the pot of gold
at the end of the rainbow
to have naive expectations

RAINY to keep something for a rainy day
to keep something in reserve

SEASON the silly season
the holiday period, when hard news is scarce and journalistic standards are lowered

SHOWER to have come down in the last shower
to be naive

SKY a light in the sky
a sign of great hope

SKY blue sky
supremely optimistic

SKY pie in the sky
a hoped for result unlikely to be achieved

SKY the sky fell in
a very serious problem arose

SKY the sky is the limit
the cost is no obstacle

SNOW to snow someone under
to overload a person with work

STORM any port in a storm
anything which helps to avoid difficulties is welcome.

STORM to be in the eye of the storm
to be at the center of a controversy

STORM to create a storm
to kick up a fuss

STORM to ride out the storm
to come safely through some dangerous situation

STORM to run into a firestorm
to be faced with many protests

STORM to take someone by storm
to captivate an audience

STORM to weather the storm
to come safely through a crisis

SUMMER one swallow does not make a summer
much further evidence is desirable before any action taken

TEMPEST a tempest in a teacup
a controversy about a minor matter but one which looms large in the minds of the parties

THUNDER to be thunderstruck
to be amazed

THUNDER to steal someone's thunder
to take credit for another person's good work (refers to a dispute over the copying of a machine invented by a 17th-century dramatist to reproduce the sound of thunder during a play)

THUNDERBOLT a thunderbolt
a surprise

TORRENT a torrent of words
a rapid and uninterrupted outpouring of words

WEATHER a fair-weather friend
a person purporting to be a friend who offers no support in difficult times

WEATHER to be under the weather
to be drunk or (less often) sick

WEATHER to keep a weather eye out for something
to look out with particular care

WEATHER to make heavy weather of something
to struggle excessively with a relatively simple task
WEATHER to run into heavy weather
to encounter difficulties

WHIRLWIND to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind
to make bad mistakes and to suffer the even worse consequences

WIND something is in the wind
something is going on secretly (this phrase uses the actual word “something”)

WIND straws in the wind
unofficial preliminary indications of something likely to be formally revealed soon

WIND the cold wind of change
the unpleasant realities of new circumstances

WIND to cast prudence to the winds
to cease being prudent

WIND to put the wind up someone
to alarm a person

WIND to reap the whirlwind
to suffer the adverse consequences of a bad act

WIND to sail against the wind
to oppose the views currently being held by others

WIND to sail close to the wind
to act in a very dangerous manner

WIND to scatter something to the four winds
to permanently get rid of something

WIND to see which way the wind is blowing
to establish the factors relevant to a situation

WIND to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind
to make bad mistakes and to suffer the even worse consequences

WIND to take the wind out of someone’s sails
to upset a person by anticipating his actions or using arguments which he was proposing to use

WINDFALL windfall
unexpected good fortune

MINING and OIL
CLAIM to stake a claim
to indicate one’s desire to obtain something

COAL to be at the coal face
to be in the place where the real work is done

COAL to haul someone over the coals
to reprimand a person

DIAMOND to be a rough diamond
to have many attributes but a gruff manner

DIRT to strike pay dirt
to become successful

DRY a dry hole
an exercise which after much effort proves fruitless

FUSE to light a fuse
to cause serious reactions

GOLD a golden handshake
a large payment in connection with or as an inducement to retirement

GOLD a pot of gold
wealth

GOLD all that glitters is not gold
things are not always what they seem

GOLD golden parachute
generous provisions in a remuneration package which come into play in certain circumstances

GOLD golden shackles
financial arrangements designed to discourage employees changing employers

GOLD to be a river of gold
to be a source of ongoing great profitability

GOLD to be worth one’s weight in gold
to be very desirable
GOLD to have a heart of gold
to have a generous disposition

GOLD to kill the goose that lays the
golden eggs
through excessive greed to destroy a
very profitable enterprise

GOLD to seek the pot of gold at the
end of the rainbow
to have naive expectations

GOLD to strike gold
to have one's efforts suddenly reward-
ed by great success

GOLDMINE a goldmine
a source of much wealth or of many facts

IRON to rule with a rod of iron
to keep strict discipline

JEWEL a jewel
a valued assistant

OIL get the good oil
to receive useful, reliable and timely information

PAN a flash in the pan
something which begins promisingly but does not last (refers to the prim-
ing of old guns)

PAN to pan out
to succeed

PETRIFY to be petrified
to be badly scared

ROCK rock bottom
very low

ROCK someone's marriage is on the rocks
someone's marriage has broken down

ROCK to be between a rock and a hard place
to be faced with two equally difficult and uncomfortable choices

ROCK to be on the rocks
to be bankrupt

ROCK to have rocks in the head
to be mentally unbalanced

SILVER to be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth
to be brought up by wealthy parents

SILVER to have a silver tongue
to be eloquent

STONE to draw blood from a stone
to do the impossible

STONE to have a heart of stone
to be unfeeling

STONE to kill two birds with one stone
to achieve a second objective in the course of achieving the first objective

STONE to leave no stone unturned
to be very thorough

TIN a little tin god
a petty tyrant

TREASURE a treasure trove
a valuable discovery

UNDERMINE to undermine someone's position
to injure another person's reputation and influence by unfair and secret tactics

UNDERMINE to undermine something
to sabotage something

MUSIC

BAND a one-man band
a person performing many different roles single-handedly

BANDWAGON to hop onto the bandwagon
to join the majority (the antonym of "bandwagon effect" is "underdog effect")

BEAT not to miss a beat
to carry on without the slightest interruption

BEAT to beat a retreat
to abandon some project
BOARD to act as a sounding board
to give, on request, constructive criticisms of ideas tentatively held

BOW to have a second string to one's bow
to have an additional qualification appropriate to the task

CHORD to strike a chord
to sound familiar or recall something to mind

CHORD to strike a responsive chord
to get a favorable reaction to a proposal

CHORD to strike the right chord
to appeal successfully to someone's emotions

DONNA a prima donna
a person with an exaggerated opinion of his own importance which makes relations with others needlessly difficult (Italian, "first lady")

DRUM to beat a drum for someone
to propagate another person's cause

DRUM to beat one's drum
to immodestly publicize one's own attributes

DRUM to drum up support
to actively seek out support

DRUM to march to a different drum
to show an independent approach

FANFARE with much fanfare
with great enthusiasm and public acclaim.

FIDDLE to fiddle while Rome burns
to neglect important considerations while concentrating on trivial side-issues

FIDDLE to play second fiddle
to fulfill a subordinate role

GAMUT the whole gamut
the whole range of some activity

HARMONIZE to harmonize several things
to make several things conform with each other

HARMONY to be in harmony with someone
to act in the same way as another person

KEY to strike the right key
to find the appropriate solution

KEYNOTE keynote address
opening address, designed to set the theme of a conference

MELODY the melody lingers on
the benefit of past actions remains

MUSIC to be music to one's ears
to be comments which one is very pleased to hear

MUSIC to face the music
to accept responsibility when confronted by one's critics

MUSIC when the music stops
suddenly and soon (refers to an imminent crisis leading to some resolution of a matter, as in a game of musical chairs)

MUSICAL to play musical chairs
to be a part of a general reshuffling of duties or functions which is not necessarily to everyone's liking

NOTE to hit a sour note
to discover an unexpected flaw in an otherwise satisfactory piece of work

NOTE to strike the right note
to make a good impression

OPERA a soap opera
a radio or television serial, often based on exaggerated domestic situations of no great importance (refers to sponsorship by soap manufacturers)

ORCHESTRATE to orchestrate something
to arrange for something to happen

OVERTONE overtones
implied threats

OVERTURE to make overtures to someone
to make suggestions to a person, inviting further negotiations
**MYTHOLOGY**

**THEMATIC SECTION**

**PEDAL** to softpedal

to restrain oneself

**PIPE** to pipe someone on board

to welcome a person

**PIPER** he who pays the piper calls the tune

a person contributing money or resources to a project is entitled to a say in its control

**PITCH** to be up to concert pitch

to be ready

**PLAY** to play it by ear

to develop one’s strategy to always fit in with circumstances as they change from time to time

**SING** it’s not over till the fat lady sings

it is not finished yet

**SING** to all sing from the same hymnal

to act consistently with each other

**SING** to sing for one’s supper

to carry out a task in order to receive a favor in return

**SING** to sing someone’s praises

to commend a person exuberantly

**SONG** nothing to make a song or dance about

unexciting or unimportant

**SONG** to buy something for a song

to buy something very cheaply

**SONG** to make a song and dance about something

to create a fuss

**SONG** to sing a particular song

to state particular views

**SWAN** swan song

last appearance before retirement

**TANGO** it takes two to tango

some activities cannot be carried out single-handedly

**THEME** variations on a theme

alternative approaches in similar vein

**TIME** to mark time

to do nothing while awaiting developments

**TRUMPET** to blow one’s own trumpet

to immodestly publicize one’s own attributes

**TRUMPET** with a flourish of trumpets

triumphantly

**TUNE** he who pays the piper calls the tune

a person contributing money or resources to a project is entitled to a say in its control

**TUNE** to be in tune with someone

to think on the same lines as another person

**TUNE** to change one’s tune

to alter one’s publicly-expressed views

**WHISTLE** you can whistle for it

you wish in vain

**MYTHOLOGY**

**ACHILLES** to be someone’s Achilles’ heel

to represent a weakness in an otherwise strong position (refers to the Greek warrior who was the hero of Homer’s Iliad)

**ALADDIN** an Aladdin’s cave

a place full of unexpected treasure

**CARRY** to carry the world on one’s shoulders

to resent being left to perform a huge task single-handedly (refers to Atlas, who was condemned to bear the heavens on his shoulders for leading the Titans against the gods)

**CRYSTAL** a crystal ball

accurate knowledge of the future

**DAMOCLES** to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one

to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one
THEMATIC SECTION

MYTHOLOGY

DAY in Halcyon days
in past happier times (refers to the 14 days about the winter solstice when winds were calm and to the mythical bird said to breed in a floating nest at that time)

DELPHIC Delphic
deliberately obscure (refers to the oracle at Delphi)

FAIRY a fairy godmother
a person showing great kindness

FAIRY to believe in the tooth fairy
to be particularly gullible

GENIE to let the genie out of the bottle
to cause something irreversible to take place

GENIE to put the genie back in the bottle
to undo something which cannot be undone

GHOST not the ghost of a chance
no hope at all

GHOST to give up the ghost
to die

GIFT I fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts
I am suspicious of generous behavior from traditional opponents (from Virgil’s AENEID, in reference to the Trojan horse)

GOD to be in the lap of the gods
to be a matter of pure chance (refers to wax tablets inscribed with requests and placed on the knees of statues of Greek gods)

GORDIAN to cut the Gordian knot
to solve, especially by force, a virtually insoluble problem (refers to a complicated knot tied by Gordius and eventually cut by Alexander the Great)

HERCULEAN a Herculean cleaning of the stables
a thorough revision of operating procedure (refers to Hercules, a mythical Greek hero who cleaned the stables of Augeas)

HERCULEAN to be a Herculean task
to be laborious

HYDRA a hydra-headed monster
an evil which is not readily destroyable

MAGIC a magic bullet
a guaranteed remedy

MAGIC to get a magic carpet ride to something
to be very fortunate in achieving some objective

MARINER to be an albatross around someone’s neck
to be a great burden (popularized by Coleridge’s ANCIENT MARINER)

MIDAS the Midas touch
attributes which cause a person’s ventures to be extremely profitable (refers to King Midas of Phrygia, who had the power to turn everything he touched into gold)

NEMESIS nemesis
downfall serving as retribution (refers to a goddess in Greek mythology)

PANDORA to open up a Pandora’s box
to do something which produces all sorts of undesired and unexpected side-effects (refers to the woman in Greek mythology who was meant to bring misery to mankind; the box contained human ills)

PHOENIX to rise from the ashes like a Phoenix
to be the replacement for something destroyed in some disaster (refers to a mythical bird which was supposed to rise from the ashes of its funeral pyre with renewed youth)

SCYLLA to be between Scylla and Charybdis
to be faced with two equally unpalatable alternatives which cannot both be avoided (refers to the voyage of Ulysses)
SPELL to break the spell
to spoil the effect

SPIRIT kindred spirit
person with similar interests and eccentricities

TROJAN a Trojan horse
a trick (refers to a large gift horse full of soldiers used to bring about the fall of Troy, as described in Homer’s Iliad)

NAUTICAL

ADRIFT to come adrift
(of a plan) not to work out as intended

AFLOAT to stay afloat
to remain solvent

ANCHOR the sheet anchor
the source of one’s confidence

ANOTHER to anchor
to fix firmly

ANCHOR to weigh anchor
move to another address

BACKWASH backwash
consequence

BERTH to give someone a wide berth
to go out of one’s way to avoid contact with a person

BOARD to pipe someone on board
to welcome a person

BOARD to take something on board
to offer to give further consideration to a matter

BOARDER to repel boarders
to keep out unwanted persons

BOAT to be in the same boat
to share a common set of difficulties

BOAT to get off the boat
to disassociate oneself from some project

BOAT to miss the boat
to fail to exploit an opportunity

BOAT to rock the boat
to disturb the comfortable status quo

BOW shots across the bow
warnings

BRACE to splice the main brace
to serve an extra ration of rum

CANOE to paddle one’s own canoe
to do something unaided and in one’s own way

COLOR to pass with flying colors
to be very successful

COLOR to sail under false colors
to pretend that one’s real character or beliefs are different from what they really are

COLOR to show one’s true colors
to disclose one’s real character or beliefs

COURSE to be on course
to be progressing satisfactorily toward one’s goal

DECK a loose cannon on the deck
a mistake likely to cause trouble

DECK all hands on deck
everybody is requested to help out

DECK to be back on deck
to have returned after an absence

DECK to clear the decks
to get ready for action

DOLDRUMS to be in the doldrums
to be depressed or to show no activity (refers to a region of little wind near the equator, becalming sailing ships)

EBB ebb and flow
fluctuations

EBB to ebb away
to decline gradually

FIGUREHEAD a figurehead
the ceremonial chief officer of some organization without any real power (refers to the carving at the front of a ship)

FISH a fishing expedition
an exercise designed to get information to which one is not strictly entitled
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>THEMATIC SECTION</strong></th>
<th><strong>NAUTICAL</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLAGSHIP</strong></td>
<td><strong>flagship</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>most important member of a group of related entities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLOTSAM</strong></td>
<td><strong>flotsam and jetsam</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>derelict persons, without a fixed abode or stable life (refers to goods found floating and to goods thrown overboard deliberately, respectively)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLOW</strong></td>
<td><strong>ebb and flow</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fluctuations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HATCH</strong></td>
<td><strong>to batten down the hatches</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get ready for expected difficulties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HELM</strong></td>
<td><strong>to be at the helm</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be in charge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td><strong>to leave someone high and dry</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to withdraw all support from a person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ICEBERG</strong></td>
<td><strong>to be the tip of the iceberg</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be only a very small portion of a much larger but less obvious whole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JETSAM</strong></td>
<td><strong>flotsam and jetsam</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>derelict persons, without a fixed abode or stable life (see flotsam)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JETTISON</strong></td>
<td><strong>to jettison some proposal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to abandon some proposal as worthless or impracticable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JIB</strong></td>
<td><strong>the cut of someone's jib</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone's personal appearance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KEEL</strong></td>
<td><strong>to keep something on an even keel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to ensure that something is not harmed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KEELHAUL</strong></td>
<td><strong>to keelhaul someone</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to penalize a person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KEEP</strong></td>
<td><strong>to keep a weather eye out for something</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to look out with particular care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KNOT</strong></td>
<td><strong>at a rate of knots</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very fast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEEWAY</strong></td>
<td><strong>to make up leeway</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get back to a normal position or to get to the position held by one's competitors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LLOYD</strong></td>
<td><strong>to be A1 at Lloyd's</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be in perfect order (refers to the classification of ships in Lloyd's register in London)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAST</strong></td>
<td><strong>to nail one's colors to the mast</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to publicly declare one's position and to maintain it in the face of criticism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NET</strong></td>
<td><strong>to catch someone in the net</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to unexpectedly involve a particular person in the course of activity designed to involve many others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NET</strong></td>
<td><strong>to draw the nets closer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to intensify one's efforts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NET</strong></td>
<td><strong>to slip through the net</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to happen as an isolated case despite steps taken to prevent such events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NET</strong></td>
<td><strong>to spread the net more widely</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to become more comprehensive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OCEAN</strong></td>
<td><strong>an ocean full of fish</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plenty of opportunity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OCEAN</strong></td>
<td><strong>to be only a drop in the ocean</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be quite insignificant in the total scene</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OIL</strong></td>
<td><strong>to pour oil on troubled waters</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to calm down a situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OVERBOARD</strong></td>
<td><strong>to go overboard</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to act foolishly and in an excessive way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PAINTER</strong></td>
<td><strong>to cut the painter</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to become separated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PEBBLE</strong></td>
<td><strong>not to be the only pebble on the beach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not to be the only available person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PIER</strong></td>
<td><strong>take a long walk on a short pier</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go away, I want no dealings with you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PIRATE</strong></td>
<td><strong>pirate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(of radio) unlicensed; (of recordings or computer software) published in breach of copyright law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLANK to walk the plank
to face certain doom

PLIMSOLL the Plimsoll line
the standard

POLE not to touch something with
a ten-foot pole
to go out of one's way to avoid
something

PORT any port in a storm
anything which helps to avoid diffi-
culties is welcome

PORT port of call
one of a series of places being visited

PUMP all hands to the pumps
everybody is requested to help out

RAFT life raft
financial assistance sufficient to avert
insolvency

RIDE to ride out the storm
to come safely through some danger-
ous situation

RIPPLE to make ripples
to disturb the status quo

ROPE to know the ropes
to know how to do one's job

ROPE to learn the ropes
to be taught the elementary features

ROPE to show someone the ropes
to teach a beginner how to do some-
thing

SAIL to be plain sailing
to be quite straightforward and very
easy

SAIL to sail against the wind
to oppose the views currently being
help by others

SAIL to sail close to the wind
to act in a very dangerous manner

SAIL to set sail
to commence a voyage

SAIL to take the wind out of
someone's sails
to upset a person by anticipating his
actions or using arguments which he
was proposing to use

SAIL to trim one's sails
to institute austerity

SEA between the devil and deep blue
sea
to be faced with two equally unpalat-
able alternatives which cannot both
be avoided

SEA to be all at sea
to be confused as to what is going on
and what to do next

SHIP a case of rats leaving a sinking
ship
the desertion of an enterprise in antic-
ipation of imminent failure

SHIP enough to sink a battleship
more than sufficient

SHIP ship shape
in excellent condition

SHIP ships that pass in the night
persons who fail to meet up

SHIP to abandon ship
to abrogate one's responsibilities or
to abandon a project

SHIP to be a rudderless ship
to be a project not managed properly

SHIP to run a tight ship
to manage an efficient organization

SHIP to run one's own ship
to do things and organize subordi-
nates in one's own way

SHIP to spoil the ship for ha'p'orth
of tar
to engage in a false economy (the
current word "ship" is actually a
mistake for the original word "sheep"
and the tar refers to the treatment of
wounds)
**THEMATIC SECTION**

**PLANTS**

**SHIP** when one's ship comes in
when one's business venture is successfully completed or when luck arrives

**SHOAL** to founder on the shoals of something
to come to grief because of unexpected dangers

**SIDE** a broadside
a short verbal attack

**SINK** it is a case of sink or swim
the attempt is worthwhile, despite the risk of failure

**SINK** to sink without a trace
to disappear completely

**SLACK** to take up the slack
to take advantage of surplus capacity

**SNAG** to strike a snag
to encounter a difficulty

**SOUNDING** to take a sounding
to ascertain people's views

**STORM** the calm before the storm
the quiet period before an expected or inevitable crisis

**TACK** to be on the wrong tack
to be using an incorrect procedure or policy

**TACK** to change tack
to alter one's direction

**TIDE** the tide has turned
conditions have changed

**TIDE** the tide is running in favor of some proposition
public opinion supports some proposition

**TIDE** to be caught by the tide
to be dealt with by something inevitable

**TIDE** to stem the tide
to make progress against something

**TIDE** to swim against the tide
to take up a minority position

**TIDE** to turn the tide
to reverse the direction of something

**TITANIC** to rearrange the deckchairs on the Titanic
to take some initiative which is quite useless because it does not take much greater change into account

**TOUCH** it was touch and go
there were considerable risks—the objective was achieved, but only just

**WAKE** in the wake of someone following a person's example

**WATER** to be in uncharted waters
to be the first to experience something

**WAVE** to be on the crest of a wave
to enjoy success which may not last

**WAVE** to cause waves
to disturb the status quo

**WRECK** to salvage something out of the wreck
to achieve some minor benefits out of a disastrous situation

**PLANTS**

**ACORN** tall oaks from little acorns grow
even major enterprises have to have small beginnings (from "Lines written for a School Declamation" by David Everett)

**APPLE** to add apples to oranges
to quite illogically lump unconnected things together

**APPLE** to be the apple of someone's eye
to be a person of whom another person is proud

**BEAN** not to have a bean
to have no money

**BEAN** not to matter a row of beans
to be utterly unimportant

**BEAN** to know how many beans make five
to have common sense

**BLOSSOM** to blossom
(of a person's attributes) to develop
BUD to nip something in the bud
to stop some activity in its early stages
when stopping it is still relatively easy

BUSH a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
a benefit currently available is more valuable than a seemingly much larger benefit which may or may not be achieved in the future

BUSH to beat about the bush
to hide the unpleasant truth

BUSHEL to hide one’s light under a bushel
to keep others in ignorance of one’s skills and experience

BUSHFIRE to fight bushfires
to deal with crises as they arise rather than take preventative action

CABBAGE to be on someone’s cabbage patch
to engage in a competitive activity in a territory regarded by someone already there as rightfully belonging exclusively to him

CARROT sticks and carrots
disincentives and incentives in combination (refers to the handling of donkeys)

CHAFF to separate the wheat from the chaff
to distinguish between important and unimportant ingredients

CHERRY to get only one bite at the cherry
to receive no further opportunity

CLOVER to be in clover
to enjoy a life of ease and luxury

CORE rotten to the core
completely corrupt

CORE to be the hard core
to be the central and most difficult problem

DEFLOWER to deflower
to deprive of virginity

DISSEMINATE to disseminate ideas
to spread ideas to a wide audience (lit., “to scatter seeds in various places”)

FALL windfall
unexpected good fortune

FIG one would not give a fig for something
one regards something as worthless

FRUIT by their fruits ye shall know them
their reputation will be based on their results (Matthew 7:20)

FRUIT forbidden fruit
something particularly desired just because it is not allowed (Genesis 2:17)

FRUIT to bear fruit
to result in success

FRUITLESS fruitless
yielding no benefit

GOOSEBERRY to play gooseberry
to act as an unwelcome chaperon

GRAIN something goes against the grain
something is completely and frustratingly against a person’s inclination

GRAPE that is just sour grapes
those are disparaging remarks made only because he is peeved and resentful at someone else’s better fortune

GRAPE to hear on the grapevine
to learn unofficially

GRAPE what is this — a bunch of grapes or a bowl of goldfish? surely you know what this is!

GRASS a snake in the grass
a person of low character

GRASS grass roots
at the lowest level
GRASS not to let grass grow under one's feet
not to let inertia or delay spoil something

HAY to look for a needle in a haystack
to attempt something with a very small chance of success

HAY to make hay while the sun shines
to utilize an opportunity before it disappears

JUNGLE the law of the jungle
the principle that those having power will use it at the expense of all others

LEMON the answer is a lemon
the outcome is inconclusive

LEMON to sell someone a lemon
to sell a person a grossly defective product on the basis that it represents quality

LEMON to suck the lemon dry
to get the maximum advantage out of some favorable situation

LILY lily-livered
cowardly

LILY lily-white
honest and incorruptible

LILY to gild the lily
(actually: to gild refined gold, to paint the lily) to do something patently unnecessary

LIMB to go out on a limb
to put oneself at risk through foolish action

MUSHROOM to mushroom
to expand rapidly

NETTLE to grasp the nettle
to deal with a neglected difficulty

NUT to be nuts
to be crazy

NUT to be nuts about someone
to be infatuated with a person

NUTSHELL in a nutshell
by way of summary

OAK tall oaks from little acorns grow
even major enterprises have to have small beginnings (from “Lines written for a School Declamation” by David Everett)

OAK to have a heart of oak
to be brave

OATS to feel one's oats
to display self-importance

OLIVE to hold out an olive branch
to make peace overtures (Genesis 8:11)

ONION to know one's onions
to be well informed in some area (refers to Dr. C.T. Onions, editor of the SHORTER OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY)

ORANGE to add apples to oranges
to quite illogically lump unconnected things together

PEA a pea and thimble trick
a clever fraud committed in the presence of its victim without this being obvious at the time

PINEAPPLE to have hold of the wrong end of the pineapple
to be utterly mistaken

PLUM the plum
the best item in a collection

POPPY a tall poppy
a person with great power or responsibility and/or in receipt of high remuneration

POPPY to cut tall poppies down to size
to humiliate haughty persons

POTATO a hot potato
an embarrassing issue

POTATO to be small potatoes
to be quite unimportant

PRUNE to prune
to remove the superfluous
PLANTS

THEMATIC SECTION

REED to be a broken reed
to be a weak and unreliable person

ROOT deep-rooted
strongly felt

ROOT to put one's roots down
to settle in

ROOT to strike at the roots of something
to work toward the destruction of something

ROSE a rose between two thorns
something beautiful in the midst of ugliness

ROSE a rose by any other name would smell as sweet
the form does not affect the substance
(from Shakespeare's ROMEO AND JULIET)

ROSE to be no bed of roses
to be difficult or uncomfortable

ROSE to be on a path strewn with roses
to lead a very pleasant life

ROSE to come up smelling like a rose
not to have a stain on one's character

SEED to run to seed
to become shabby

SEED to sow seeds
to propagate ideas in the hope that they will be adopted

STRAW straws in the wind
unofficial preliminary indications of something likely to be formally revealed soon

STRAW the final straw
the latest step, which, when added to a large number of seemingly harmless previous steps, sets off a disaster resulting from cumulative effect

STRAW to be a man of straw
to have no assets while giving a contrary appearance

STRAW to clasp at straws
to have a hopeless case but show unjustified optimism on noting minor positive features

STRAW to draw the short straw
to be the one appointed to do something

THORN to be a thorn in someone's flesh
to be a person whose persistent presence and righteous views annoy

THORN to wear one's crown of thorns
to have one's own difficulties (John 19:5)

TREE to bark up the wrong tree
to reach an incorrect conclusion

TREE to be at the top of the tree
to be a leading member of one's profession

TREE to be up a gum tree
to be in difficulty or at the end of one's resources

TREE to be up a tree
to be perplexed or cornered

TREE to shake a tree
to do something in order to see what will result

VEGETABLE to become a vegetable
to lose one's mental and physical faculties

VINE to wither on the vine
by virtue of changed circumstances of the effluxion of time to be no longer relevant

VIOLET a shrinking violet
a shy person

WEED to weed some group out
to get rid of some elements not meeting a desired standard

WHEAT to separate the wheat from the chaff
to distinguish between important and unimportant ingredients
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELIGION AND BIBLICAL</th>
<th>THEMATIC SECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADAM not to know someone from Adam to be unable to recognize a person</td>
<td>APOCRYPHAL apocryphal fictitious but resembling truth and illustrating a point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADAM since Adam was a boy for a very long time</td>
<td>BABEL a tower of Babel a noisy and confused assembly (Genesis 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTAR to sacrifice something on the altar of some belief to give up some benefit as a matter of principle</td>
<td>BAPTISM a baptism of fire the commencement of an operation which presented great difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANGEL a fallen angel a previously trusted person who has transgressed</td>
<td>BE to be kosher to fulfill all requirements (refers to food complying with all aspects of Jewish religious law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANGEL fools rush in where angels fear to tread unsophisticated persons take unwise risks in circumstances where more knowledgeable persons would exercise caution</td>
<td>BEADLEDOM beadledom stupid officiousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANGEL someone's guardian angel someone's friend, watching over him and advancing his interests</td>
<td>BIBLE a bible basher a person who makes unwelcome attempts to force his religious beliefs on others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANGEL to be an angel to be very helpful</td>
<td>BIBLE to be the bible to be the authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANGEL to be no angel to have a great many serious faults</td>
<td>BLESSING a blessing in disguise an unwelcome but salutary experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANGEL to be on the side of the angels to be on the side of righteousness (from a speech by Benjamin Disraeli)</td>
<td>BLESSING to be a mixed blessing to be an outcome with some desirable and some undesirable features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOINT the anointed one the desired successor</td>
<td>BLESSING to give one's blessing to something to indicate one's approval of something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANTEDILUVIAN antediluvian very outmoded</td>
<td>BRANCH to hold out an olive branch to make peace overtures (Genesis 8:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAST to cast one's bread upon the waters not to expect gratitude or recognition for one's good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1)</td>
<td>CHANGE to ring the changes to exhaust the number of different ways of doing something (refers to the permutations used for ringing peals of church bells)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRISTMAS all his Christmases came at once he was overjoyed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMANDMENT eleventh
commandment
unwritten rule

CURATE to be curate's egg
to be good only in parts (refers to an
1895 cartoon in PUNCH)

DAY a red-letter day
an important occasion (refers to the
color used to print saints' days on
some calendars)

DEVIL a devil-may-care attitude
a reckless attitude

DEVIL be a devil!
take a chance!

DEVIL between the devil and the
deep blue sea
to be faced with two equally unpalat-
able alternatives which cannot both
be avoided

DEVIL he must have a long spoon
that sups with the devil
great care is needed when negotiating
deals with disreputable parties

DEVIL poor devil
person to be pitied

DEVIL talk of the devil
here is the person we were just
discussing

DEVIL the devil can cite scripture
for his purpose
a person can quote a respectable or
hostile authority while advocating a
disreputable cause of his own (from
Shakespeare's MERCHANT OF VENICE)

DEVIL the devil one knows is better
than the devil one does not know
the status quo is more comfortable
than change

DEVIL to act as a devil's advocate
to put a point of view which one does
not hold in order to draw out the best
arguments regarding a proposition (re-
fers to a church official vetting a
candidate for sainthood)

DEVIL to give the devil his due
to be fair (a phrase used in parenthe-
sis, and only in the infinitive)

DEVIL to grab the devil by the tail
to face up to difficulties

ENSHRINE to enshrine
to incorporate as an important part of
something

FAITH an article of faith
a fundamental belief on which certain
behavior is based

FAITHFUL the old faithful
a greatly loved article

FOR a tooth for a tooth
retaliation (Exodus 21:24)

GOD a little tin god
a petty tyrant

GOD the mills of God grind slowly
retribution may be delayed but is
inevitable

GODFORSaken godforsaken
dismal and without any redeeming
feature

GOLIATH a Goliath
a giant or a person whose ability and
achievements exceed those of most
other people (1 Samuel 17)

GOSPEL to take something as gospel
to believe that something is true

HEAVEN heaven help you!
you are in trouble

HEAVEN heaven only knows
it is not known

HEAVEN manna from heaven
unexpected benefits (Exodus 16:15)

HEAVEN to be in seventh heaven
to be very happy

HEAVEN to move heaven and earth
to do everything possible

HEAVEN to reek to high heaven
to be patently unethical
THEMATIC SECTION

RELIGION AND BIBLICAL

HELL  
- all hell broke loose
great confusion erupted
- come hell or high water
regardless of the consequences
- on a cold day in hell
never
- to be hell bent on something
to be very determined to achieve something, regardless of the adverse consequences
- to frighten hell out of someone
to alarm a person
- to give someone hell
to make life difficult for a person
- to have a snowflake’s chance in hell
to have no hope or possibility at all
- to raise merry hell
to prominently involve others in a matter in the expectation of significant results from this action

HERESY  
heresy
views different from those held by the majority

HOLY  
a holier-than-thou attitude
excessive righteousness

HYMNAL  
to all sing from the same hymnal
to act consistently with each other

IMPRIMATUR  
imprimatur
confirmation that something is in order (Latin, “let it be printed”; refers to the formal ruling given by a Roman Catholic bishop authorizing the publication of a book on religion or morals)

JEREMIAH  
Jeremiah
a person who looks on the gloomy side of everything (refers to the prophet Jeremiah in the Old Testament)

JERICHO  
walls of Jericho
something seemingly solid but actually destructible (Joshua 6:20)

JUDAS  
to play Judas
betray a person (Matthew 6:20)

LIMBO  
to be in limbo
to have one’s ultimate fate yet to be determined

to consign something to limbo
to consider something as permanently disposed of

MAHOMET  
if the mountain will not come to Mahomet then Mahomet will go to the mountain
on recognizing that one has insufficient power to effect one’s most desired solution, one decides to make do with the next best alternative

MOTE  
a mote in someone’s eye
a fault in another person which is trifling in comparison to an unrecognized major fault in oneself (Matthew 7:3)

MUMBO  
mumbo jumbo
blatant nonsense (refers to a deity worshipped by primitive tribes)

PARADISE  
to live in a fool’s paradise
to delude oneself

PARISH  
parish pump issues
issues of trivial importance

PAROCHIAL  
parochial
narrow minded

POINT  
to point the bone at someone
to accuse a person (actually, an Australian Aboriginal method of applying a curse)

PONTIFICATE  
to pontificate
to speak as if with great authority and with an assumed air of infallibility
PRAYER on a wing and a prayer
without proper resources

PRAYER the answer to a maiden's
prayer
an unexpected but very welcome
happening

PREACH to preach to the converted
to say something to those who al-
ready believe in it

PRIEST the high priest of something
the leading advocate of something

RELIGIOUSLY religiously
conscientiously

SACRED a sacred cow
an institution so well established that
it is virtually unalterable

SACRED a sacred trust
a moral obligation

SACRED nothing is sacred
nothing is safe from interference

SACRIFICAL sacrificial lamb
somebody unfairly made to suffer for
the mistakes of others

SAINT a saint
a good person

SAINT to have the patience of a
saint
to endure annoyances with particular
calm

SCAPEGOAT a scapegoat
a person unfairly blamed for some-
thing not his fault

SCRIPTURE the devil can cite
scripture for his purpose
a person can quote a respectable or
hostile authority while advocating a
disreputable cause of his own (from
Shakespeare's MERCHANT OF VENICE)

SHIBBOLETH a shibboleth
a doctrine once held as essential but
now abandoned as having outlived its
usefulness (a word used as a test to
determine to which tribe an Israelite
belonged) (Judges 12:6)

SHRIFT to give someone short shrift
to be impatient with a person (refers
to the confession to a priest just be-
fore an execution)

SIN for one's sins
by way of punishment, as it were

SOLOMON to need the wisdom of
Solomon
to be faced with the need to make a
difficult decision (1 Kings 3:16-28)

SOUL a soul brother
a person of similar ideals

SOUL a soul-searching exercise
an examination of the advantages and
disadvantages of a proposal

SOUL heart and soul
with great energy

SOUL soul-destroying
extremely boring and demotivating

SOUL to bare one's soul
talkatively to give a revealing insight
into oneself

SOUL to be the life and soul of the
party
to be the prime enthusiast for a cause

SOUL to keep body and soul together
to keep alive

SPIRIT the spirit is willing but the
flesh is weak
the body is not up to the demands
made on it

TOTEM to be at the bottom of the
totem pole
to be in the most junior position in
some hierarchy

UNHOLY an unholy alliance
a working relationship for a nefarious
purpose between unlikely partners

VERSE to quote chapter and verse
to authenticate the information

SCIENCE AND MEDICINE

ACID to be the acid test
to establish something beyond doubt
ACID to put the acid on someone
to make demands on a person

BALANCE to weigh two alternative propositions in the balance
to assess the relative significance to two alternative propositions

BLOW to blow up
(of a person) to express rage

BREAD to claim that something is the best thing since sliced bread
to have an exaggerated opinion of the importance or novelty of an invention or practice

BUBBLE the bubble has burst
the inevitable has occurred or the scheme has come to ruination

BURNER something is on the back burner
consideration is postponed pending further research

CATALYST a catalyst
a factor causing something to happen

CHEMISTRY good chemistry
a good ability to work closely together

CIRCLE to try to square the circle
to attempt the impossible (refers to a classical problem in geometry, namely, to construct with a compass a square of the same area as a given circle)

CIRCUIT to short-circuit something
to do something, eliminating various intermediate steps

CONCRETE to set something in concrete
to make something virtually unalterable

COUNT the final countdown
the last stages of something (refers to the launch of space vehicles)

CRYSTALLIZE to crystallize
to emerge in its final form

CURE the cure is worse than the disease
the remedy involves more disadvantages than if it were not applied

DEGREE to the nth degree
with great precision

DENOMINATOR the lowest common denominator
the highest level of taste found among all the members of some target audience

DOCTOR just what the doctor ordered
exactly right

ECLIPSE to eclipse someone
to outshine a person

ELEMENT to be in one's element
to very comfortable in familiar surroundings or in an environment in which one can cope very readily

EMOLLIENT to be an emollient
to be a measure designed to make people more favorably disposed to one's wishes

ENCAPSULATE to encapsulate some idea
to reduce the essential points of a complicated proposal to a small number of words

FEEDBACK feedback
response from a target audience to those seeking to influence it

FEVER to be at fever pitch
to be in a state of excited activity

FILTER to filter through to someone
(of information) to eventually reach a person

FIREFWORKS fireworks
aggressive behavior because of anger

FLAME an old flame
a former lover

FLAME keepers of the flame
persons keen to maintain old traditions

FLAME to fan the flames
to increase unrest

FLAME to pour gasoline on the flames
to make a bad situation worse
FLAME to rekindle an old flame
to inspire the reinstatement of a former loving relationship

FLUX to be in a state of flux
to be subject to continuous change

FOCUS to bring something into focus
to put some matter into its proper context and explain its true significance

FOCUS to focus on something
to concentrate attention on something

FREEZE to freeze someone out
to deliberately exclude a person

GALVANIZE to galvanize someone into action
to enthuse a person into doing something

GRAVITY the center of gravity
the place most convenient to the greatest number

GRAVITY to defy gravity
to go up when the expectation is to go down

HOT red hot
highly exciting and desirable

HOYLE according to Hoyle with authority

IMPETUS to have impetus
to move along forcefully

LINE to take the line of least resistance
to succumb to outside pressure

LITMUS a litmus test
an event which allows the outcome of future events to be predicted more accurately

LOUD to come through loud and clear
to be well understood

MAGNET to be a magnet
to be a factor drawing a crowd of people

MEDICINE strong medicine
a tough remedy

MEDICINE to get a taste of one’s own medicine
to suffer from an initiative intended to affect only other persons

MEDICINE to take one’s medicine
to submit to something unpleasant but necessary

METEORIC meteoric rapid

MICROSCOPE to be under the microscope
to be the subject of close examination

MOMENTUM to have momentum
to move along forcefully

PENDULUM the swing of the pendulum
the alternation of voter acceptance between opposing political parties

PILL to be a bitter pill to swallow
to be a great humiliation and disappointment which have to be endured

PILL to sugar the pill
to cause something to be more acceptable

PLANET to be off the planet
to be extremely naive or uninformed

POLARIZE to polarize
to cause people to identify themselves as belonging to groups holding opposing views

PSYCHOLOGY at the psychological moment
at the most appropriate instant of time (a phrase which actually confuses the German word for “motive” with the term for an instant of time)

QUANTUM a quantum leap
a gigantic step forward

SCALES to tip the scales
to be a factor which in combination with other factors results in a particular decision which would otherwise not have been reached
SHOT a shot in the arm
something to revive a person’s enthusiasm

SKYROCKET to skyrocket
(of a price of value) to increase greatly in a short time

SOFTEN to soften someone up
to make a person more favorably disposed to one’s wishes

SPECTACLES to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

SPECTRUM spectrum
wide range of different opinions or backgrounds

STAR one can thank one’s lucky stars
one was extremely fortunate

STAR rising star
person making good progress in his career

STAR to have stars in one’s eyes (for emotional rather than rational reasons) to be ecstatic

STAR to shoot for the stars
to be unrealistic

TANGENT to go off at a tangent
to depart from the main matter under consideration and follow instead some other matter only marginally related to it

TONIC to be a tonic
to cheer someone up

TUNE to stay tuned
to keep in touch for further information as it becomes available

TUNE to tune in
to pay attention

VACUUM to fill a vacuum
to take advantage of an opportunity not acted on by others

VITRIOL to pour vitriol on something
to sharply criticize something

WATER to water down something
to reduce the severe impact of something

WAVELENGTH to be on the same wavelength
to think on similar lines

WAVELENGTH to be on the wrong wavelength
to be incorrect in one’s thinking

WHEEL to reinvent the wheel
to waste resources doing something already accomplished

WIRE to have one’s wires crossed
to be mistaken about key facts

SEX

BASTARD a bastard
an unpleasant person

BEAR not to have been born yesterday
not be naive

BEAR to be born on the wrong side of the blanket
to be illegitimate

BEAR to be born with a silver spoon in one’s mouth
to be brought up by wealthy parents

BIRTH to give birth to something
to create or invent something

EMASCULATE to emasculate something
to delete the essential features of something

JUMP to jump into bed with someone
to enter into a joint enterprise with another person

PULL to pull one’s fingers out
to get on with a job with alacrity
SPORT

AND neck and neck
(of contestants) with little between them
BACK to back the wrong horse
to have faith in, give support to and/or invest in a project which proves to be unsuccessful
BALL to be a new ball game
to be subject to completely revised rules or very different conditions
BALL to be in the right ballpark
to be approximately correct
BALL to be on the ball
to be fully informed
BALL to be right behind the eight ball
to be in a position of extreme disadvantage
BALL to have the ball at one's feet
to have unlimited opportunity
BALL to keep an eye on the ball
to monitor a fast-changing situation
BALL to keep the ball rolling
to take advantage of the existing momentum or to participate actively
BALL to keep up with the ball
to stay on top of the situation
BALL to pass the ball along
to cooperate with others
BALL to play ball
to cooperate
BALL to run with the ball
to make the most of the opportunity
BALL to start the ball rolling
to commence and enthusiastically advance an activity involving people
BALL to take one's bat and ball home
as a gesture of spite to remove an essential ingredient which one has contributed to a joint enterprise

BANDY to bandy something about
to discuss something in a light-hearted manner
BASE to get to first base
to succeed in getting others to start comprehending a problem
BAT off one's own bat
on a person's own initiative and without outside help
BAT to go in to bat for someone
to carry out a task on another person's behalf
BAT to maintain a straight bat
to be efficient
BAT to open the batting
to be the first in a series of persons speaking or doing something
BAT to take one's bat and ball home
as a gesture of spite to remove an essential ingredient which one has contributed to a joint enterprise

BELL saved by the bell
rescued before disaster strikes

BLOCK stumbling block
an impediment or difficulty preventing the easy completion of some project or a dilemma involving a moral issue

BLOW a blow-by-blow description
a description overburdened by unimportant or irrelevant detail
BLOW to soften the blow
to take action to reduce the trauma of bad news

BORE full bore ahead!
proceed forward!

BOX to shadow box
to go through the motions without achieving or intending to achieve anything

CANTER to win the prize in a canter
to win very easily
THEMATIC SECTION

SPORT

CANVAS to get off the canvas
to recover after near defeat

CHALK to win by a long chalk
to win very conclusively

COMPETE to compete on all fours
with someone
to strive on equal terms

COURT the ball is in someone’s
court
it is some other person’s responsibility

CRICKET a cricket team
eleven people

CRICKET not to be cricket
to be unfair

DRAW to draw first blood
to get an advantage

DUCK to break one’s duck
to end a spell without results

ELEVEN the second eleven
persons performing an important function
but one which is less important than
that performed by others (refers to cricket)

END to go off the deep end
to lose one’s temper

END to jump straight in at the deep end
to do something without a proper lead-in

FACE volte face
a reversal of previously-held beliefs
(French, “a turning around”)

FENCE to rush one’s fences
to act precipitately

FIELD a field day
a very enjoyable and successful occasion

FIELD a level playing field
competition on equal terms

FIELD to be ahead of the field
to be better than one’s competitors

FIELD to cover the field
to be comprehensive

FIELD to exhaust the field
to use up all the possibilities

FINISH a photo finish
a close result in a contest

FOOTBALL a political football
a political issue which is not being debated on its merits

GAME I’ll soon stop his little game
his activities are not tolerated and I will ensure that they cease

GAME a mug’s game
activity which wise persons would eschew

GAME fun and games
amusement derived in the course of a serious activity

GAME game, set and match
completion

GAME it is just a game to someone
it is an exercise which a person does not take seriously

GAME the game is up
escape is now impossible

GAME the only game in town
the only event worthy of attention

GAME to beat someone at his own game
to outwit a person in his own specialization

GAME to give the game away
to cease involvement with some activity

GAME to lift one’s game
to raise the standard of one’s performance
GAME to play a deep game
to show cunning

GAME to play the game
to observe the letter and the spirit of the rules or to act honorably

GAME to stick to one’s game
to confine oneself to activities in areas in which one has knowledge and expertise

GAME what is his game?
what is the significance of his actions?

GLOVE to take off the gloves
to fight mercilessly or to debate with great ferocity

GOAL to score a goal
to achieve an objective

GOAL to score an own goal
to blow oneself up

GOLD to go for the gold
to aim for victory (refers to Olympic medals)

GRANDSTAND to grandstand
to bignote oneself

GREYHOUND move over and let the greyhound see the rabbit
move over

GROUND to kiss the ground
to suffer a loss

GROUND to prepare one's ground
to get ready for a confrontation

GUARD to catch someone off guard
to surprise a person (a fencing term)

GUARD to slip under one's guard
to cause a mistake to be made despite care being taken to prevent this

GUN to jump the gun
to start before one is meant to

HEAVYWEIGHT a heavyweight
a person of importance or influence

HIT to hit someone below the belt
to act unfairly toward another person

HIT to hit someone for six
to damage a person’s cause (refers to cricket)

HOLD no holds barred
without any limitation

HOLD to hold someone at bay
to successfully resist an attacker

HOOK hook, line and sinker
wholly

HOP something is but a hop, skip and jump away
something is nearby

HURDLE to jump a hurdle
to overcome a problem or difficulty

HURDLE to jump that hurdle when one comes to it
to deal with a particular problem only when it becomes necessary to do so

INNINGS to have had a good innings
to have had a successful life (refers to cricket)

KEEPER to let something go to the keeper
to deliberately ignore a particular incident

KICK to kick off
to start some action

LAUREL to look to one’s laurels
to be careful not to lose one’s reputation for some skill

LAUREL to rest on one’s laurels
to use a reputation for success earned in earlier times as a substitute for current endeavor

LEAGUE to be in the same league
to have comparable skills

LEAP to leap frog something
to overtake something, with the likelihood of in turn being overtaken (refers to a game in which participants jump over each other in turn)
LIGHTWEIGHT lightweight uninfluential
LINE someone’s job is on the line a person’s career path is under consideration and/or his present position is at risk
LINE to be line ball to be equal
LOOK to need to look over one’s shoulder to be subject to attack which is not obvious
LURCH to leave someone in the lurch to desert a person who is in difficulties (refers to the score in certain games)
MARK to be first off the mark to start ahead of all others
MARK to be slow off the mark to be slow to start something
MARK to be up to the mark to be of the right standard
MARK to be wide off the mark to have a belief which is far removed from the true position
MARK to hit the mark to achieve one’s object or to make the correct decision (refers to archery)
MARK to overstep the mark to fail to observe the proprieties
MCCOY to be the real McCoy the genuine article (refers to an American boxer who became world welterweight champion in 1890)
OAR to stick one’s oar in to intervene without invitation in a dispute to which one is not a party
PACE to put someone through his paces to test a person
PACE to set the pace to give a lead in regard to a rate of progression
PADDLE to paddle one’s canoe to do something unaided and in one’s own way
PARRY to parry some argument to deflect some argument (refers to fencing)
PEDAL to backpedal to reverse to some extent previously applied policies
PEG to peg out to die (refers to the final stroke in a game of croquet)
PIN to pin someone down to find a person willing to accept blame or responsibility or to force a person to announce a decision or concede a point
PLAY foul play treachery or murder
PLAY to be in full play to be fully operational
PLAY to find out the state of play to ascertain the current position of some project
PLAY to play by Marquis of Queensberry rules to act ethically
PLAY to play by the book to apply the rules strictly
PLAY to play fast and loose to disregard one’s obligations
PLAY to play it safe to take no risks
PLAYERS a trap for young players a good opportunity for the inexperienced or naive to make mistakes
PLUNGE to take the plunge to expose oneself to certain risks
POINT to score points to make a good impression
POINT to score top points to outwit other persons
POST  to pip someone at the post
      to achieve something only just ahead
      of a rival

PRESERVES  to poach on someone’s
      preserves
      to encroach uninvited on another per-
      son’s territory

PRIZE  not to be here to win prizes
      to be altruistic

PRIZE  to win the booby prize
      to do worse than all others

PUNCH  to be punch drunk
      to be stupefied by some news

PUNCH  to beat someone to the
      punch
      to get to some objective ahead of
      some keen rival

PUNCH  to telegraph one’s punches
      by one’s actions to give advance warn-
      ing of one’s future plans

RACE  not to be in the race
      to lack the required standard

RACE  rat race
      pressures of modern living

RACE  your race is run
      you have had your opportunity

REIN  to take over the reins
      to assume control

RIDE  riding instructions
      directions as to how to do something

RIDE  to be riding for a fall
      to act in a reckless manner

RIDE  to ride high
      to be successful but vulnerable

RIDE  to ride roughshod over
      someone
      to disregard the feelings and wishes
      of a person

RING  to jump into the ring
      to join in enthusiastically

RING  to step into the ring
      to enter a competitive environment

RING  to throw one’s hat into the
      ring
      to publicly announce one’s interest in
      some position

ROPE  to be on the ropes
      to be facing defeat

ROUND  to be only round one
      to be only the first of many stages

ROUND  to win some rounds
      to be partly successful

RUB  here’s the rub
      this is where a difficulty arises (a
      term used in bowling)

RUN  to be up and running
      to be operative

RUN  to have a run for one’s money
      to at least get some enjoyment out of
      an otherwise abortive exercise

RUN  to have the runs on the board
      to have a demonstrable record of
      achievement

RUNNER  front-runner
      person expected to win

SADDLE  to be in the saddle
      to be in command

SCORE  to even the score
      to get one’s own back for some past
      action

SCORE  to score a point
      to make a clever contribution in the
      course of debate

SCORE  to see the score
      to appreciate the reality of a situation

SCRATCH  to be back to scratch
      to have to start all over again

SCRATCH  to be up to scratch
      to be of the required standard

SCRATCH  to start from behind
      scratch
      to be faced with a handicap

SCRATCH  to start from scratch
      to commence something without the
      benefit of any past activity
THEMATIC SECTION

THEATER

SHOOT to be on a slippery shoot to court disaster
SIDE LINE to sit on the sidelines not to take part in the main action
SIT to be a sitting duck to be readily exploited
SKATE to get one’s skates on to hurry up
SKATE to skate around some subject by diversionary tactics to avoid discussing some subject
SKITTLES not to be all beer and skittles not to be all pleasant and easy
SOMERSAULT to turn a complete somersault to reverse one’s established policy
SPASH to make a splash to create a sensation
SPONGE to throw up the sponge to concede defeat
SPRINGBOARD a springboard a situation from which one intends to make a rapid advance
START to have a head start to have an advantage over others
STRAP to hit the straps to really get going
STRETCH to enter the home stretch to commence the last stage
STROKE a master stroke particularly brilliant action
STUMPS until stumps are drawn until the project ends (refers to cricket)
SWIM it is a case of sink or swim the attempt is worthwhile, despite the risk of failure
SWIM to be in the swim to be a member of a group knowing what is going on
SWIM to swim against the tide to take up a minority position

TOWEL to throw in the towel to concede defeat
TRACK track record proven performance
TUG a tug of war a dispute in which each protagonist desires a different course of action
TURF to be on one’s own turf to engage in one’s own customary area of activity
WALKOVER a walkover an easy victory
WARM to warm up to get ready
WICKET to be on a sticky wicket to face some difficulties (refers to cricket)
WINNER to be on a winner to have faith in, give support to and/or invest in a project which proves to be successful
WOODEN to get the wooden spoon to come ingloriously last

THEATER

ACT to be a hard act to follow to be an impressive performance, not easily matched by the next person
ACT to clean up one’s act to fix up the deficiencies in one’s affairs
ACT to get in on the act to participate in some activity started by others
ACT to get one’s act together to organize one’s activities so as to make them efficient
AILSE to have an audience rolling in the aisles to amuse an audience
BOW to bow out to retire from some activity
THEATER

THEMATIC SECTION

BOW to take a bow
to receive recognition

CHARADE to act out a charade
ostentatiously to pretend to be doing
something in an ethical fashion

CHOREOGRAPH to choreograph
something
to organize the detail of who does
what and when in a project

COMEDY a comedy of errors
a series of separate mistakes in relation to some matter (name of a Shake-
speare play)

CURTAIN curtain raiser
introduction

CURTAIN it's curtains!
this is the end!

CURTAIN the curtain rises on
something
something is about to start

CURTAIN to ring down the curtain
on something
to treat something as concluded

DANCE nothing to make a song or
dance about
unexciting or unimportant

DANCE to lead someone a merry
dance
to mislead a person

DANCE to make a song and dance
about something
to create a fuss

DANSE danse macabre
gruesome final step (French, "ghast-
ly dance")

FRANKENSTEIN to create a
Frankenstein
to create something wicked and out
of control (a reference to the fictional
creator of a monster, in mistake for a
reference to the monster itself)

GALLERY to play to the gallery
to do something which appeals to the
general public rather than something
which is right

LIGHT to be the leading light
to be the most important person in a
venture

LIMELIGHT to be in the limelight
to be exposed to public attention

PART to play one's part
to cooperate or carry out one's obli-
gations under some arrangement

REHEARSAL dress rehearsal
preliminary skirmish

SCENARIO scenario
details of arrangements

SCENE behind the scenes
out of public view or awareness

SCENE to make a scene
to create a fuss

SCENE to quit the scene
to depart

SCENE to set the scene for
something
to get things ready for something

SEAT to be on the edge of one's seat
to be very excited at what is currently
happening

SHOW the show must go on
despite difficulties the action in con-
templation has to proceed

SHOW to get the show on the road
to commence a planned activity

SHOW to give the show away
to indiscreetly reveal sensitive infor-
mation

SHOW to steal the show
to have the maximum appeal to those
watching

SIDESHOW a sideshow
an unimportant adjunct

SIXTY-FOUR a sixty-four thousand
dollar question
a pertinent but very difficult question
(refers to a TV show in which an
initial prize doubles with the success-
ful answering of progressively more
difficult questions)

406
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>THEMATIC SECTION</strong></th>
<th><strong>TRANSPORT</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPOTLIGHT</strong> to steal the spotlight</td>
<td><strong>BOX</strong> to be in the box seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to set out to be the center of attention</td>
<td>to be in a very powerful position to control activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAGE</strong> the stage is set</td>
<td><strong>BRAKE</strong> to put the brake on someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>something is about to happen</td>
<td>to stop a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAGE</strong> to be center stage</td>
<td><strong>BUGGY</strong> the horse and buggy days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to have everyone’s attention</td>
<td>long ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAGE</strong> to be on a world stage</td>
<td><strong>BUS</strong> the wheels are back under the bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be prominent in international affairs</td>
<td>normal activity has been resumed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAGE</strong> to stage-manage something</td>
<td><strong>BUS</strong> to jump on the bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to arrange how something happens</td>
<td>to join an activity already well under way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEAL</strong> to steal someone’s thunder</td>
<td><strong>BUS</strong> to miss the bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to take credit for another person’s good work</td>
<td>to fail to exploit an opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(refers to a dispute over the copying of a machine invented by a 17th-century dramatist to reproduce the sound of thunder during a play)</td>
<td><strong>BUSMAN</strong> a busman’s holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRING</strong> to pull strings</td>
<td>leisure time spent in a way not significantly different from one’s normal business activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to use one’s special influence with those in a position to make favorable decisions which might otherwise not be forthcoming</td>
<td><strong>CAB</strong> to be the first cab off the rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRICK</strong> a whole bag of tricks</td>
<td>to start ahead of all others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a series of articles or a series of artificial devices</td>
<td><strong>CARAVAN</strong> the caravan will roll on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UPSTAGE</strong> to upstage someone</td>
<td>the activity will continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to deprive another person of the glory which he would otherwise have enjoyed</td>
<td><strong>CARRY</strong> to be carried away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be excited by something imaginative</td>
<td>to be excited by something imaginative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WING</strong> to wait in the wings</td>
<td><strong>CART</strong> to put the cart before the horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be prepared to stay unobtrusive till the appropriate time for action arrives</td>
<td>to do things in the wrong order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRANSPORT</strong></td>
<td><strong>CART</strong> to upset the applecart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALLEY</strong> to be up one’s alley</td>
<td>to engage in conduct disturbing a peaceful state of affairs and thereby cause discomfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be right within a person’s expertise of area of interest</td>
<td><strong>CLASS</strong> to be first class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be very satisfactory</td>
<td>to very satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALLEY</strong> to rush into a blind alley</td>
<td><strong>COACH</strong> an opening wide enough to drive a coach and four through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to make a precipitate move which does not lead one anywhere</td>
<td>an excellent opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AVENUE</strong> avenue</td>
<td><strong>COACH</strong> to drive a coach and horses through something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>method of approach</td>
<td>to demonstrate major errors in something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRANSPORT

COLLISION to be on a collision course
to be headed for a clash with an opponent

COOK a Cook's tour
a guided tour of inspection (refers to Thomas Cook, the travel company)

COVENTRY to send someone to Coventry
to ostentatiously and collectively ignore a person by way of punishment

CREEK to be up the creek
to be completely mistaken

CYLINDER to spark on all cylinders
to work extremely well

DERAIL to derail some strategy
to cause a strategy to fail

DRIFT to drift apart
to lose contact or to change feelings once held in common

DRIVE to drive someone from pillar to post
to send a person to a series of places in a vain attempt to achieve something

DRIVE to drive someone up the wall
to annoy another person by one's actions

DRIVER a backseat driver
a person seeking to exercise control

DRIVER to be in the driver's seat
to be in charge

GARAGE garage sale
sale of miscellaneous assets at cheap prices

GEAR to be geared up to do something
to have equipment, labor and know-how in place adequate for some task

GEAR to be in top gear
to be making excellent progress

GRADE to be on the downgrade
to be of deteriorating quality

HALT to grind to a halt
to cease some activity despite expectations that it would continue

HAUL for the long haul
as a long-term proposition

LANE life in the fast lane
existence full of exciting but worthless activity

MILEAGE to get some mileage out of something
to benefit from something

NOTCH to move down a notch
to accept a lower position

PASSPORT to be a passport to success
to be a means of achieving success

PEDESTRIAN pedestrian
uninspired

POLE to be poles apart
to have ideas which are very different

POST a staging post
a place where action is initiated

POST to go post haste
to go very fast

POWER under one's own power
without external help

RAIL to run off the rails
significantly depart from the intended course of action

RAILROAD to railroad something through
to rush people into accepting a proposal

RAILWAY what a way to run a railway!
the way things are done is disgraceful (refers to a cartoon)

RIDE to get a magic carpet ride to something
to be very fortunate in achieving some objective

RIDE to get an armchair ride
to be given a particularly easy time
RIDE to go along for the ride
to seek to benefit from a project in
which others contribute the effort

RIDE to take someone for a ride
to deceive a person

ROAD a middle-of-the-road solution
a solution near the middle of a range
of possibilities

ROAD all roads lead to Rome
all alternatives will have the same
outcome

ROAD fork in the road
turning point for decisions

ROAD one for the road
a final drink before leaving

ROAD roadblocks
difficulties

ROAD the royal road to success
the way of attaining success without
effort

ROAD this is the end of the road
for someone
a person will have no further oppor-
tunity to do something

ROAD to be at the crossroads
to need to choose between several
mutually exclusive alternatives

ROAD to enter a long road
to commence a task which will take a
long time

ROAD to face a rocky road ahead
to be likely to encounter difficulties

ROAD to go down a particular road
to adopt a particular strategy

ROAD to happen down the road
to happen later

ROAD to road test something
to try something out under real condi-
tions

ROAD to set someone on the right
road
to show a person how to go about
doing something

SEAT to take a backseat
not to actively involve oneself

STEAM full steam ahead!
get going as fast as possible!

STEAM to develop a head of steam
to gain momentum

STEAM to let off steam
to engage in noisy or robust activity
as a form of relaxation

STEAM to lose steam
to slow down

STEAM to run out of steam
to lose one’s energy and enthusiasm

STEAM under one’s own steam
without external help

STOP to come to a full stop
to completely cease activity

STOP to pull out all stops
to make maximum effort

STREAM to get on stream
to now operate successfully following
the end of a settling-in period

STREET a one-way street
a flow of activity in only one direction

STREET not to be in the same street
as someone
not to be of comparable quality

STREET the man in the street
the average citizen

STREET to be streets ahead
to outperform one’s competitors by a
wide margin

STREET to walk in off the street
to come without prior arrangement or
notification

TIRE to carry a spare tire
to be fat

TRAIL to blaze a trail
to be the first person to do something

TRAIN to get on a gravy train
to take steps to become a recipient of
benefits which are available but unde-
served
TRAIN to miss the train
to fail to exploit an opportunity

TRAM to be on the wrong tram
to be completely mistaken as to the basic facts

TRUCK it fell off the back of a truck
it was leaked to me

TUNNEL to see the light at the end of the tunnel
to be close to finalizing a long exercise

U-TURN to do a U-turn
to reverse one’s thinking

WAGON to be on the water wagon
to be teetotal

WAY to stand in someone’s way
to prevent a person achieving his goal

WHEEL the squeaky wheel gets the most attention
those complaining the most loudly will get their problems sorted out first

WHEEL the wheel has turned
circumstances have changed

WHEEL the wheel has turned the complete circle
things are now back to where they were before

WHEEL the wheels fell off
the plan failed

WHEEL to be a fifth wheel
to be superfluous

WHEEL to make the wheels go round
to cause something to happen

WHEEL to put a spoke in someone’s wheel
to interfere with another person’s activity, so preventing its continuance

WHEEL to wheel someone in
to bring a person along for a confrontation

WAR AND MILITARY

AMMUNITION ammunition
arguments helpful to a case

ARM to be armed to the teeth
to carry many weapons

ARMOR a chink in someone’s armor
an opportunity to do something which otherwise could not be done

ARMOR a knight in shining armor
a very helpful person

ARMS to be up in arms against something
to express violent opposition to a proposal

ARROW another arrow in one’s quiver
an additional reason

AX an old battle-ax
a hostile woman

BARREL with both barrels blazing
with great intensity

BASTION the last bastion
the only remaining defensive measure

BATON to have a field marshal’s baton in one’s kit
to be ambitious

BATTLE a battle royal
a fight or argument with many simultaneous participants

BATTLE to fight an uphill battle
to face difficulties or to have formidable opposition

BATTLESSHIP enough to sink a battleship
more than sufficient

BEARER a standard bearer
a highly visible activist for a cause

BOLT to shoot one’s bolt
to lose one’s temper

BOMB a bombshell
an unpleasant surprise

BOMB a time bomb
a source of serious problems which are certain to surface later on

BOMB to be a bomb
to be grossly defective
THEMATIC SECTION

WAR AND MILITARY

BOMB to put a bomb under someone
to induce a person to take some action

BOMBARD to bombard someone
with something
to overwhelm a person with material
or to persistently assail a person with
words of argument or abuse

BOW to draw a long bow
to state a conclusion which while
possible is unlikely on the known
facts

BREACH once more unto the breach
let us get on with the task (from
Shakespeare’s HENRY V)

BREACH to stand in the breach
to bear the brunt of criticisms

BRIDGEHEAD a bridgehead
an advanced post set up to facilitate
further access to some new market,
etc.

BROADSIDE a broadside
a short verbal attack

BULLET a gun with no bullets
something incomplete and therefore
useless for the desire purpose

BULLET to bite the bullet
to face up to the difficulties of a
situation

BULLET to have a bullet which can
be fired
to have available an effective response
which can be used at will

BURN to burn one’s bridges
to do something irreversible

CAMP in our camp
in the group representing our vested
interest

CANNON a loose cannon on the
deck
a mistake likely to cause trouble

CATAPULT to catapult
(of sales, etc.) to increase rapidly

CATAPULT to catapult to fame
to achieve fame unexpectedly quickly

CATCH catch-22
a situation made impossible because
it requires as a prior fulfillment some-
thing which does not exist until that
condition is satisfied (title of a novel
by Joseph Heller)

COCK to go off half-cocked
to act without adequate thought or
preparation (refers to a gun at the
half-ready)

COLUMNIST a fifth columnist
a person using his position of trust to
work for a rival cause

COMMAND to be in a commanding
position
to have a strategic advantage

COMMAND to be in command
to be on top of a situation

CORPS esprit de corps
a feeling of camaraderie and concern
for the good name of some organiza-
tion of which one is a member (French,
“vital breath of a body”)

CUDGEL to take up the cudgels for
someone
to defend a person

DAGGER cloak and dagger activity
secret activity

DAGGER to look daggers at
someone
to look at a person in a way which
indicates great animosity

DECIMATE to decimate
to greatly reduce in size (often used
in the sense of “to reduce to one
tenth,” although the original meaning
was “to reduce by one tenth”)

DECIPHER to decipher something
to understand the significance of
something

DEVASTATE to be devastated
to be extremely disappointed

DISASTER a pit of disaster
great and unexpected misfortune
DISPATCH to be mentioned in dispatches
to be favorably mentioned (refers to military recognition for bravery)

DITCH to make a last-ditch stand
to make a brave effort to stave off final defeat

DRAW to be quick on the draw
to act precipitately

DRUM to drum someone out of some organization
to terminate in ignominy a person’s employment or membership (refers to the ceremonial cashiering in the army to the beating of parade drums)

DYNAMITE to be dynamite
to cause outrage

DYNAMITE to play with dynamite
to invite trouble by virtue of one’s risky conduct

EXPLODE to explode
(of a person) to express rage

FIRE sure-fire
guaranteed

FIRE to be in the firing line
to be among the first to be under attack

FIRE to draw fire
to encounter criticism

FIRE to hang fire
to take no immediate action

FIRE to hold fire
to defer criticizing

FIRE to hold one’s fire
to delay proposed action

FLAK to attract flak
to attract criticism

FORCE to join forces
to cooperate with one another in order to achieve a common objective

FORT to hold the fort
to be in charge during the temporary absence of a superior

GAUNTLET to run the gauntlet
to be subjected to criticism (from the Spanish word for “passage,” in reference to punishment inflicted on delinquents made to run between two files of soldiers)

GROUND to gain ground
to advance one’s position relative to others

GUARD new guard
changed regime

GUN a gun with no bullets
something incomplete and therefore useless for the desired purpose

GUN a scattergun approach
an effort going here, there and everywhere, instead of being properly targeted

GUN to be a gun for hire
to be a person willing to undertake assignments for a fee

GUN to be going great guns
to be making very successful progress

GUN to be great guns at something
to be very skilled at something

GUN to bring out one’s biggest guns
to use the most impressive persons or arguments

GUN to hold a gun at someone’s head
to put pressure on a person to make a particular decision regardless of his desires in the matter

GUN to look down the barrel of a gun
to be given little choice in a matter

GUN to outgun someone
to outmaneuver a person

GUN to spike someone’s guns
to cause something to become useless

GUN to stick to one’s guns
to continue to hold certain beliefs notwithstanding opposition by others
THEMATIC SECTION

WAR AND MILITARY

GUN to turn one’s guns on someone
to criticize a person

HATCHET to bury the hatchet
to abandon hostilities

HERO to make a hero of oneself
to curry favors

HILT to the hilt
to the maximum extent

LAND to ascertain the lay of the land
to establish the pertinent facts and opinions

LINE to be out of line
to adopt a stance not held by others

LINE to fall into line
to conform with others

LINE to put one’s reputation on the line
to take a public stance in the realization that there is a risk that one’s reputation will suffer if one is proved wrong

LINE to step out of line
to infringe accepted rules of behavior

LOCK lock, stock and barrel
to the maximum extent

MARCH in the course of a day’s march
while carrying out one’s normal activities

MARINE tell it to the marines
such nonsense is not believable

MINE a minefield
a source of great hidden danger or of difficulties not obvious on a first encounter

ORDER the order of the day
the customary behavior

ORDER to get one’s marching orders
to be told to leave

OVERKILL overkill
more action than really required for the purpose

PACKDRILL no names—no packdrill
the identities of the parties will be kept confidential in order to protect them

PASSWORD the password is so-and-so
the main attraction is so-and-so

PETARD to be hoist with one’s own petard
to have one’s own case used against one (refers to being blown up by one’s own bomb)

POINT to refuse point blank
to refuse outright

POTSHOT to take a potshot at someone
to make disparaging remarks about a person

POWDER to keep one’s powder dry
to retain key arguments or resources in reserve for use later

RANK to break ranks
to identify oneself as having separate interests or views from the rest of a group

RANK to close ranks
to sink minor differences in order to present a unified front to a common enemy

READ to read between the lines
to appreciate the true significance of something not put into words

RETREAT to beat a retreat
to abandon some project

ROCKET to give someone a rocket
to severely reprimand a person

ROCKET to put a rocket under someone
to induce a person to take some action

ROCKET to skyrocket
(of a price or value) to increase greatly in a short time
SABER  saber rattling  
hints of retribution if certain conduct does not cease

SALVO  to fire a salvo at someone  
to present a series of criticisms to a person

SHELL  to be shell-shocked  
to be stunned by unexpected bad news

SHOOT  a straight shooter  
a person who is frank and outspoken

SHOOT  a troubleshooter  
a person good at finding and then rectifying faults

SHOOT  shoot!  
go on, speak!

SHOOT  the whole shooting match  
the whole lot

SHOOT  to be shot to pieces  
to have one's case seriously damaged

SHOOT  to be shot to ribbons  
(of an argument) to be utterly discredited

SHOOT  to shoot from the hip  
to speak frankly and openly

SHOOT  to shoot one's mouth off  
to speak without thinking

SHOOT  to shoot someone down in flames  
to utterly destroy another person's arguments

SHOT  a big shot  
an important person

SHOT  a shot in the dark  
an intelligent or lucky guess

SHOT  a sitting shot  
an initial move which is designated to establish facts for use in a later action

SHOT  opening shot  
first step in an activity expected to last a long time

SHOT  shots across the bow  
warnings

SHOT  that is a long shot  
there is only a remote possibility

SHOT  to be a sitting shot  
to be a person whose actions make him very vulnerable to criticism

SHOT  to beat by a long shot  
to defeat very convincingly

SHOT  to call the shots  
to have the direction over a project

SHOT  to fire a parting shot  
to make a defiant gesture on leaving

SHOT  to give one's best shot  
to make the best attempt possible

SHOT  to have a shot at someone  
to use subtly chosen words implying friendly criticism but designed to embarrass another person

SHOT  to have a shot at something  
to attempt to achieve something

SIGHT  to lower one's sights  
to reduce one's ambition

SIGHT  to set one's sights on something  
to aim to achieve something

SIGNAL  to send a smoke signal  
to given an indication

SMOKE  to set up a smokescreen  
to deliberately confuse an issue by disguising its salient features

SMOKE  when the smoke clears  
when sufficient time has passed

SOLDIER  to be a brave soldier  
to be brave

SOLDIER  to soldier on  
to carry on despite difficulties

SPEARHEAD  to spearhead something  
to lead a movement

SPUR  to win one's spurs  
to gain recognition after a period of effort (refers to the earning of a knighthood in battle)
STANDOFF a Mexican standoff
a situation where neither of two parties is making a move

STORM to barnstorm
to visit accompanied by a show of force

STREET there is blood in the streets
much damage has been done to a cause

STRIKE to be within striking distance
to be fairly close

STRIPE to earn one's stripes
to deserve promotion

SWORD to be a two-edged sword
to involve both advantages and disadvantages of similar significance

SWORD to cross swords with someone
to have a disagreement with another person

SWORD to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one
to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one

SWORD to hold a sword at someone's throat
to exert undue pressure on another person in an endeavor to achieve a result which would otherwise not be forthcoming

TARGET a moving target
an objective subject to constant revision

TARGET target
objective

TOWER to be in an ivory tower
to be emersed in theoretical considerations and ignorant of the practical realities (Song of Solomon 7:4)

TRENCH to be back in the trenches
to be made to carry out menial tasks

TRIGGER to be trigger-happy
to be impetuous

TRIGGER trigger
factor responsible for certain events occurring at that particular time

TROOPER to be a real trooper
to be a person willing to try anything

VANGUARD to be at the vanguard of something
to be among the first to do something

VICTORY a Pyrrhic victory
a win which costs more than if there had been a loss (refers to the battle at which King Pyrrhus of Epirus defeated the Romans at Asculum)

VOLLEY to fire a volley at someone
to send a series of angry messages to someone

WAR the cold war
the unfriendly relations between the communist nations and the rest of the world

WAR to be on the warpath
to be on the lookout for faults which can be criticized

WARFARE paper warfare
an excessive amount of correspondence or red tape

WEAPON to use all the weapons at one's disposal
to utilize all available advantages
### ABUSE

- **give him an inch and he will take a mile**
- make him a small concession and he will abuse it by taking much more
- **to feel the rough side of someone's tongue**
- to be verbally abused by a person
- **to get one's head blown off**
- to be very soundly abused
- **to get the rounds of the kitchen**
  (of a husband) to be subject to personal abuse by his wife
- **to give someone a piece of one's mind**
- to abuse another person
- **to kick someone around**
- to abuse a person

### ACHIEVEMENT

- **a Goliath**
  a giant or a person whose ability and achievements exceed those of most other people (1 Samuel 17)
- **a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush**
  a benefit currently available is more valuable than a seemingly much larger benefit which may or may not be achieved in the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a crusade</td>
<td>an aggressive campaign to achieve some political or social objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a feather in one's cap</td>
<td>a meritorious personal achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a giant</td>
<td>a person whose ability and achievements exceed those of most other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a milestone</td>
<td>an achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a recipe for disaster</td>
<td>a certain way of achieving disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a warm inner glow</td>
<td>satisfaction at some achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gateway to something</td>
<td>method of achieving something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heartburn</td>
<td>regret at some non-achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is no use crying over spilt milk</td>
<td>lamenting over a disaster achieves nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it was touch and go</td>
<td>there were considerable risks—the objective was achieved, but only just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one can't make bricks without straw</td>
<td>one cannot achieve results in the absence of adequate resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
one would give one's eye teeth for something
a person would very much like to achieve some objective

path
means of achieving an objective

pie in the sky
a hoped-for result unlikely to be achieved

something has done the trick
something has achieved the desired purpose

the crowning point
the height of a person's achievement

the river found its mark
equilibrium between two pressures has been achieved

there are many ways to cook eggs
there are many ways to achieve an objective

there is more than one way to skin a cat
this can be achieved in a variety of acceptable ways

to achieve a flying start
to get operational very quickly

to be a passport to success
to be a means of achieving success

to be hell bent on something
to be very determined to achieve something, regardless of the adverse consequences

to be only a gleam in one's eyes
to be a long way from final achievement

to be unable to take a trick
to be unable to achieve success in anything

to be up against a brick wall
to be unable to achieve anything because of intractable opposition or apathy

to catapult to fame
to achieve fame unexpectedly quickly

to deliver the goods
to achieve the objective

to drive someone from pillar to post
to send a person to a series of places in a vain attempt to achieve something

to gain a foothold
to achieve a position from which further advances can readily be made

to get a magic carpet ride to something
to be very fortunate in achieving some objective

to get something under one's belt
to achieve something

to get the worst of all worlds
to get a series of disadvantages without achieving any corresponding advantages

to have a shot at something
to attempt to achieve something

to have one's heart set on something
to be very keen to achieve something

to have one's work cut out to do something
it will be difficult to achieve something

to have the runs on the board
to have a demonstrable record of achievement

to head someone in the right direction
to assist a person to achieve something

to heave a sigh of relief
to express satisfaction at the achievement of a solution to a difficult problem

to hit the mark
to achieve one's object or to make the correct decision (refers to archery)

to hold a knife at someone's throat
to exert undue pressure on another person in an endeavor to achieve a result which would otherwise not be forthcoming

to hold a sword at someone's throat
to exert undue pressure on another person in an endeavor to achieve a result which would otherwise not be forthcoming
to join forces
  to cooperate with one another in order to achieve a common objective

to kill two birds with one stone
  to achieve a second objective in the course of achieving the first objective

to land something
  to achieve something

to let blood
  to allow some harm as the price for achieving some greater benefit

to mend fences
  to achieve a reconciliation

to pip someone at the post
  to achieve something only just ahead of a rival

To pull something off
  to achieve success in some enterprise

To put one's back into something
  to work hard at achieving some goal

To salvage something out of the wreck
  to achieve some minor benefits out of a disastrous situation

To score a goal
  to achieve an objective

To set a hare running
  in order to achieve some desired effect, to initiate some related activity

To set one's sights on something
  to aim to achieve something

To shadow box
  to go through the motions without achieving or intending to achieve anything

To stand in someone's way
  to prevent a person achieving his goal

To steamroll something through
  to use enormous force to achieve an objective

To throw one's cap into the air
  to celebrate some achievement

to throw one's weight about
  to use one's real or imagined status in order to achieve certain results

to walk away with a profit
  to achieve a profit on concluding a project

to waste one's breath
  to talk or request something without achieving anything

Without any cards to play
  without the means to achieve something

ACTIVITY

I'll soon stop his little game
  his activities are not tolerated and I will ensure that they cease

A backwater
  a place of little activity

A busman's holiday
  leisure time spent in a way not significantly different from one's normal business activities

A cobbler should stick to his last
  every person should confine himself to activities for which he has been trained

A honeymoon
  a short period enjoyed by a newcomer to some activity before his performance is criticized

A logjam
  a stoppage of activity caused by input in greater volume than allowed for

A mug's game
  activity which wise persons would eschew

A one-way street
  a flow of activity in only one direction

A standard bearer
  a highly visible activist for a cause

A watershed
  an occasion dividing two distinct phases of activity
across the board
over the whole range of activity

behind someone's back
in a way which deliberately conceals an activity from a person

blueprint
a master plan for some activity or a model which others can copy

cloak and dagger activity
secret activity

distant fields look greener
activities of which one has no experience seem much easier than is really the case

early in the piece
at an early stage of some activity

fun and games
amusement derived in the course of a serious activity

in the course of a day's march
while carrying out one's normal activities

it is a long time between drinks
activity is occurring only very spasmodically

it takes two to tango
some activities cannot be carried out single-handedly

kingmaker
person engaging in behind-the-scenes activities to promote another person to a particular leadership position

life in the fast lane
existence full of exciting but worthless activity

monkey business
mischievous or underhand activity

nimble-footed
quick to change the direction of one's activities when circumstances warrant

opening shot
first-step in an activity expected to last a long time

someone's number is up
a person's period of activity or influence is about to expire

the caravan will roll on
the activity will continue

the coast is clear
there are no observers to one's activity around

the wheels are back under the bus
normal activity has been resumed

the whole gamut
the whole range of some activity

the world is one's oyster
one has enormous scope for activity

to be at fever pitch
to be in a state of excited activity

to be in full swing
to be very active

to be in the box seat
to be in a very powerful position to control activity

to be in the doldrums
to be depressed or to show no activity (refers to a region of little wind near the equator, becalming sailing ships)

to be in the thick of things
to get involved at the center of some activity

to be on a treadmill
to be involved in some unpleasant ongoing activity which cannot readily be stopped

to be on one's own turf
to engage in one's own customary area of activity

to be on someone's cabbage patch
to engage in a competitive activity in a territory regarded by someone already there as rightfully belonging exclusively to him

to be riveted to one's seat
to find the activity being watched very exciting and worthy of full attention
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>THESAURUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to be tied down</td>
<td>to have one's fingers in many different pies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to have responsibilities precluding alternative activities</td>
<td>to be engaged in a variety of separate activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to bow out</td>
<td>to have the plug pulled out from under one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to retire from some activity</td>
<td>to have a successful activity destroyed by the actions of someone else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to call it a day</td>
<td>to hedge one's bets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cease involvement with some activity</td>
<td>to take action involving a cost but which is designed to reduce the possible adverse consequences of some activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to catch someone in the net</td>
<td>to get one's act together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to unexpectedly involve a particular person in the course of activity designed to involve many others</td>
<td>to organize one's activities so as to make them efficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to close the book on something</td>
<td>to get in on the act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to terminate an activity</td>
<td>to participate in some activity started by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to come to a full stop</td>
<td>to do a hatchet job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to completely cease activity</td>
<td>to destroy some existing activity or to ruin a person's credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do a hatchet job</td>
<td>to get one's act together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to destroy some existing activity or to ruin a person's credibility</td>
<td>to organize one's activities so as to make them efficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get in on the act</td>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to participate in some activity started by others</td>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get one's act together</td>
<td>to give the game away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to organize one's activities so as to make them efficient</td>
<td>to cease involvement with some activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do a hatchet job</td>
<td>to go to sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to destroy some existing activity or to ruin a person's credibility</td>
<td>to grind to a halt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to cease activity despite expectations that it would continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to gum up the works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to cause an activity to be halted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do a hatchet job</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to destroy some existing activity or to ruin a person's credibility</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to have a tiger by the tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to nip something in the bud
to stop some activity in its early stages when stopping it is still relatively easy

to pick up the pieces
to resume previous activities to the maximum extent possible after some setback

to plow new ground
to laboriously engage in an untried activity

to plow on
to methodically and painstakingly continue with an activity

to put a spoke in someone's wheel
to interfere with another person's activity, so preventing its continuance

to put something on 'hold'
to put something aside for the time being with a view to resuming activity later on (refers to the telephone)

to put up the shutters
to cease an established activity

to run around in circles
to engage in excited but useless activity

to set a hare running
in order to achieve some desired effect, to initiate some related activity

to shut up shop
to cease an established activity

to start from scratch
to commence something without the benefit of any past activity

to start the ball rolling
to commence and enthusiastically advance an activity involving people

to stick to one's game
to confine oneself to activities in areas in which one has knowledge and expertise

to take a backseat
not to actively involve oneself

to try one's hand at something
to attempt a new activity, especially by way of experiment

to twiddle one's thumbs
not to be involved in any worthwhile activity

ADVANTAGE

a lame dog
a person under some disadvantage needing attention and assistance

a mixed bag
some advantages and some disadvantages

a soul-searching exercise
an examination of the advantages and disadvantages of a proposal

bargaining chips
benefits which can be conceded in negotiations in order to obtain some advantage

leech
person taking undue advantage of others

the cure is worse than the disease
the remedy involves more disadvantages than if it were not applied

the early bird gets the worm
a person who acts ahead of others gets an advantage over them

the upside
the advantage

to be a two-edged sword
to involve both advantages and disadvantages of similar significance

to be in a commanding position
to have a strategic advantage

to be quick on one's feet
to cleverly take advantage of a situation

to be right behind the eight ball
to be in a position of extreme disadvantage
to cut both ways
to involve both advantages and disadvantages of similar significance

to draw first blood
to get an advantage

to expose one's flank
to allow others to take advantage of one

to feather one's own nest
to improperly arrange a transaction on behalf of others to one's own financial advantage

to fill a vacuum
to take advantage of an opportunity not acted on by others

to gain the upper hand
to attain, after some effort, an advantage over another person

to get the jump on someone
to get an advantage over a person

to get the worst of all worlds
to get a series of disadvantages without achieving any corresponding advantages

to give someone the edge
to give a person an advantage over others

to have a head start
to have an advantage over others

to have a leading edge
to have an advantage

to have someone over a barrel
to take advantage of someone's weakened position in relation to oneself

to have the high ground
to have an advantage in moral terms

to hijack a debate
to involve oneself in the public discussion of some matter and turn that discussion to one's advantage

to jump at the opportunity
to enthusiastically take immediate advantage of a good chance

to keep the ball rolling
to take advantage of the existing momentum or to participate actively

to kick a man when he is down
to take unfair advantage of a person already in difficulty

to make a rod for one's own back
to act in disregard of likely disadvantages for oneself

to play right into someone's hands
to act so as to give a person an unintended advantage

to run with something
to take advantage of some current development

to see something through rose-colored spectacles
to appreciate only the advantages and to completely disregard the disadvantages

to squeeze the last drop out of something
to get the maximum advantage out of some favorable situation

to strike while the iron is hot
to take advantage of a situation which cannot last

to suck the lemon dry
to get the maximum advantage out of some favorable situation

to take something lying down
to accept a disadvantage without protest

to take up the slack
to take advantage of surplus capacity

to throw out the baby with the bathwater
to discard a major benefit in the course of obtaining a comparatively minor advantage

to use all the weapons at one's disposal
to utilize all available advantages

to want the best of both worlds
to unreasonably desire to get some advantage without incurring a corresponding disadvantage
THESAURUS

what one loses on the swings one gains on the roundabouts
there are advantages and disadvantages which offset each other

AGREEMENT

a bone of contention
the subject matter of violent disagreement

a sweetheart deal
an agreement negotiated in private without full regard to the interests of those affected

that washes with me
I agree

to be at odds with someone
to disagree with a person

to be of one mind
(of several people) to be agreed

to come to the party
to agree to someone’s terms

to cross swords with someone
to have a disagreement with another person

to lock someone into some arrangement
to create an agreement which cannot be broken by one of the parties

to ram something down someone’s throat
to pressure another person into accepting an idea with which he does not agree

to see eye to eye with someone
to agree

to set the seal on something
to confirm absolutely that something is agreed

to sign on the dotted line
to confirm one’s agreement

AIM

a crusade
an aggressive campaign to achieve some political or social objective

a gun with no bullets
something incomplete and therefore useless for the desired purpose

a moving target
an objective subject to constant revision

an unholy alliance
a working relationship for a nefarious purpose between unlikely partners

any stick to beat a dog
any excuse will do if it serves one’s purpose

it was touch and go
there were considerable risks—the objective was achieved, but only just

one would give one’s eye teeth for something
a person would very much like to achieve some objective

overkill
more action than really required for the purpose

path
means of achieving an objective

something has done the trick
something has achieved the desired purpose

target
objective

the devil can cite scripture for his purpose
a person can quote a respectable or hostile authority while advocating a disreputable cause of his own (from Shakespeare’s MERCHANT OF VENICE)

there are many ways to cook eggs
there are many ways to achieve an objective

to beat someone to the punch
to get to some objective ahead of some keen rival

to deliver the goods
to achieve the objective

to earmark
to allocate to a specific purpose
to engage in pump priming
to spend public money with the aim of attracting parochial electoral support

to get a magic carpet ride to something
to be very fortunate in achieving some objective

to go down a particular track
to make decisions aimed at a particular goal

to go for the gold
to aim for victory (refers to Olympic medals)

to hit the mark
to achieve one’s object or to make the correct decision (refers to archery)

to join forces
to cooperate with one another in order to achieve a common objective

to kill two birds with one stone
to achieve a second objective in the course of achieving the first objective

to leave someone out in the cold
to deny a desired objective to a person

to pull oneself together
to cease acting without purpose or enthusiasm

to score a goal
to achieve an objective

to set one’s sights on something
to aim to achieve something

to stake a claim
to indicate one’s desire to obtain something

to steamroll something through
to use enormous force to achieve an objective

to want something both ways
to desire two mutually exclusive objectives

to zero in on a target
to move directly toward one’s objective

---

all roads lead to Rome
all alternatives will have the same outcome

between the devil and the deep blue sea
to be faced with two equally unpalatable alternatives which cannot both be avoided

if the mountain will not come to Mahomet then Mahomet will go to the mountain
on recognizing that one has insufficient power to effect one’s most desired solution, one decides to make do with the next best alternative

in another vein
as an alternative way of looking at things

it is a toss-up
either alternative is equally acceptable

the horns of a dilemma
the unpalatable alternatives between which a choice must be made

to be at the crossroads
to need to choose between several mutually exclusive alternatives

to be between Scylla and Charybdis
to be faced with two equally unpalatable alternatives which cannot both be avoided (refers to the voyage of Ulysses)

to be of two minds
to be undecided between two alternatives

to be tied down
to have responsibilities precluding alternative activities

to fall between two stools
not to fit neatly into either of two available alternatives and waver between them

to have other irons in the fire
to have the opportunity to do something else as an alternative
to pre-empt some issue
to deliberately do something which
has the effect of limiting the range of
alternative approaches to a matter

to shop around
to explore alternatives

to signpost something
to give an indication of the alterna-
tives available

to sit on the fence
to refuse to choose between two
alternatives

to take stock
to contemplate the alternatives

to want to have one’s cake and eat it
too
to want two mutually exclusive alter-
natives

to weigh two alternative propositions
in the balance
to assess the relative significance of
two alternative propositions

variations on a theme
alternative approaches in similar vein

ANGER

I will have his guts for garters
I am extremely angry and dissatisfied
with him

fireworks
aggressive behavior because of anger

to be a red rag to a bull
to be something which makes a per-
son very angry and very excited (re-
fers to the erroneous belief that the
color red, rather than the motion of
waving, excites a bull)

to be after someone’s blood
to be keen to make a person the
victim of an angry confrontation

to be purple with rage
to be very angry

to bite one’s lip
to control one’s anger

to blow one’s top
to show anger (refers to a volcano)

to blow up
(of a person) to express rage

to explode
(of a person) to express rage

to fire a volley at someone
to send a series of angry messages to
someone

to fly off the handle
to show irrational anger

to foam at the mouth
to show anger

to hit the roof
to be very angry

to jump up and down
to show excitement or anger or frus-
tration

to kick the cat
to take out one’s anger on some inno-
cent party

to make someone’s blood boil
to make a person very angry

to raise someone’s hackles
to make a person angry

to see blood
to be very angry

to see red
to become very angry

ANNOYANCE

an eager beaver
a person with great drive and enthusi-
asm even if this causes annoyance to
others

to be a thorn in someone’s flesh
to be a person whose persistent pres-
ence and righteous views annoy

425
to breathe down someone’s neck
to cause annoyance to another person
by remaining in his vicinity or by
supervising him too closely; or to be
narrowly behind another person in
some competitive situation
ARGUMENT

to drive someone up the wall
to annoy another person by one's actions

to get on someone's nerves
by one's behavior to cause annoyance to a person

to get someone's back up

to annoy or antagonize a person

to get under someone's skin

to annoy another person through stupidity

to have the patience of a saint

to endure annoyances with particular calm

to kick heads in

to demonstrate annoyance at or dislike of certain persons

to kick someone in the teeth

to take action which demonstrates annoyance at or dislike of a person

to rub someone up the wrong way

to annoy someone with actions failing to recognize his current mood

APPROVAL

a seal of approval
confirmation that something is satisfactory

to frown on something
to disapprove of some matter

to get the nod
to receive approval

to give a thumbs up
to approve or grant permission (refers to sign given by Roman emperor sparing a life)

to give one's blessing to something
to indicate one's approval of something

to look at someone sideways
to silently and politely indicate one's disapproval

to shake one's head
to indicate disbelief or wonder or disapproval

ARGUMENT

a battle royal
a fight or argument with many simultaneous participants

a political football
a political issue which is not being debated on its merits

ammunition
arguments helpful to a case

an argument holding water
a debating point of substance

eyeball to eyeball
confronting each other and taking account of each other's reactions

mealy-mouthed
not at all forceful in debate

myopia
the inability to appreciate an argument (lit., short-sightedness)

not to have a leg to stand on
to have one's arguments completely demolished or to be without acceptable excuse or explanation

shifting sands
arguments which are constantly being changed

that argument is wearing a bit thin
that is a very weak case

the other side of the coin
the arguments for the opposite point of view

the thread
the connecting link of a set of arguments

to act as a devil's advocate
to put a point of view which one does not hold in order to draw out the best arguments regarding a proposition (refers to a church official vetting a candidate for sainthood)

to argue the toss
to dispute a decision
to argue till the cows come home
to argue forever

to be after someone's blood
to be keen to make a person the victim of an angry confrontation

to be an open and shut case
to be an unarguable proposition (a phrase popular in detective novels and probably a play on the two meanings of the word "case")

to be on shaky ground
not to have, strong arguments

to be shot to ribbons
(of an argument) to be utterly discredited

to belt someone over the head
to override someone's views or arguments

to bring out one's biggest guns
to use the most impressive persons or arguments

to buy into some argument
to seek to participate in some discussion

to confront someone head-on
to confront a person

to drive a wedge between two persons
to set out to cause two persons to confront each other

to expose holes
to expose weaknesses in an argument

to face the music
to accept responsibility when confronted by one's critics

to give ground
to make some concessions or to retreat or to concede some arguments

to go on till one is blue in the face
to argue for a long time

to have an ace up one's sleeve
to hold an impressive counter-argument in reserve

to hijack a debate
to involve oneself in the public discussion of some matter and turn that discussion to one's advantage

to keep one's powder dry
to retain key arguments or resources in reserve for use later

to lead someone up the garden path
to mislead a person by deliberately fallacious arguments

to lock horns with someone
to have an argument with another person

to parry some argument
to deflect some argument (refers to fencing)

to play every card in the pack
to try very hard and use every conceivable argument

to prepare one's ground
to get ready for a confrontation

to score a point
to make a clever contribution in the course of debate

to shoot someone down in flames
to utterly destroy another person's arguments

to tackle someone head-on
to confront a person

to take off the gloves
to fight mercilessly or to debate with great ferocity

to take the wind out of someone's sails
to upset a person by anticipating his actions or using arguments which he was proposing to use

to talk one's book
to present arguments which, while plausible, are really designed to foster one's vested interest

to tip the balance
to be further information or argument which results in an issue which could have been decided either way to be determined in a particular way
to use every trick in the book
to try very hard and use every conceivable argument
to weigh in with a particular argument
to produce a strong argument
to wheel someone in
to bring a person along for a confrontation
what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.
arguments which apply in one case also apply in another

BEHAVIOR

I fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts
I am suspicious of generous behavior from traditional opponents (from Virgil’s AEneid, in reference to the Trojan horse)
a watchdog
a person or organization monitoring behavior
an article of faith
a fundamental belief on which certain behavior is based
fireworks
aggressive behavior because of anger
guiding light
yardstick for ethical behavior
horseplay
boisterous and undignified behavior
not to put a foot wrong
to behave impeccably
the order of the day
the customary behavior
to be a bad egg
to engage in dishonest behavior
to be beyond the pale
to be socially unacceptable, especially for unacceptable standards or behavior
to be left with a nasty taste in one’s mouth
to be appalled or very disappointed at another person’s unethical behavior to one
to blow the whistle on someone
to report a person’s improper behavior to the authorities or to publicize it
to get on someone’s nerves
by one’s behavior to cause annoyance to a person
to keep one’s eye on someone
to supervise a person or to monitor a person’s activities and behavior
to lay it on the line
to make clear what the accepted rules of behavior are
to lead with one’s chin
by one’s brash behavior to virtually invite one’s opponents to take action against one
to make an exhibition of oneself
to behave in a way which invites ridicule
to make feathers fly
to cause trouble to those misbehaving
to play monkey tricks on someone
to engage in discreditable behavior affecting a person
to pull one’s socks up
to set out to improve or correct one’s inadequate behavior or performance
to ruffle someone’s feathers
to engage in behavior which irritates another person
to set tongues wagging
to behave in a way which encourages scandal mongers
to sow wild oats
to indulge in foolish behavior while a young adult
to step out of line
to infringe accepted rules of behavior
to teach someone a lesson
to inflict something unpleasant on a person in the hope that it will lead to a change in his behavior
to watch one's step
to be on the lookout for danger or to set out to improve one's behavior
transparent
(of behavior, etc.) to be easily seen as not genuine

BELIEF
I'll eat my hat if so-and-so happens
I do not believe that so-and-so will happen
a bible basher
a person who makes unwelcome attempts to force his religious beliefs on others
a doubting Thomas
a person who refuses to believe claims in absence of proof (John 20:25)
a gut feeling
a belief based purely on intuition and unsupported by facts or evidence
a soul brother
a person of similar ideals
an article of faith
a fundamental belief on which certain behavior is based
anyone could be forgiven for believing that
it is understandable that people would believe that
he is your man
he conforms to an ideal
the fold
the body of believers (refers to an enclosure for sheep)
to be someone after one's own heart
to be a person who shares one's beliefs
to be too big for one's boots
to have an unwarranted belief as to one's capabilities or status
to be wide off the mark
to have a belief which is far removed from the true position
to believe in the tooth fairy
to be particularly gullible
to go to the barricades for something
to very strongly believe in something
to preach to the converted
to say something to those who already believe in it
to put someone in the pillory
to hold a person up to ridicule for his beliefs
to sacrifice something on the altar of some belief
to give up some benefit as a matter of principle
to sail under false colors
to pretend that one's real character or beliefs are different from what they really are
to shake one's head
to indicate disbelief or wonder or disapproval
to show one's true colors
to disclose one's real character or beliefs
to stick to one's guns
to continue to hold certain beliefs notwithstanding opposition by others
to take something as gospel
to believe that something is true
Utopian
ideally perfect (refers to the mythical island in Sir Thomas More's UTOPIA)
volt face
a reversal of previously-held beliefs (French, "a turning around")

BENEFIT
a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
a benefit currently available is more valuable than a seemingly much larger benefit which may or may not be achieved in the future
BENEFIT

a mare's nest
da discovery with illusory benefits

a milch cow
an easy and plentiful source of some desired benefit

bargaining chips
benefits which can be conceded in negotiations in order to obtain some advantage

every cloud has a silver lining
there are benefits even in seemingly adverse situations

fruitless
yielding no benefit

heads I win—tails you lose
whichever way this matter goes I will benefit at your expense

manna from heaven
unexpected benefits (Exodus 16:15)

mirage
illusory benefit

that is just sour grapes
those are disparaging remarks made only because he is peeved and resentful at someone else's better fortune

the melody lingers on
the benefit of past actions remains

to be cream on top of the milk
to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario

to be icing on top of the cake
to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario

to be the salt of the earth
to be a person whose ordinary efforts benefit the community (Matthew 5:13)

to cast pearls before swine
to confer valuable benefits on someone who neither recognizes nor appreciates them

to get on a gravy train
to take steps to become a recipient of benefits which are available but undeserved

to get some mileage out of something
to benefit from something

to go along for the ride
to seek to benefit from a project in which others contribute the effort

to hand over something on a silver platter
to provide a valuable benefit for virtually nothing

to laugh all the way to the bank
to appreciate one's good fortune

to learn a lesson
to benefit from one's experience

to let blood
to allow some harm as the price for achieving some greater benefit

to look a gift horse in the mouth
to be suspicious about a benefit which has been volunteered

to mortgage the future
to get benefits now but at a cost in due course

to pick someone's brain
to get the benefit of another person's knowledge and experience

to ride on the back of someone
without effort to benefit from the prior efforts of others

to ride on the sheep's back
to benefit from the production of wool

to rub off on someone
to benefit a person through an association which increases his skills

to sacrifice something on the altar of some belief
to give up some benefit as a matter of principle

to salvage something out of the wreck
to achieve some minor benefits out of a disastrous situation

to start from scratch
to commerce something without the benefit of any past activity

430
to throw out the baby with the bathwater
to discard a major benefit in the course of obtaining a comparatively minor advantage

vulture
dead upon benefiting from another's misfortune

windfall
unexpected good fortune

BIGNESS

a big bang
a sudden major change in the environment

ea big shot
an important person

ea big wheel
an important person

a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
a benefit currently available is more valuable than a seemingly much larger benefit which may or may not be achieved in the future

a golden handshake
a large payment in connection with or as an inducement to retirement

a landslide
an electoral result involving victory or defeat by an unexpectedly large margin

a mansize job
a large task worth doing well

a mosaic
something with a large number of different aspects to it

a sausage machine
the turning out of large volumes without particular thought

a tempest in a teacup
a controversy about a minor matter but one which looms large in the minds of the parties

a toehold
an opportunity small in itself but with the potential to lead to bigger things

in for a penny—in for a pound
once something is commenced it ought to be finished; or if one is willing to take a small risk then one might as well take a bigger one

more chiefs than Indians
a disproportionately large number of supervisors

not to be Robinson Crusoe
to be one of a large number of people with a common problem (from Daniel Defoe's ROBINSON CRUSOE)

someone's eyes are bigger than his stomach
a person is unrealistic

speak softly and carry a big stick
be polite to your potential enemies but maintain an active and visible defense capability (from a speech by Theodore Roosevelt in 1901)

the big smoke
the big city

the lion's share
the biggest portion

to be a big fish in a little pond
to be a person holding an important office but in an unimportant organization

to be a money spinner
to produce large profits easily and quickly

to be a small cog in a large wheel
to be a relatively unimportant person in a large organization

to be the thin end of the wedge
by conceding a small point to create an undesirable precedent for much larger issues

to be the tip of the iceberg
to be only a very small portion of a much larger but less obvious whole
to be too big for one's boots
to have an unwarranted belief as to one's capabilities or status

to be too big for one's breeches
to have an exaggerated idea of one's own importance

to be unable to keep people away with a big stick
to be faced with a large crowd or much demand

to bring out one's biggest guns
to use the most impressive persons or arguments

to crawl out of the woodwork
to turn up unexpectedly and in large numbers

to have a leg in
to have an opportunity which has the potential to lead to bigger things

to have deep pockets
to have large financial resources

to only scratch the surface
to deal with only a small portion of a much larger whole

to pay a king's ransom
to pay a very large sum

to pay something back with interest
to return a small favor with a bigger favor or to extract retribution of greater value than the circumstances warrant

to pick the eyes out of something
to choose the most valuable items from among a large number

to stand over someone with a big stick
to intimidate a person in order to get him to act in a particular way

to steamroll something through
to use enormous force to achieve an objective

to swarm out
to gather in large numbers

to wield a big stick
to exert power

---

CARE

a bull in a china shop
a careless person likely to cause great damage

he must have a long spoon that sups with the devil
great care is needed when negotiating deals with disreputable parties

not to just pick something out of a hat
to choose carefully, after weighing all the considerations

to handpick someone
to carefully choose a person for his individual attributes

to keep a weather eye out for something
to look out with particular care

to look to one's laurels
to be careful not to lose one's reputation for some skill

to need to watch one's back
to find it necessary to take care in case others act against one's interests

to slip under one's guard
to cause a mistake to be made despite care being taken to prevent this

to smell out something
to discover something by careful investigation

to start off on the right foot
to commence an operation with great care to do it correctly

to think twice before doing something
to consider with particular care

to tread lightly
to be careful

to watch one's p's and q's
to be very careful (may refer to pints and quarts of beer on a hotel slate or to easily-confused printer's type)

---

CHANCE

be a devil!
take a chance!
the hand of fate
chance

to be in the lap of the gods
to be a matter of pure chance (refers to wax tablets inscribed with requests and placed on the knees of statues of Greek gods)

to be the luck of the draw
to be a chance result

to cross someone's path
to meet another person by chance

to cruel someone's pitch
to spoil a person's chances

to have one's beady eyes on something
to await the chance to acquire something to which one is not properly entitled

to jump at the opportunity
to enthusiastically take immediate advantage of a good chance

to look for a needle in a haystack
to attempt something with a very small chance of success

to take pot luck
to take whatever happens by chance to be available

CHANGE

a big bang
a sudden major change in the environment

a chameleon
a person without character who changes his stance all the time to reflect the current circumstances

a leopard cannot change his spots
each person is born with certain unalterable characteristics

a new broom
a changed regime which is likely to alter the status quo

a sacred cow
an institution so well established that it is virtually unalterable

new guard
changed regime

nimble-footed
quick to change the direction of one's activities when circumstances warrant

shifting sands
arguments which are constantly being changed

stiff cheese!
circumstances which may be unwelcome but which will not be altered and in respect of which no great sympathy is felt

that takes on added color
there are now further facts which alter the appearance of a matter

the cold wind of change
the unpleasant realities of new circumstances

the devil one knows is better than the devil one does not know
the status quo is more comfortable than change

the ink is hardly dry
something intended to last a long time is to be changed shortly after its establishment

the tide has turned
conditions have changed

the wheel has turned
circumstances have changed

to be a breath of fresh air
to be a pleasant change from the past

to be a stormy petrel
a person who disturbs a pleasant state of affairs by agitating for change

to be carved in marble
to be virtually unalterable

to be cast in bronze
to be virtually unalterable

to be in a rut
to lead a dull life, with no change from long-established habits
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>to be in a state of flux</th>
<th>to set something in concrete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to be subject to continuous change</td>
<td>to make something virtually unalterable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to change one's mind</td>
<td>to change direction during the course of a project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to alter the views which one had previously formed</td>
<td>to teach someone a lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to change one's tune</td>
<td>to inflict something unpleasant on a person in the hope that it will lead to a change in his behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to alter one's publicly-expressed views</td>
<td>to change tack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to change one's direction</td>
<td>to alter one's publicly-expressed views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to change the whole picture</td>
<td>to change one's tune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to alter the major assumptions on which some assessment was based</td>
<td>to change one's tune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
<td>to change one's tune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to repeatedly raise an unjustified concern with the result that one will be ignored when the circumstances change</td>
<td>to change one's tune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to die a natural death</td>
<td>to die a natural death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by virtue of changed circumstances or the effluxion of time, to be no longer relevant</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to drift apart</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to lose contact or to change feelings once held in common</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to have a change of heart</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to form a new view in place of a strongly-held previous view</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to leave one's mark on something</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be responsible for permanently altering the way something is operated</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to play it by ear</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to develop one's strategy to always fit in with circumstances as they change from time to time</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to put a new face on something</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to alter the way something should be regarded</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to rearrange the deckchairs on the Titanic</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to take some initiative which is quite useless because it does not take much greater change into account</td>
<td>to cry &quot;wolf&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONFUSION**

*a tower of Babel*

*a noisy and confused assembly* (Genesis 11)

*all hell broke loose*

*great confusion erupted*

*to be all at sea*

*to be confused as to what is going on and what to do next*

*to be at sixes and sevens*

*to be confused, concerned and undecided*

*to be in a fog*

*to be in a state of confusion*

*to get into a knot*

*to get into state of confusion*

*to lose one's head*

*to become confused*

*to muddy the waters*

*to deliberately confuse an issue by creating a diversion*

*to set up a smokescreen*

*to deliberately confuse an issue by disguising its salient features*
THESAURUS

COURAGE

to watch one's p's and q's
to be very careful (may refer to pints and quarts of beer on a hotel slate or to easily-confused printer's type)

CORRECTNESS

a step in the right direction
the first in a series of measures designed to correct some problem

it is on the tip of my tongue
the right word has momentarily escaped me

it is pointing in the right direction
success looks likely

just what the doctor ordered
exactly right

mark my words
you will find out that I am right

one looks for elephants in elephant country
one needs to search in the right place

to be in the right ballpark
to be approximately correct

to be up to the mark
to be of the right standard

to have one's heart in the right place
to have a well-developed social conscience

to head someone in the right direction
to assist a person to achieve something

to hit the bull's eye
to make the correct decision

to hit the mark
to achieve one's object or to make the correct decision (refers to archery)

to hit the nail right on the head
to astutely come to the correct conclusion

to play one's cards right
to approach a matter sensibly

to play to the gallery
to do something which appeals to the general public rather than something which is right

to pull one's socks up
to set out to improve or correct one's inadequate behavior or performance

to see daylight
to get the right answer

to set someone on the right road
to show a person how to go about doing something

to start off on the right foot
to commence an operation with great care to do it correctly

to strike the right key
to find the appropriate solution

to strike the right note
to make a good impression

COURAGE

a stiff upper lip
obstinate courage in the face of pain or adversity

chicken-hearted
showing little courage

to be a brave soldier
to be brave

to be a man of steel
to be a person with moral courage

to be of good heart
to be brave in adversity

to brave the water
to enter a venture with courage and determination

to have a heart of oak
to be brave

to make a last-ditch stand
to make a brave effort to stave off final defeat

to present a happy face to the world bravely to gloss over one's problems

to put a brave face on it
to face adversity cheerfully

to put one's head on the block
to have the courage of one's convictions

435
to stick one's neck out
to have the courage of one's convictions or to take a calculated risk

CRITICISM

_a honeymoon_
a short period enjoyed by a newcomer to some activity before his performance is criticized

_an Aunt Sally_
a person who can readily be singled out and criticized as the proxy for a group

_people in glass houses should not throw stones_
those who are less than perfect are foolish to criticize others

_the pot calling the kettle black_
a person criticizing another person without realizing his own even greater shortcomings

to act as a sounding board
to give, on request, constructive criticisms of ideas tentatively held

to attract flak
to attract criticism

to be a sitting shot
to be a person whose actions make him very vulnerable to criticism

to be in the hot seat
to hold a position requiring one to answer criticism or accusations

to be like water off a duck's back
(of advice or criticism) to be completely rejected

to be on the warpath
to be on the lookout for faults which can be criticized

to bulldoze some proposal through
to ensure the passage of some measure in complete disregard of criticism or opposition

to cover oneself
to create evidence so that if one is criticized or accused later on, one can clear one’s name

to draw fire
to encounter criticism

to engage in back biting
to criticize in an unfriendly manner

to face the music
to accept responsibility when confronted by one’s critics

to fire a salvo at someone
to present a series of criticisms to a person

to get off someone’s back
to leave a person alone to carry on without constant criticism

to give someone a bit of stick
to mildly criticize a person

to have a shot at someone
to use subtly chosen words implying friendly criticism but designed to embarrass another person

to have a thick skin
to be impervious to criticism

to have the hide of a rhinoceros
to be totally unaffected by and unresponsive to valid criticism

to hold fire
to defer criticizing

to leave oneself wide open
to act in such a way that one’s opponents will find much which can be easily criticized

to nail one’s colors to the mast
to publicly declare one’s position and to maintain it in the face of criticism

to nippick
to criticize a person in respect to very minor matters

to pour vitriol on something
to sharply criticize something

436
to run the gauntlet
to be subjected to criticism (from the Spanish word for "passage," in reference to punishment inflicted on delinquents made to run between two files of soldiers)

to stand in the breach
to bear the brunt of criticisms

to turn one's guns on someone
to criticize a person

DANGER

a minefield
a course of great hidden danger or of difficulties not obvious on a first encounter

pitfall
unsuspected danger

slippery path
dangerous course of action

someone's head is on the block
a person is in danger of having his appointment terminated

to be a wolf in sheep's clothing
to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous although masquerading as something harmless (Matthew 7:15)

to be on a knife edge
to be in danger

to be on the razor's edge
to be in great danger

to bell the cat
to do some dangerous but highly useful mission (refers to a fable in which none of the mice was willing to put a warning bell on a cat)

to fight fire with fire
to counter a dangerous situation by making an equally dangerous move

to founder on the shoals of something
to come to grief because of unexpected dangers

to have a sword of Damocles hanging over one
to be in imminent danger despite normal activity going on all around one

to have a tiger by the tail
to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized

to push someone over the brink
by a small action to cause the absolute ruin (financially or emotionally) of someone already in peril

to put one's head in the noose
to recklessly and unnecessarily expose oneself to great danger

to put one's head into the lion's mouth
to recklessly expose oneself to great danger

to ride out the storm
to come safely through some dangerous situation

to sail close to the wind
to act in a very dangerous manner

to see red lights flashing
to be conscious of the danger

to skate on thin ice
to act in disregard of obvious danger

to walk a tightrope
to do something very dangerous

to watch one's step
to be on the lookout for danger or to set out to improve one's behavior

DECISION

a landmark ruling
a decision marking a turning point in the way a matter is approached

fork in the road
turning point for decisions

if the mountain will not come to Mahomet then Mahomet will go to the mountain
on recognizing that one has insufficient power to effect one's most desired solution, one decides to make do with the next best alternative
the jury is still out
to argue the toss
to be at sixes and sevens
to be at the cutting edge of something
to be in two minds
to be out of someone's hands
to bite one's fingernails
to cross the Rubicon
to go down a particular track
to have something to chew on
to hit the bull's eye
to hit the mark
to hold a gun at someone's head
to hold the power to do something in the hollow of one's hand

to lose one's nerve
to abandon, out of fear, a decision to do something
to need the wisdom of Solomon
to be faced with the need to make a difficult decision (1 Kings 3:16-28)
to pin someone down
to find a person willing to accept blame or responsibility or to force a person to announce a decision or concede a point
to pull strings
to use one's special influence with those in a position to make favorable decisions which might otherwise not be forthcoming
to tip the balance
to provide further information or argument which results in an issue, which could have been decided either way, being determined in a particular way
to tip the scales
to be a factor which in combination with other factors results in a particular decision which would otherwise not have been reached
to toss up
to decide on a fairly arbitrary basis
when it comes to the crunch
when the matter comes up for decision

development

a thought in the back of one's mind
an undeveloped idea
a wild card
an unexpected development
an ugly duckling
a person initially thought unintelligent who develops and becomes brilliant (refers to a cygnet in a brood of ducks in a children's story of that name by Hans Christian Andersen)
THESAURUS

**DIFFICULTY**

*framework*
outline of a proposal, on which further details can be developed

*that is a turn up for the books*
that is a surprising favorable development

*the bottom line*
the conclusion which matters or the net effect of a series of developments

*to be a turn up for the books*
to be a surprising development

*to blossom*
(of a person's attributes) to develop

*to develop a head of steam*
to gain momentum

*to find one's feet*
to develop one's skills

*to keep an ear to the ground*
to be well informed as to current developments

*to mark time*
to do nothing while awaiting developments

*to play it by ear*
to develop one's strategy to always fit in with circumstances as they change from time to time

*to run with something*
to take advantage of some current development

*to see the big picture*
to have the vision and imagination enabling a project to be developed as part of a bigger whole

*to see which way the cat jumps*
to await developments

*a minefield*
a source of great hidden danger or of difficulties not obvious on a first encounter

*a prima donna*
a person with an exaggerated opinion of his own importance which makes relations with others needlessly difficult (Italian, "first lady")

*a problem child*
a source of unnecessary difficulty

*a sixty-four thousand dollar question*
a pertinent but very difficult question (refers to a TV quiz show in which an initial prize doubles with the successful answering of progressively more difficult questions)

*a sticky patch*
a period fraught with difficulties

*any port in a storm*
anything which helps to avoid difficulties is welcome

*blood, sweat and tears*
hard work and much effort

*elbow grease*
hard manual work

*here's the rub*
this is where a difficulty arises (a term used in lawn bowling)

*no sweat*
this presents no difficulty

*ready-made*
easily fabricated or available without difficulty

*road blocks*
difficulties

*search for the Holy Grail*
work toward a difficult goal (refers to a vessel supposedly used by Christ at the last supper and featuring in the Arthurian legends)

*someone is a hard nut to crack*
it is very difficult to persuade a person to do something
DIFFICULTY
stumbling block
an impediment or difficulty preventing the easy completion of some project or a dilemma involving a moral issue
that is hard to take
it is difficult to face up to the reality of this
the show must go on
despite difficulties the action in contemplation has to proceed
the very best of British luck
you will have a hard time of it, but you carry my best wishes
to back someone into a corner
to drive a person into a position from which escape is difficult
to batten down the hatches
to get ready for expected difficulties
to be a cross which one has to bear
to be a difficulty which one has to endure
to be a fish out of water
to be in difficulty by virtue of being in a strange environment
to be a handful
to be difficult to manage
to be a hard act to follow
to be an impressive performance, not easily matched by the next person
to be between a rock and a hard place
to be faced with two equally difficult and uncomfortable choices
to be in a hole
to experience some difficulties
to be in a jam
to be in difficulties
to be in a pickle
to be in difficulties
to be in a quagmire
to be in great difficulty
to be in a stew
to be in difficulties
to be in deep water
to be in great difficulty
to be in hot water
to be in trouble or to be in difficulty
to be in the same boat
to share a common set of difficulties
to be in the soup
to be in great difficulties
to be no bed of roses
to be difficult or uncomfortable
to be no fun
to be difficult
to be on a sticky wicket
to face some difficulties (refers to cricket)
to be out of one's depth
to find that some issue is too complicated or too difficult
to be out of the woods
the previous difficulties have been overcome
to be pushing uphill
to face difficulties
to be sheer murder
to be extremely unpleasant or difficult; or to be an inglorious defeat
to be the hard core
to be the central and most difficult problem
to be up a gum tree
to be in difficulty or at the end of one's resources
to bite the bullet
to face up to the difficulties of a situation
to catch someone in a bind
to find a person in a difficulty from which he cannot readily extricate himself
to face a rocky road ahead
to be likely to encounter difficulties
to fall on one's feet
surprisingly to succeed despite difficulties

to fight an uphill battle
to face difficulties or to have formidable opposition

to get around some difficulty
to use an approach which overcomes some difficulty

to give someone hell
to make life difficult for a person

to grab the devil by the tail
to face up to difficulties

to grasp the nettle
to deal with a neglected difficulty

to have a dream run
to encounter no difficulties

to have a hard row to hoe
to be a difficult assignment

to have a job in front of one
to face difficulties

to have one's work cut out to do something
it will be difficult to achieve something

to have the cards stacked against one
to be faced with many difficulties frustrating a project

to have the odds stacked against one
to be faced with many difficulties frustrating a project

to heave a sigh of relief
to express satisfaction at the achievement of a solution to a difficult problem

to iron out something
to sort out a difficult problem

to jump a hurdle
to overcome a problem or difficulty

to kick a man when he is down
to take unfair advantage of a person already in difficulty

to leave someone in the lurch
to desert a person who is in difficulties (refers to the score in certain games)

to make a good fist of something
to be successful in a difficult task

to need the wisdom of Solomon
to be faced with the need to make a difficult decision (1 Kings 3:16-28)

to penetrate someone's thick skull
to make a person understand something difficult or acknowledge something unwelcome

to plot a safe course through troubled waters
to make a plan which overcomes certain difficulties

to put one's thinking cap on
to concentrate on finding a solution to a difficult problem

to put something into the "too hard" basket
to defer consideration of a difficult issue

to run into heavy weather
to encounter difficulties

to sharpen one's ax
to get ready for a difficult task

to sink deeper into the mire
to get into further difficulties

to sink deeper into the mud
to get into even greater difficulty

to skirt around the difficulties
to act as though the difficulties did not exist

to smell trouble
to perceive difficulties

to soldier on
to carry on despite difficulties

to strike a snag
to encounter a difficulty

to take the bull by the horns
to come to grips with the realities of a difficult problem
to take the rough with the smooth
to accept the hardships of life along with its pleasant features

to tiptoe around the difficulties
to act as though the difficulties did not exist

to tread a fine line
cautiously to take action in circumstances whether either too much or too little will cause difficulties

to tread the thin line
cautiously to take action in circumstances whether either too much or too little will cause difficulties

to wear one’s crown of thorns
to have one’s own difficulties (John 19:5)

DISAPPOINTMENT

a damp squib
disappointingly ineffective action (refers to fireworks which fail to go off)
someone’s face fell
someone registered obvious disappointment

someone’s jaw dropped
someone registered obvious disappointment

to be a bitter pill to swallow
to be a great humiliation and disappointment which have to be endured
to be a severe blow
to be a great disappointment
to be at the end of one’s tether
to be frustrated by a lack of knowledge, authority or patience

to be cut to pieces
to be very upset
to be devastated
to be extremely disappointed
to be left with a nasty taste in one’s mouth
to be appalled or very disappointed at another person’s unethical behavior to one
to be someone’s bete noire
to be a person whose ideas and actions cause upset and loathing in another person (French, “black beast”)
to bite someone’s head off
to rudely express displeasure at some person

to break someone’s heart
to act in a way causing great upset to another person

to give someone a black look
to indicate one’s displeasure with a person
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Term</th>
<th>Thesaurus Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to go through the roof</td>
<td>to go through the roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(of a person) to be very upset or (of prices) to escalate greatly</td>
<td>(of a person) to be very upset or (of prices) to escalate greatly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to knit one's brows</td>
<td>to knit one's brows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to indicate one's displeasure</td>
<td>to indicate one's displeasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to make a noise about something</td>
<td>to make a noise about something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to complain or express dissatisfaction about something</td>
<td>to complain or express dissatisfaction about something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to open up a festering sore</td>
<td>to open up a festering sore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to upset a person by drawing attention to a long-standing grievance</td>
<td>to upset a person by drawing attention to a long-standing grievance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to put someone's nose out of joint</td>
<td>to put someone's nose out of joint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to upset another person</td>
<td>to upset another person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to take the wind out of someone's sails</td>
<td>to take the wind out of someone's sails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to upset a person by anticipating his actions or using arguments which he was proposing to use</td>
<td>to upset a person by anticipating his actions or using arguments which he was proposing to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to throw brickbats at someone</td>
<td>to throw brickbats at someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to express displeasure with a person</td>
<td>to express displeasure with a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to tread on someone's corns</td>
<td>to tread on someone's corns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility</td>
<td>to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to tread on someone's toes</td>
<td>to tread on someone's toes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility</td>
<td>to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to upset the applecart</td>
<td>to upset the applecart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to engage in conduct disturbing a peaceful state of affairs and thereby cause discomfort</td>
<td>to engage in conduct disturbing a peaceful state of affairs and thereby cause discomfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to vote with one's feet</td>
<td>to vote with one's feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to show one's displeasure by terminating an association</td>
<td>to show one's displeasure by terminating an association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to wave a finger at someone</td>
<td>to wave a finger at someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to indicate mild displeasure at another person's actions</td>
<td>to indicate mild displeasure at another person's actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EASE**

**a milch cow**

an easy and plentiful source of some desired benefit

**a walkover**

an easy victory

distant fields look greener

activities of which one has no experience seem much easier than is really the case

it's a breeze

it is easy

money for jam

remuneration easily earned

not to be all beer and skittles

not to be all pleasant and easy

ready-made

easily fabricated or available without difficulty

stumbling block

an impediment or difficulty preventing the easy completion of some project or a dilemma involving a moral issue

to be laid-down misère

to be very easily accomplished and/or to be certain of outcome (refers to the declaration in certain card games undertaking to win no tricks)

to be a money spinner

to produce large profits easily and quickly

to be a piece of cake

to be very easy or greatly to one's liking

to be able to do something standing on one's head

to be able to do something very easily

to be able to do something with one hand behind one's back

to be able to do something very easily

to be able to eat someone for breakfast

to be able to outwit a person very easily

to be child's play

to be easy or to require only elementary skills and knowledge

to be in clover

to enjoy a life of ease and luxury

443
to be plain sailing

to be quite straightforward and very easy

to be putty in someone's hands
to be far too easily influenced by another person

to chase every hare
to be easily sidetracked

to die hard
not to give up easily

to get an armchair ride
to be given a particularly easy time

to have a mind of one's own
not to be easily influenced

to have nerves of steel
not to be easily frightened

to leave oneself wide open
to act in such a way that one's opponents will find much which can be easily criticized

to nip something in the bud
to stop some activity in its early stages when stopping it is still relatively easy

to roll off the tongue
to be said very easily

to run rings around someone
to easily outwit another person

to serve something up to someone on a plate
to make something especially easy for a particular person

to smooth the path for someone
to use one's influence to make arrangements so that a person's task will be easier or more readily accomplished

to take something in one's stride
to cope with something easily

to win the prize in a canter
to win very easily

transparent
(of behavior, etc.) to be easily seen as not genuine

employment

a dead-end position
a job with no prospects of advancement

feather bedding
(industrial relations) creating unnecessary jobs solely to increase employment; (in economics) assisting an inefficient industry by government grants or excessive tariff protection

golden shackles
financial arrangements designed to discourage employees changing employers

rising star
person making good progress in his career

someone's job is on the line
a person's career path is under consideration and/or his present position is at risk

to drum someone out of some organization
to terminate in ignominy a person's employment or membership (refers to the ceremonial cashiering in the army to the beating of parade drums)

to have one's fingers in the till
to steal from one's employer

to hold someone's hand
to give detailed on-the-job training and supervision

to know the ropes
to know how to do one's job

to move on to greener pastures
to commence a new, better career

to swing the lead
to cheat an employer by not working while being paid to do so

to tickle the Peter
to rob one's employer

to turn an honest penny
to earn money out of odd jobs
a clean sweep
the complete removal in an election of all sitting members

a dead-end position
a job with no prospects of advancement

a logjam
a stoppage of activity caused by input in greater volume than allowed for

a photo finish
a close result in a contest

at the end of the day
in due course or at the conclusion of a project

cold turkey
the sudden cessation of drugs to an addict

cut it out!
stop doing that!

danse macabre
gruesome final step (French, “ghastly dance”)

dead and buried
(of some issue) definitely concluded, especially so long ago as to be nearly forgotten

from a to z
from start to finish

from alpha to omega
from start to finish (refers to the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet)

from go to whoa
from start to finish (refers to the command given to horses)

I’ll soon stop his little game
his activities are not tolerated and I will ensure that they cease

in for a penny—in for a pound
once something is commenced it ought to be finished; or if one is willing to take a small risk then one might as well take a bigger one

in the wash-up
when everything is finalized

it’s not over till the fat lady sings
it is not finished yet

one for the road
a final drink before leaving

saber rattling
hints of retribution if certain conduct does not cease

someone’s head is on the block
a person is in danger of having his appointment terminated

stalemate
a final result in which neither party to a dispute is victorious

that wraps it up
that is the end

the bottom line
the conclusion which matters or the net effect of a series of developments

the buck stops here
I accept full responsibility (sign on the desk of Harry S. Truman when president of the United States)

the final countdown
the last stages of something (refers to the launch of space vehicles)

the final straw
the latest step, which, when added to a large number of seemingly harmless previous steps, sets off a disaster resulting from the cumulative effect

the sands are running out
the time available for some action is nearly at an end

the sun has set on something
something has concluded

the tail end of something
the very end of something

this is the end of the road for someone
a person will have no further opportunity to do something
to abandon ship
to abrogate one's responsibilities or
to abandon a project

to bale out of something
to abandon an enterprise in anticipation of disaster

to be all over bar the shouting
to be virtually finished

to be in at the death
to be present at the conclusion of something

to be in at the kill
to be present at the climatic finish to something

to be on a treadmill
to be involved in some unpleasant ongoing activity which cannot readily be stopped

to be on one's death bed
(of an organization or a piece of equipment) to be about to cease functioning

to be only a gleam in someone's eyes
to be a long way from final achievement

to be out on one's ear
to have one's services abruptly terminated

to be out the door
to have one's position terminated

to be stopped in one's tracks
suddenly and unexpectedly to be prevented from carrying on with a project

to be the sting in the tail
to be the unexpected unpleasant conclusion

to be up a gum tree
to be in difficulty or at the end of one's resources

to beat a retreat
to abandon some project

to break one's duck
to end a spell without results (refers to cricket)

to break the back of a task
to complete the bulk of the work

to bury the hatchet
to abandon hostilities

to call it a day
to cease involvement with some activity

to call off the dogs
to abandon an audit or other inquiry

to cast prudence to the winds
to cease being prudent

to chop someone off at the socks
to stop someone's proposals prematurely

to close the book on something
to terminate an activity

to come to a full stop
to completely cease activity

to come to a head
to reach culmination

to come to a sticky end
to endure an unpleasant fate

to crystalize
to emerge in its final form

to cut corners
to lower one's standards in order to complete something more quickly

to deal the final hand
to take steps which conclude a matter

to dot the i's and cross the t's
to be meticulous in completing the documentation for a transaction

to drum someone out of some organization
to terminate in ignominy a person's employment or membership (refers to the ceremonial cashiering in the army to the beating of parade drums)

to dry up
to cease

to fall by the wayside
to abandon and not complete what one set out to do
to fetter someone
to stop a person acting on his own initiative

to finish with a bang
to conclude something in grand style

to get on stream
to now operate successfully following the end of a settling-in period

to get rid of the dead wood
to terminate the services of unsatisfactory personnel

to get up off one's butt
to cease being apathetic

to give someone the boot
to terminate a person's appointment

to give the game away
to cease involvement with some activity

to grind to a halt
to cease some activity despite expectations that it would continue

to jettison some proposal
to abandon some proposal as worthless or impracticable

to kill some proposal stone dead
to abandon some proposal completely

to lay some theory to rest
to abandon some theory as being no longer appropriate

to lose heart
to cease being enthusiastic

to lose one's nerve
to abandon, out of fear, a decision to do something

to lose one's touch
to cease to be familiar with something

to lower the boom
to terminate an activity

to make a last-ditch stand
to make a brave effort to stave off final defeat

to nip something in the bud
to stop some activity in its early stages when stopping it is still relatively easy

to peg out
to die (refers to the final stroke in a game of croquet)

to play the last card in the pack
to lower one's standards in a final desperate effort

to play the trump card
to make a final move, thereby defeating one's opponents

to pull oneself together
to cease acting without purpose or enthusiasm

to put a wall around someone
to stop a person associating with others

to put something to bed
to finally dispose of

to put the brake on someone
to stop a person

to put up the shutters
to cease an established activity

to quietly fold up one's tent
to surreptitiously abandon a previously-cherished stance

to receive the coup de grace
to be finished off by an opponent (French, "mercy stroke")

to ring down the curtain on something
to treat something as concluded

to run into a dead end
to get nowhere in an investigation

to run its course
to come to a natural end

to see the light at the end of the tunnel
to be close to finalizing a long exercise

to shelve some proposal
to abandon some proposal

to shut up shop
to cease an established activity

to sound the death knell of something
to indicate the impending end of something
to stem the hemorrhage
to put a stop to the financial losses of a project

to stitch up a deal
to successfully conclude a deal

to strangle some discussion
to cut off some unfinished discussion

to throw someone to the lions
to abandon a person

to tie something up
to finalize the arrangement for something

to tie up the loose ends
to complete the minor outstanding items of some substantially finished project

to turn a complete somersault
to reverse one's established policy

to turn up trumps
to finish up better than expected or to experience unexpected good luck

to vote with one's feet
to show one's displeasure by terminating an association

to walk away with a profit
to achieve a profit on concluding a project

to wrap up a deal
to bring a deal to a successful conclusion

until stumps are drawn
until the project ends

when the crunch comes
when the inevitable conclusion is reached

when the music stops
suddenly and soon (refers to an imminent crisis leading to some resolution of a matter, as in a game of musical chairs)

where the ax falls
who gets terminated

ENThusiasm

I would give my right arm for something
I am very keen to acquire something

a fire in someone's belly
great enthusiasm

a shot in the arm
something to revive a person's enthusiasm

an eager beaver
a person with great drive and enthusiasm even if this causes annoyance to others

bright-eyed and bushy-tailed
naive but enthusiastic
deafening silence
great apathy and lack of enthusiasm

half-hearted
unenthusiastic

heart and soul
with great energy

keepers of the flame
persons keen to maintain old traditions

larger than life
in person and full of enthusiasm

lukewarm
unenthusiastic though not hostile

not to break someone's door down
to be quite unenthusiastic about someone's goods or services

not to care a hoot
not to show the slightest concern or enthusiasm

one's heart is not in some cause
one has little enthusiasm for some cause

the lifeblood
the main or essential ingredient; or the person or factor instilling enthusiasm

they fell over themselves to do something
they showed great keenness while doing something
to be a live wire

to be an enthusiast

to be a political animal

to want to be in politics

to be after someone's blood

to be keen to make a person the victim of an angry confrontation

to be after someone's scalp

to be keen to penalize a person

to be bitten with something

to become very enthusiastic over something

to be close to one's heart

to be a project on which one is very keen

to be dying to do something

to be extremely keen to do something

to be hot on a subject

to be knowledgeable and enthusiastic about a subject

to be in someone's blood

to be something about which a person is very knowledgeable or keen

to be itching to go

to be highly enthusiastic and keen to start

to be on one's soap box

to hold forth on an issue about which one feels keenly

to be the life and soul of the party

to be the prime enthusiast for a cause

to beat someone to the punch

to get to some objective ahead of some keen rival

to break one's neck to do something

to be particularly keen

to carry a torch for someone

to act as an enthusiastic advocate of another person's cause

to galvanize someone into action

to enthuse a person into doing something

to get one's teeth into something

to tackle a task with enthusiasm

to give something a blood transfusion

to give something new enthusiasm

to go hammer and tongs

to do something with great energy

to grab some opportunity with both hands

to seize some opportunity with great enthusiasm

to have one's heart in something

to be enthusiastic about and committed to a cause

to have one's heart set on something

to be very keen to achieve something

to jump at the opportunity

to enthusiastically take immediate advantage of a good chance

to jump into the ring

to join in enthusiastically

to leap at an idea

to accept a suggestion enthusiastically

to lose heart

to cease being enthusiastic

to make a beeline for something

to go straight to something with great enthusiasm or to head for some goal by the most direct route

to pour cold water on some idea

to be unenthusiastic about some proposal or scornful of its apparent weaknesses

to pull oneself together

to cease acting without purpose or enthusiasm

to rebound with a vengeance

to return to an issue with great enthusiasm

to run out of steam

to lose one's energy and enthusiasm

to start the ball rolling

to commence and enthusiastically advance an activity involving people
to take a shine to someone
to be keen on a person
to want someone's hide
to be keen to penalize a person

with much fanfare
with great enthusiasm and public acclaim

with open arms
enthusiastically

EXCESS

EQUALITY

a level playing field
competition on equal terms

a second-class citizen
a person not treated as an equal

between the devil and the deep blue sea
to be faced with two equally unpalatable alternatives which cannot both be avoided

it is a toss-up
either alternative is equally acceptable

only a cigarette paper between them
virtually equal or close together

only a postage stamp between them
virtually equal or close together

only a tissue between them
virtually equal or close together

the river found its mark
equilibrium between two pressures has been achieved

to be between Scylla and Charybdis
to be faced with two equally unpalatable alternatives which cannot both be avoided (refers to the voyage of Ulysses)

to be between a rock and a hard place
to be faced with two equally difficult and uncomfortable choices

to be line ball
to be equal

to compete on all fours with someone
to strive on equal terms

to fight fire with fire
to counter a dangerous situation by making an equally dangerous move

EXCESS

a holier-than-thou attitude
excessive righteousness

daylight robbery
the charging of grossly excessive prices

feather bedding
(in industrial relations) creating unnecessary jobs solely to increasing employment; (in economics) assisting an inefficient industry by government grants or excessive tariff protection

highway robbery
the charging of grossly excessive prices

paper warfare
an excessive amount of correspondence or red tape

penny-pinching
excessively mean

red tape
excessively bureaucratic procedures

someone has swallowed a dictionary
a person uses excessively long words

that takes the cake
that is quite absurd or outrageous or excessively cheeky

to be a sticky beak
to show excessive curiosity into matters not of one's concern

to be above water
(of securities) to have a market value in excess of the cost price

to be babes in the wood
to be excessively naive and inexperienced and thus ripe for exploitation

to be dressed up to the nines
to be attired in excessively elaborate garments
to be on one’s high horse
to be excessively pompous

to be tied to someone's apron strings
to be excessively influenced by a female

to be too frightened to say “boo”
to a goose
to be excessively shy

to be wet behind the ears
to be excessively naive and inexperienced

to burn the candle at both ends
to work excessively long hours

to charge like a wounded bull
to impose excessive prices (a play on words; not a simile)

to cost an arm and a leg
to be excessively expensive

to eat one’s head off
to eat excessively

to go overboard
to act foolishly and in an excessive way

to hang onto someone’s coattails
to excessively rely on another person’s initiatives

to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs
through excessive greed to destroy a very profitable enterprise

to make heavy weather of something
to struggle excessively with a relatively simple task

to make noise enough to wake the dead
to be excessively noisy

to pay through the nose
to pay an excessive price

to read the Riot Act
to reprimand persons who are excessively noisy (refers to the police reading out to a rowdy crowd extracts from a law requiring its dispersal)

to talk the hind leg off a donkey
to talk excessively

EXPECTATION

a gambit
an opening move in a competitive situation which involves short-term losses in the expectation of long-term gains

drawcard
feature expected to attract a crowd

front-runner
person expected to win

not to hold one’s breath for something
to give up all expectation

opening shot
first step in an activity expected to last a long time

the calm before the storm
the quiet period before an expected or inevitable crisis

there are black clouds on the horizon
bad news is expected

to batten down the hatches
to get ready for expected difficulties

to be a tall order
to be an unreasonable expectation

to be in cloud cuckoo land
to be mad or to have unrealistic expectations

to be more than flesh can stand
to be more than a person can reasonably be expected to endure

to be more than one bargained for
to be more than one expected

to be successful beyond one’s wildest dreams
to be far more successful than one could have expected

to beat the odds
to do better than could reasonably have been expected
to cast one's bread upon the waters
not to expect gratitude or recognition
for one's good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

to catch someone with his pants down
to act when another person least ex-
pects it

to catch someone with his trousers
down
to act when another person least ex-
pects it

to count one's chickens before they
are hatched
to treat as fact the expected results of
a future proposal

to defy gravity
to go up when the expectation is to
go down

to fall through
not to eventuate as expected

to grind to a halt
to cease some activity despite expec-
tations that it would continue

to live on borrowed time
to live longer than expected

to loom on the horizon
to be expected but not immediately

to raise merry hell
to prominently involve others in a
matter in the expectation of signifi-
cant results from this action

to raise the specter of something
to draw attention to a worrying ex-
pectation of something

to see the color of someone's eyes
to see how a person matches expecta-
tions or requirements

to seek the pot of gold at the end of
the rainbow
to have naive expectations

to turn up trumps
to finish up better than expected or to
experience unexpected good luck

to wait for the other shoe to drop
to await the seemingly imminent and
inevitable (refers to a man undressing,
disturbing a neighbor by dropping one
shoe, then frustrating his expectation
by putting the other shoe down gently)

to wear one's heart on one's sleeve
to lack the reserve expected of one

**EXPENSE**

*a Pyrrhic victory*
a win which costs more than if there
had been a loss (refers to the battle at
which King Pyrrhus of Epirus defeated
the Romans at Asculum)

*a white elephant*
an expensive and useless luxury (re-ers to gifts of sacred elephants by
the King of Siam to persons then
ruined by the expense of their upkeep)

*a white knight*
a party voluntarily coming to the as-
sistance of another party at considera-
able cost to itself

*garage sale*
sale of miscellaneous assets at cheap
prices

*heads I win—tails you lose*
whichever way this matter goes I will
benefit at your expense

*not to be worth the candle*
to be too expensive in relation to the
true value

*the law of the jungle*
the principle that those having power
will use it at the expense of all others

*the sky is the limit*
the cost is no obstacle

*to be above water*
(of securities) to have a market value
in excess of the cost price

*to be on the house*
to be free of cost
to buy something for a song
to buy something very cheaply
to cost an arm and a leg
to be excessively expensive
to cut costs to the bone
to economize
to hedge one's bets
to take action involving a cost but
which is designed to reduce the pos-
sible adverse consequences of some
activity
to hit someone hard
to greatly affect a person emotionally
or to cost a person a lot of money
to hold the purse strings
to have control of expenditure
to mortgage the future
to get benefits now but at a cost in
due course

EXPERIENCE

a blessing in disguise
an unwelcome but salutary experience

a green chum
an inexperienced person

a nightmare
an unpleasant experience

a past master
an expert with long experience

a trap for young players
a good opportunity for the inexperi-
enced or naive to make mistakes

a warhorse
an old soldier who likes to relive past
wartime experiences

an old head on young shoulders
experience, knowledge and maturity
in a young person

distant fields look greener
activities of which one has no experi-
ence seem much easier than is really
the case

hard-bitten
toughened by experience

hard-boiled
toughened by experience

off the top of one's head
based on experience but without de-
tailed consideration

to be babes in the wood
to be excessively naive and inexperi-
enced and thus ripe for exploitation

to be in a hole
to experience some difficulties

to be in a tight corner
to experience a crisis

to be in uncharted waters
to be the first to experience something

to be someone's bread and butter
to be a person's livelihood or to be a
person's everyday experience

to bet wet behind the ears
to be excessively naive and inexperi-
enced

to broaden someone's mind
to expose a person to a greater varie-
ty of experiences and interests than
he had previously

to cut one's teeth on something
to get one's first experience by doing
something

to feel the draft
to experience unfavorable conditions

to hide one's light under a bushel
to keep others in ignorance of one's
skills and experience

to learn a lesson
to benefit from one's experience

to pick someone's brain
to get the benefit of another person's
knowledge and experience

to put someone through the mill
to give a person practical experience
to reap as one has sown
to experience the consequences of one's own actions
to teach one's grandmother how to suck eggs
to try to tell a much more experienced person something very obvious to him
to turn up trumps
to finish up better than expected or to experience unexpected good luck

EXPERTISE

a backroom boy
an expert unable to communicate effectively with the lay public
a past master
an expert with long experience
father knows best
as an expert I know better than you do just what is most suitable for you
not to be someone's cup of tea
to be outside a person's expertise or area of interest
to be slipping
to be losing one's cunning or expertise
to be up one's alley
to be right within a person's expertise or area of interest
to hang up one's shingle
to go into business offering expert personal services
to stick to one's game
to confine oneself to activities in areas in which one has knowledge and expertise

FACT

a goldmine
a source of much wealth or of many facts
a gut feeling
a belief based purely on intuition and unsupported by facts or evidence

a sitting shot
an initial move which is designed to establish facts for use in a later action
a telltale sign
a visible indication revealing true facts despite efforts at concealment
it will all come out in the wash
the facts will emerge as work proceeds
put that in your pipe and smoke it
contemplate that fact
showdown
disclosure of certain pertinent facts
that takes on added color
there are now further facts which alter the appearance of a matter
the affair blew up
certain unwelcome facts have become publicly available
the boot is on the other foot
the real facts are the other way round
the penny dropped
a person has just realized a fact which should have been obvious (refers to old-fashioned pay toilets)
to almost drive someone to tears
to present information designed to make another person express sympathy not warranted by the facts
to ascertain the lay of the land
to establish the pertinent facts and opinions
to balance the picture
to put the other side of the story or to quote facts in contradiction
to be old hat
to be a very widely-known fact
to be on the wrong tram
to be completely mistaken as to the basic facts
to bring a fact home to someone
despite his inclination to the contrary, to make a person realize a fact
to count one's chickens before they are hatched
to treat as fact the expected results of a future proposal
to drag someone by the head and ears
to force a person to reveal the true facts
to draw a long bow
to state a conclusion which while possible is unlikely on the known facts
to flush out the facts
to ascertain, after some effort, the truth of some matter
to have one's wires crossed
to be mistaken about key facts
to have something to chew on
to have firm facts on which to base a decision
to send someone away with a flea in his ear
to give a person frank but unwelcome facts (refers to fleas trapped in the armor of ancient knights)
to sift
to closely examine the evidence or a set of facts with a view to attaching different significance as appropriate to each of the various components
to strengthen someone's hand
to give a person additional authority or greater moral support or more facts to support his case
to take something at face value
(of alleged facts) to accept something without question or challenge
to take something with a grain of salt
to regard the facts in a statement with considerable skepticism
to throw a cat among the pigeons
to cause consternation by revealing an unpleasant and unexpected fact
to throw in one's six pennies' worth
to modestly supply one's own facts or views
to throw in one's two cents' worth
to modestly supply one's own facts or views
to wake up to something
to realize a fact or its significance
to whitewash
to exonerate when this is not warranted by the facts
when the balloon goes up
when the adverse facts come to light
when the chips are down
when all facts are known and taken into consideration

FACTOR

a bottleneck
a factor obstructing an even flow
a catalyst
a factor causing something to happen
chicken and egg
two factors each of which results in the other
the lifeblood
the main or essential ingredient; or the person or factor instilling enthusiasm
the nigger in the woodpile
the factor spoiling an otherwise satisfactory arrangement
to be a magnet
to be a factor drawing a crowd of people
to cloud one's mind
to allow irrelevant or extraneous factors to affect one's impartiality or judgment
to make or break someone
to be a factor leading either to a person's success or to his failure, with no intermediate position
to paint a black picture
to state a set of unfavorable factors
to present a rosy picture
to state a set of favorable factors
to see which way the wind is blowing
to establish the factors relevant to a situation
to tip the scales
to be a factor which in combination with other factors results in a particular decision which would otherwise not have been reached

trigger
factor responsible for certain events occurring at that particular time

FAILURE

a bloodbath
catastrophic losses

a case of rats leaving a sinking ship
the desertion of an enterprise in anticipation of imminent failure

a damp squib
dissappointingly ineffective action (refers to fireworks which fail to go off)

a flash in the pan
something that begins promisingly but does not last (refers to the priming of old guns)

a gambit
an opening move in a competitive situation which involves short-term losses in the expectation of long-term gains

a game of cat and mouse
negotiations between two parties of unequal bargaining power during which the stronger makes some temporary concessions to the weaker without, however, affecting the latter's eventual total defeat

a landslide
an electoral result involving victory or defeat by an unexpectedly large margin

a Pyrrhic victory
a win which costs more than if there had been a loss (refers to the battle at which King Pyrrhus of Epirus defeated the Romans at Asculum)

a roller coaster ride
a series of successes followed by failures

a South Sea bubble
an unrealistic financial venture which is bound to result in total loss

checkmate
defeat

it is a case of sink or swim
the attempt is worthwhile, despite the risk of failure

stalemate
a final result in which neither party to a dispute is victorious

that is money down the drain
money has been wastefully lost on a failed project

the wheels fell off
the plan failed

to back the wrong horse
to have faith in, give support to and/or invest in a project which proves to be unsuccessful

to bang one's head up against a brick wall
to fight an unwinnable case

to be a dead duck
to have failed

to be done like a dinner
to be defeated and humiliated

to be on the ropes
to be facing defeat

to be one in the eye for someone
to represent an unexpected and unwelcome defeat

to be sheer murder
to be extremely unpleasant or difficult; or to be an inglorious defeat
to be slipping
to be losing one's cunning or expertise

to beat by a long shot
to defeat very convincingly

to become a vegetable
to lose one's mental and physical faculties

to burn one's fingers
to lose money through foolishness

to chase a corpse
to harp on something long ago resolved or a lost cause

to derail some strategy
to cause a strategy to fail

to draw a blank
to be unsuccessful

to eat crow
to accept a humiliating defeat

to eat someone alive
to soundly defeat a person

to fall to the ground
to fail

to fly out the window
to be lost

to force someone onto his knees
to inflict a humiliating defeat on a person

to get off the canvas
to recover after near defeat

to give someone a bath
to dramatically defeat a person

to go down the tube
to fail

to hold a winning hand
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

to hold all the aces
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

to hold the trump card
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others

to kiss something good-bye
to give something up as permanently lost

to kiss the ground
to suffer a loss

to lick one's wounds
to adjust oneself to defeat

to lose face
to endure embarrassment by virtue of being defeated or having one's errors found out

to lose money hand over fist
to lose money very fast and convincingly

to lose one's shirt
to make heavy financial losses

to make a last ditch stand
to make a brave effort to stave off final defeat

to make or break someone
to be a factor leading either to a person's success or his failure, with no intermediate position

to meet one's Waterloo
to receive a decisive defeat (refers to Napoleon's fate at the Battle of Waterloo)

to miss the boat
to fail to exploit an opportunity

to miss the bus
to fail to exploit an opportunity

to miss the sharks while netting the minnows
to succeed in minor aspects but fail in the ones that really matter

to miss the train
to fail to exploit an opportunity

to nurse one's bruises
to face up to the consequences of defeat

to overstep the mark
to fail to observe the proprieties
FRANKNESS

**to play the trump card**
to make a final move, thereby defeating one’s opponents

**to raise the stake**
to increase the amount of potential gain or loss in a project

**to rub it in**
to humiliate another person by emphasizing his defeat

**to save face**
to be allowed to keep one’s dignity despite having suffered a defeat or made an error

**to sink slowly in the West**
to fail gradually

**to stem the hemorrhage**
to put a stop to the financial losses of a project

**to throw good money after bad**
to waste further money in a vain attempt to recover money already lost

**to throw in the towel**
to concede defeat

**to throw up the sponge**
to concede defeat

**to tighten the noose**
to get closer to inflicting defeat

**to trump someone**
to defeat a person

**to turn the corner**
to commence being successful after initial failures

**to wipe the floor with someone**
to inflict a humiliating defeat on a person

**FALSITY**

* a false dawn
  an incident giving rise to unjustified hope

* a tall story
  an interesting but untrue and unbelievable tale

**a white lie**
a false statement uttered in a good cause

**some mud will stick**
reputations will be hurt even after accusations are proved false

**to cook the books**
fraudulently to maintain false records of financial transactions

**to dream up some story**
to concoct a false story naively or maliciously

**to lie through one’s teeth**
to tell blatant untruths

**to nail a lie**
to expose an untruth

**to pull someone’s leg**
to tell a false but plausible story as an act of humor

**to sail under false colors**
to pretend that one’s real character or beliefs are different from what they really are

**to speak with forked tongues**
to utter half-truths with the intention of misleading the listener

**to swallow the line**
to accept as truth the story being proffered

FRANKNESS

* a straight shooter
  a person who is frank and outspoken

* not to pull any punches
  to be brutally frank

**to come out into the open**
to start being frank

**to hit someone right between the eyes**
to be brutally frank

**to lay one’s cards on the table**
to be utterly frank and open or to honestly disclose one’s position
to make no bones about it
to be brutally frank

to send someone away with a flea in his ear
to give a person frank but unwelcome facts (refers to fleas trapped in the armor of ancient knights)

to shoot from the hip
to speak frankly and openly
to speak one's mind
to express one's views frankly and forcefully

FRIGHT

in fear and trembling
in a state of apprehension

to frighten hell out of someone
to alarm a person

to frighten the horses
to scare people off by one's ill-considered tactics

to have a threat hanging over one's head
to fear some intimidated unpleasant action

to have nerves of steel
not to be easily frightened

to lose one's nerve
to abandon, out of fear, a decision to do something

to make someone's flesh creep
to frighten a person with something horrific

to nearly jump out of one's skin
to receive a fright

to scare the pants off someone
to greatly frighten a person

FUTURE

a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
a benefit currently available is more valuable than a seemingly much larger benefit which may or may not be achieved in the future

a crystal ball
accurate knowledge of the future

a litmus test
an event which allows the outcome of future events to be predicted more accurately

to be destined for the scrap-heap
to face a future in which one will have no meaningful role

to conduct a postmortem on something
to review past actions with a view of learning lessons for the future (Latin, 'after the death')

to count one's chickens before they are hatched
to treat as fact the expected results of a future proposal

to have a cloud hanging over one's head
there is doubt as to one's future

to keep one's seat warm
to hold a position temporarily with a view to another person taking it over permanently in the near future

to keep something up one's sleeve
to secretly retain something in reserve for use in the future or at a later stage of negotiations

to mortgage the future
to get benefits now but at a cost in due course

to pigeon-hole
to put aside for further consideration in the distant future

to put something into cold storage
to put something aside for dealing with at some indeterminate future time

to telegraph one's punches
by one's actions to give advance warning of one's future plans

to wash one's hands of something
to emphatically decline future responsibility
HAPPINESS AND ENJOYMENT

*a field day*

*a very enjoyable and successful occasion*

*all his Christmases came at once*

*he was overjoyed*

*in Halcyon days*

*in past happier times (refers to the 14 days about the winter solstice when winds were calm and to the mythical bird said to breed in a floating nest at that time)*

*to be in a seventh heaven*

*to be very happy*

*to be in clover*

*to enjoy a life of ease and luxury*

*to be on cloud nine*

*to be very happy*

*to be on the crest of a wave*

*to enjoy success which may not last*

*to be on top of the world*

*to be very happy*

*to be wrapped in something*

*to enjoy something*

*to have a ball*

*to have an enjoyable time*

*to have a run for one’s money*

*to at least get some enjoyment out of an otherwise abortive exercise*

*to jump for joy*

*to express great satisfaction*

*to lap it up*

*to enjoy the attention*

*to laugh one’s head off*

*to greatly enjoy something*

*to throw one’s hat into the air*

*to express joy*

*to turn handstands*

*to express great joy*

*to walk on air*

*to be joyful*

---

to warm the cockles of someone’s heart

to delight a person

HARM

*a muckraker*

*a person who sets out to publicize misconduct of prominent persons or institutions*

*a mudraker*

*a person who sets out to publicize features harming another person’s reputation*

*not to touch a hair on someone’s head*

*not to harm a person*

*one cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs*

*the desired end dictates the means even if they cause harm to others*

*the final straw*

*the latest step, which, when added to a large number of seemingly harmless previous steps, sets off a disaster resulting from the cumulative effect*

*the straw which broke the camel’s back*

*the latest step, which, when added to a large number of seemingly harmless previous steps, sets off a disaster resulting from the cumulative effect*

*to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing*

*to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous although masquerading as something harmless (Matthew 7:15)*

*to cut one’s nose off to spite one’s face*

*to act in pique in a way which harms only oneself*

*to keep something on an even keel*

*to ensure that something is not harmed*
to let blood
to allow some harm as the price for achieving some greater benefit
to save one's bacon
to escape harm
to shoot oneself in the foot
to act in a foolish way and thus harm one's own cause
to stab someone in the back
to deliberately and surreptitiously harm a person who regarded one as a friend

HOPE

a chink of light
a small hope of a solution or breakthrough
a false dawn
an incident giving rise to unjustified hope
a fat chance
little hope
a light in the sky
a sign of great hope
a slough of despond
a feeling of hopelessness
not a dog's chance
no hope at all
not the ghost of a chance
no hope at all
pie in the sky
a hoped-for result unlikely to be achieved
the one bright spot on the horizon
the only hopeful aspect
things look black
there is little hope of success or prosperity or a favorable outcome
to clasp at straws
to have a hopeless case but show unjustified optimism on noting minor positive features
to fish for compliments
to drop hints in the hope that one will receive praise or recognition
to fly a kite
to issue uncovered checks in the hope that they will be covered before clearance or to test public reaction to legislation in contemplation by leaking broad details of it to the media
to have a snowflake's chance in hell
to have no hope or possibility at all
to keep one's fingers crossed
to hope for a good outcome
to pull something out of the fire
to salvage something in a seemingly hopeless situation
to sow seeds
to propagate ideas in the hope that they will be adopted
to teach someone a lesson
to inflict something unpleasant on a person in the hope that it will lead to a change in his behavior
to throw a sprat to catch a mackerel
to risk a little in the hope of gaining much
to touch wood
it is to be hoped that our good luck will not go away

IDEA

I buy that
I accept that idea
a brainwave
a suddenly occurring bright idea
a copycat
a person who imitates another person's ideas
a dinosaur
a person with incredibly outmoded ideas
a pipeline to someone
an intermediary used as a means of communicating ideas to a person
a swelled head
an exaggerated idea of one's abilities or status

a thought in the back of one's mind
an undeveloped idea

brainchild
inspired original idea

moonshine
unrealistic ideas

moth-eaten
(of ideas, etc.) antiquated

to act as a sounding board
to give, on request, constructive criticisms of ideas tentatively held

to be bankrupt of ideas
to be bereft of ideas

to be poles apart
to have ideas which are very different

to be someone's bete noire
to be a person whose ideas and actions cause upset and loathing in another person (French, "black beast")

to be the cat's pajamas
to have an exaggerated idea of one's own importance

to be the cradle of something
to be the place where some idea was first nurtured

to be too big for one's breeches
to have an exaggerated idea of one's own importance

to brainstorm
to pool thoughts in the course of a session designed to generate fresh ideas and especially to build upon the ideas of others

to disseminate ideas
to spread ideas to a wide audience (lit., "to scatter seeds in various places")

to dust some idea off
to revive some proposal

to encapsulate some idea
to reduce the essential points of a complicated proposal to a small number of words

to go to someone's head
to cause a person to get an exaggerated idea of his abilities or status

to have a blank canvas
to be bereft of ideas

to knock an idea on the head
to utterly reject a proposal

to leap at an idea
to accept a suggestion enthusiastically

to pour cold water on some idea
to be unenthusiastic about some proposal or scornful of its apparent weaknesses

to put one's heads together
to confer and pool ideas

to put pen to paper
to set out one's ideas in written form

to ram something down someone's throat
to pressure another person into accepting an idea with which he does not agree

to sow seeds
to propagate ideas in the hope that they will be adopted

to speak the same language
to have a good understanding and similar ideas

to stand on someone's shoulders
to build upon another person's ideas

to steal someone's clothes
to plagiarize another person's ideas

to test the water
to try out an idea in a small way

to throw something out of the window
to completely reject an idea or proposal

to turn someone's head
to cause a person to get an exaggerated idea of his abilities or status
young Turks
members of an organization who hold ideas regarded as too revolutionary

**INFERENCES**

*the answer is a lemon*
the outcome is inconclusive

to bark up the wrong tree
to reach an incorrect conclusion

to draw a long bow
to state a conclusion which while possible is unlikely on the known facts

to get the wrong sow by the ear
to reach an incorrect conclusion

to hit the nail right on the head
to astutely come to the correct conclusion

to jump to a conclusion
to infer something without proper consideration

to make up one’s mind
to reach a conclusion after contemplating a matter

to put two and two together
to reach a conclusion by combining isolated pieces of information

**INTEREST**

*a nine-day wonder*
an exciting event, but one which will cease to arouse interest when the novelty has worn off

*a sweetheart deal*
an agreement negotiated in private without full regard to the interests of those affected

*a tall story*
an interesting but untrue and unbelievable tale

*birds of a feather flock together*
persons of like interests gather in the same place

in our camp
in the group representing our vested interest

*kindred spirit*
person with similar interests and eccentricities

*not to be someone’s cup of tea*
to be outside a person’s expertise or area of interest

*not to care a pin for something*
not to have the slightest interest in something

*on our side of the fence*
in the group representing our vested interest

*someone’s guardian angel*
someone’s friend, watching over him and advancing his interests

*to be off on one’s hobby horse*
to throw into conversation aspects of a subject in which one has a passionate interest

*to be up one’s alley*
to be right within a person’s expertise or area of interest

*to bore someone to death*
to greatly weary a person by full and uninteresting conversation or by lack of action

*to bore someone to tears*
to greatly weary a person by full and uninteresting conversation or by lack of action

*to bore the pants off someone*
to weary a person by dull and uninteresting conversation

*to break ranks*
to identify oneself as having separate interests or views from the rest of a group

*to broaden someone’s mind*
to expose a person to a greater variety of experiences and interests than he had previously
to compare notes
to exchange information about some subject of mutual interest

to have a finger in the pie
to have an interest in a project

to have an ax to grind
to have a vested interest

to need to watch one's back
to find it necessary to take care in case others act against one's interests

to talk one's book
to present arguments which, while plausible, are really designed to foster one's vested interest

to throw one's hat into the ring
to publicly announce one's interest in some position

to wear a particular hat
to act in a particular capacity or for a particular vested interest

to whet one's appetite
to arouse one's curiosity or interest

INTERFERENCE

a logjam
a stoppage of activity caused by input in greater volume than allowed for

a palace revolt
the overthrow of those in authority by their subordinates

a stitch in time saves nine
preventive maintenance saves money in the long run

nothing is sacred
nothing is safe from interference

pull your head in!
do not interfere in this!

stumbling block
an impediment or difficulty preventing the easy completion of some project or a dilemma involving some moral issue

to be stopped in one's tracks
suddenly and unexpectedly to be prevented from carrying on with a project

to block someone's path
to interfere with a person's opportunity to advance himself

to break down the barriers
to do away with the prejudice preventing something

to cloud one's mind
to allow irrelevant or extraneous factors to affect one's impartiality or judgement

to get the red light
to be forbidden to do something

to go over someone's head
to bypass lower levels of authority and approach someone more senior instead

to hold someone on a short leash
to give a person very little authority

to keep off someone's pad
not to interfere with or compete against another person in his customary area of activity

to keep one's cotton-picking fingers off something
not to interfere in something

to keep someone in a straitjacket
to deny a person any discretionary powers at all

to let blood
to allow some harm as the price for achieving some greater benefit

to poke one's nose into something
to interfere

to put a legrope on someone
to give a person very little authority

to put a spoke in someone's wheel
to interfere with another person's activity, so preventing its continuance
to put one's foot down
to exert one's authority and insist on something

to queer the pitch for someone
to spoil the opportunity a person has to do something

to spike someone's guns
to cause something to become useless

to stand in someone's way
to prevent a person achieving his goal

to strengthen someone's hand
to give a person additional authority or greater moral support or more facts to support his case

to throw a spanner in the works
to cause an unexpected complication

to tie someone's hands
to prevent a person from acting as he sees fit

to tie someone's hands behind his back
to make it impossible for a person to act at all

to tread on someone's corns
to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility

to tread on someone's toes
to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility

to wipe the slate clean
to forgive past indiscretions

to be in the thick of things
to get involved at the center of some activity

to be on a treadmill
to be involved in some unpleasant ongoing activity which cannot readily be stopped

to be the center of the spider's web
to control an operation which involves numerous and/or complex ingredients

to be up to one's ears in something
to be very deeply involved in something

to be up to one's elbow in something
to be very deeply involved in something

to be up to one's neck in something
to be very deeply involved in something

to be up to the eyeballs in something
to be very deeply involved in something

to butt in
uninvited to involve oneself in someone else's conversation

to call it a day
to cease involvement with some activity

to catch someone in the net
to unexpectedly involve a particular person in the course of activity designed to involve many others

to cover one's tracks
to hide the evidence of one's involvement

to give the game away
to cease involvement with some activity

to have a finger in something
to be involved in something

to have a tiger by the tail
to be involved in an activity which is much more dangerous than one had realized

IN invOLVEMENT

a lone wolf
a person who prefers to act without involving others

a shaggy-dog story
an amusing anecdote with an unexpected ending, often involving talking animals given certain human skills

to be in something up to one's armpits
to be very deeply involved in something
to hijack a debate
to involve oneself in the public discussion of some matter and turn that discussion to one’s advantage

to leave someone high and dry
to isolate a person from a desired involvement

to raise merry hell
to prominently involve others in a matter in the expectation of significant results from this action

to see the back of someone
to know that a person is no longer involved in something

to start the ball rolling
to commence and enthusiastically advance an activity involving people

to take a backseat
tonot to actively involve oneself

to twiddle one’s thumbs
tonot to be involved in any worthwhile activity

JUDGMENT

beauty is in the eye of the beholder
some things are matters for subjective judgments

in someone’s eyes
in a person’s judgment

to cloud one’s mind
to allow irrelevant or extraneous factors to affect one’s impartiality or judgment

to fall flat on one’s face
to make a bad error of judgment

to have an open mind
to be willing to assess evidence on its merits and without prejudging it

to judge a book by its cover
foolishly to go only by superficial appearances

to put money on the table
to back one’s judgment in a tangible way or to demonstrate one’s sincerity

to put one’s money where one’s mouth is
to back one’s judgment by putting assets at risk

to twist someone’s arm
to coerce another person to do something against his will or better judgment

KNOWLEDGE

a crystal ball
accurate knowledge of the future

a down-to-earth solution
a realistic solution

a skeleton in the cupboard
an unpleasant truth the knowledge of which has been deliberately suppressed

an old head on young shoulders
experience, knowledge and maturity in a young person

as soon as someone’s back was turned
at the moment it became possible to do something without a person’s knowledge

father knows best
as an expert I know better than you do just what is most suitable for you

fools rush in where angels fear to tread
unsophisticated persons take unwise risks in circumstances where more knowledgeable persons would exercise caution

hard-headed
realistic

he would turn in his grave
he would have been very surprised or displeased if he had known while still alive

heaven only knows
it is not known

it hits one
one comes to realize something
it's a small world
it is surprising to meet people one
knows in unexpected places

not to have the foggiest notion
to know nothing at all about the subject

still waters run deep
a person with a quiet manner may
have a surprisingly great knowledge
of a subject

the left hand does not know what the
right hand is doing
one section of a large bureaucracy
does not realize that another section
is simultaneously doing something
inconsistent

the penny dropped
a person has just realized a fact which
should have been obvious (refers to
old-fashioned pay toilets)

the pot calling the kettle black
a person criticizing another person
without realizing his own even greater
shortcomings

the word is out
it is now known

to be a full bottle on something
to be very knowledgeable

to be at the end of one's tether
to be frustrated by a lack of knowl-
dge, authority or patience

to be child's play
to be easy or to require only elemen-
tary skills and knowledge

to be geared up to do something
to have equipment, labor and know-
how in place adequate for some task

to be hot on a subject
to be knowledgeable and enthusiastic
about a subject

to be in someone's blood
to be something about which a person
is very knowledgeable or keen

to be in the swim
to be a member of a group knowing
what is going on

to be old hat
to be a very widely-known fact

to bring a fact home to someone
despite his inclination to the contrary,
to make a person realize a fact

to buy a pig in a poke
to buy goods of unknown quality

to cock one's eye at someone
to glance knowingly at a person

to draw a long bow
to state a conclusion which while
possible is unlikely on the known
facts

to drop names
to slip names of celebrities allegedly
known to the speaker into a conversa-
tion in an attempt to impress

to hand on the torch
to pass on accumulated knowledge

to have a tiger by the tail
to be involved in an activity which is
much more dangerous than one had
realized

to have eyes at the back of one's head
to know more of what is going on
than is generally realized

to have one's feet firmly on the ground
to know what one is doing

to have one's fingers on the pulse
to know what is going on

to know something in one's heart of
hearts
to know something while reluctant to
admit it, even to oneself

to know something inside out
to know something very thoroughly

to know the ropes
to know how to do one's job
to know where one stands
to know what one supports or how one is affected

to know which way to turn
to know which strategy to adopt or where to seek assistance

to pick someone’s brain
to get the benefit of another person’s knowledge and experience

to put one’s reputation on the line
to take a public stance in the realization that there is a risk that one’s reputation will suffer if one is proved wrong

to see the back of someone
to know that a person is no longer involved in something

to shrug one’s shoulders
to indicate that one does not know or care or that one is unable or unwilling to assist

to stick to one’s game
to confine oneself to activities in areas in which one has knowledge and expertise

to wake up to something
to realize a fact or its significance

under someone’s nose
in a person’s immediate area of responsibility or in circumstances where he should have known something

what is this—a bunch of grapes or a bowl of goldfish?
surely you know what this is!

when the chips are down
when all facts are known and taken into consideration

with 20/20 hindsight
with the benefit of knowing what happened

LEADERSHIP

kingmaker
person engaging in behind-the-scenes activities to promote another person to a particular leadership position

the blind leading the blind
persons without the necessary skills for a task purporting to impart those skills to others

the high priest of something
the leading advocate of something

to be at the head of the pack
to be the best of many or the de facto leader

to be at the top of the tree
to be a leading member of one’s profession

to be the leading light
to be the most important person in a venture

to knock someone off his perch
to displace a person from his leadership position in some competitive situation

to set the pace
to give a lead in regard to a rate of progression

to spearhead something
to lead a movement

too many cooks spoil the broth
one leader is all that is required

LIKELIHOOD

a bull in a china shop
a careless person likely to cause great damage

a cancer
an evil which is likely to spread

a death wish
the contemplation of action so foolish that it is likely to lead to utter disaster

a loose cannon on the deck
a mistake likely to cause trouble
a new broom
a changed regime which is likely to alter the status quo

a pipedream
a fanciful notion, wished for but unlikely

an unholy alliance
a working relationship for a nefarious purpose between unlikely partners

it is pointing in the right direction
success looks likely

pie in the sky
a hoped-for result unlikely to be achieved

straws in the wind
unofficial preliminary indications of something likely to be formally revealed soon

there is blood in the water
something is likely to cause a person to go into a frenzy

to be on the cards
to be likely

to be shortsighted
not to recognize the likely consequences

to draw a long bow
to state a conclusion which while possible is unlikely on the known facts

to face a rocky road ahead
to be likely to encounter difficulties

to find a needle in a haystack
to find something when the probability of finding it is very small

to get brownie points
to do a person a favor with the likely result that the recipient will do a favor in return in due course

to give someone enough rope to hang himself
to give a person the opportunity to do something which is likely to get him into severe trouble

to leap frog something
to overtake something, with the likelihood of in turn being overtaken (refers to a game in which participants jump over each other in turn)

to make a rod for one's own back
to act in disregard of likely disadvantages for oneself

to spin a yarn
to tell an amusing or unlikely story

where there is smoke there is fire
if there is a hint of trouble, then it is highly likely that there really is trouble

MEMBERSHIP

a black sheep
a disreputable member of an otherwise reputable group

a blueblood
a person of high birth (refers to the appearance of veins on the skin of members of some royal families)

a clean sweep
the complete removal in an election of all sitting members

esprit de corps
a feeling of camaraderie and concern for the good name of some organization of which one is a member (French, "vital breath of a body")

flagship
most important member of a group of related entities

fresh blood
newly joined members of some organization

pariah
social outcast (refers to members of a low caste in India)

the lowest common denominator
the highest level of taste found among all the members of some target audience
to be a cuckoo in the nest
to purport to be a member of a group of people although having no such right

to be at the top of the tree
to be a leading member of one’s profession

to be in the swim
to be a member of a group knowing what is going on

to drum someone out of some organization
to terminate in ignominy a person’s employment or membership (refers to the ceremonial cashiering in the army to the beating of parade drums)

to introduce new blood
to recruit new members to some organization

to shepherd some group
to marshall the members of some group

young Turks
members of an organization who hold ideas regarded as too revolutionary

MISLEADING

a house of cards
an organization which gives a misleading impression of solidity

to lead someone a merry dance
to mislead a person

to lead someone up the garden path
to mislead a person by deliberately fallacious arguments

to pull the wool over someone’s eyes
to deceive or deliberately mislead another person

to speak with forked tongues
to utter half-truths with the intention of misleading the listener

to throw dust into someone’s eyes
to deceive a person by presenting inaccurate or misleading information

to throw someone off the scent
to deceive a person by giving out misleading indications

MISTAKE

a comedy of errors
a series of separate mistakes in relation to some matter (name of a Shakespeare play)

a loose cannon on the deck
a mistake likely to cause trouble

a slip of the tongue
incorrect words uttered accidentally

a trap for young players
a good opportunity for the inexperienced or naive to make mistakes

glaring error
patently obvious mistake

Murphy’s law
the principle that everything which can go wrong will go wrong

not to be a hanging matter
be only a minor mistake

sacrificial lamb
somebody unfairly made to suffer for the mistakes of others

something is rotten in the state of Denmark
the situation is not correct (from Shakespeare’s HAMLET)

to bark up the wrong tree
to reach an incorrect conclusion

to be off beam
to be mistaken

to be on the road to Damascus
to see the error of one’s ways (Acts 9:3)

to be on the wrong tack
to be using an incorrect procedure or policy

to be on the wrong track
to be heading toward an incorrect solution
to be on the wrong tram
  to be completely mistaken as to the basic facts

to be on the wrong wavelength
  to be incorrect in one's thinking

to be up the creek
  to be completely mistaken

to be wide off the mark
  to have a belief which is far removed from the true position

to catch someone flat-footed
  to embarrass a person in the course of his making mistakes or being unprepared

to clean up a mess
  to sort out mistakes or neglect

to drive a coach and horses through something
  to demonstrate major errors in something

to fall flat on one's face
  to make a bad error of judgment

to get the wrong sow by the ear
  to reach an incorrect conclusion

to have an eagle eye
  to be able to notice small mistakes very readily

to have hold of the wrong end of the pineapple
  to be utterly mistaken

to have one's wires crossed
  to be mistaken about key facts

to hold the wrong end of the stick
  to be completely mistaken about something

to lose face
  to endure embarrassment by virtue of being defeated or having one's errors found out

to put one's foot in it
  to make a foolish mistake

to put one's reputation on the line
  to take a public stance in the realization that there is a risk that one's reputation will suffer if one is proved wrong

to put the cart before the horse
  to do things in the wrong order

to save face
  to be allowed to keep one's dignity despite having suffered a defeat or made an error

to slip under one's guard
  to cause a mistake to be made despite care being taken to prevent this

to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind
  to make bad mistakes and to suffer the even worse consequences

MONEY

a cash cow
  a source of ready money

a license to print money
  a lucrative government-conferred monopoly or privilege

a stitch in time saves nine
  preventive maintenance saves money in the long run

he who pays the piper calls the tune
  a person contributing money or resources to a project is entitled to a say in its control

money for jam
  remuneration easily earned

not for love or money
  definitely not

not to be made of money
  not to be wealthy

not to have a bean
  to have no money

pin money
  an allowance to a wife for her personal use
that is money down the drain
money has been wastefully lost on a
failed project

the money is rolling in
the scheme is very profitable

to be a money spinner
to produce large profits easily and
quickly

to be in the black
to have money

to be in the red
to owe money

to be out of pocket
to have been forced to spend money
which cannot be recovered from others

to burn one's fingers
to lose money through foolishness

to button up one's purse
to refuse to spend money

to engage in pump priming
to spend public money with the aim
of attracting parochial electoral support

to have a run for one's money
to at least get some enjoyment out of
an otherwise abortive exercise

to have deep pockets
to have large financial resources

to have money burning a hole in
one's pocket
to be impatient to spend or invest
available funds

to have money flowing out of one's
ears
to be very rich

to hit someone hard
to greatly affect a person emotionally
or to cost a person a lot of money

to hold out a fistful of dollars
to offer money by way of inducement

to hold the purse strings
to have control of expenditure

to line one's pockets
to make, improperly and secretly, a
profit out of some transaction

to lose money hand over fist
to lose money very fast and convinc-
ingly

to pork barrel
to spend taxpayers' money in one
area in order to attract political support

to put money on the table
to back one's judgment in a tangible
way or to demonstrate one's sincerity

to put one's hand in one's pockets
to spend

to put one's money where one's mouth is
to back one's judgment by putting
assets at risk

to save a bundle
to save much money

to see the color of someone's money
to get evidence of the sincerity of a
person's proposal

to throw good money after bad
to waste further money in a vain
attempt to recover money already lost

to tighten the purse strings
to reduce outlays

to turn an honest penny
to earn money out of odd jobs

to turn one's chips in
to convert one's assets or entitlements
into cash

MONITORING

a watchdog
a person or organization monitoring
behavior

to keep an eye on the ball
to monitor a fast-changing situation

to keep one's eye on someone
to supervise a person or to monitor a
person's activities and behavior
to keep one's eye on something
to monitor a situation
to keep tabs on something
to monitor something

**NAIVETE**

to monitor a situation

to keep one's eye on something

to monitor a situation

to keep tabs on something

to monitor something

**NAIVETE**

*a lamb led to slaughter*
a naive person allowing himself to be exploited

*a trap for young players*
a good opportunity for the inexperienced or naive to make mistakes

*bright-eyed and bushy-tailed*
naive but enthusiastic

*not to have been born yesterday*
not to be naive

*that is strictly for the birds*
that is blatant and naive nonsense

*to be babes in the wood*
to be excessively naive and inexperienced and thus ripe for exploitation

*to be green*
to be naive

*to be off the planet*
to be extremely naive or uninformed

*to be wet behind the ears*
to be excessively naive and inexperienced

*to dream up some story*
to concoct a false story naively or maliciously

*to have come down in the last shower*
to be naive

*to seek the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow*
to have naive expectations

**NONSENSE**

*a load of rubbish*
blatant nonsense

*hogwash*
nonsense

*mumbo jumbo*
blatant nonsense (refers to a deity worshipped by primitive tribes)

*tell it to the marines*
such nonsense is not believable

*that is strictly for the birds*
that is blatant and naive nonsense

*to be eye wash*
to be nonsense

**OPINION**

*a prima donna*
a person with an exaggerated opinion of his own importance which makes relations with others needlessly difficult (Italian, “first lady”)

*heresy*
views different from those held by the majority

*spectrum*
wide range of different opinions or backgrounds

*the jury is still out*
no decision has yet been made or the public has not yet given an indication of its views

*the other side of the coin*
the arguments for the opposite point of view

*the tide is running in favor of some proposition*
public opinion supports some proposition

*to act as a devil's advocate*
to put a point of view which one does not hold in order to draw out the best arguments regarding a proposition (refers to a church official vetting a candidate for sainthood)

*to ascertain the lay of the land*
to establish the pertinent facts and opinions

*to be a lone voice in the wilderness*
to be the only person stating unpopular views
to be a thorn in someone’s flesh
to be a person whose persistent presence and righteous views annoy

to be full of hot air
to have an exaggerated opinion of one’s own importance and to boast about it

to be on the other side of the fence
to have an opposing point of view or position

to belt someone over the head
to override someone’s views or arguments

to break ranks
to identify oneself as having separate interests or views from the rest of a group

to bridge a gulf
to overcome a wide divergence in views

to change one’s mind
to alter the views which one had previously formed

to change one’s tune
to alter one’s publicly-expressed views

to claim that something is the best thing since sliced bread
to have an exaggerated opinion of the importance or novelty of an invention or practice

to echo someone’s words
to repeat another person’s views as though they were one’s own

to get words in edgeways
to manage to interrupt a conversation in order to put a separate point of view

to have a change of heart
to form a new view in place of a strongly-held previous view

to know one’s mind
to form and adhere to an opinion

to polarize
to cause people to identify themselves as belonging to groups holding opposing views

to pull one’s horns in
to retreat from previously stated views

to put someone back in his box
to make it clear to a person that his views are not welcome

to sail against the wind
to oppose the views currently being held by others

to sing a particular song
to state particular views

to speak one’s mind
to express one’s views frankly and forcefully

to take a sounding
to ascertain people’s views

to throw in one’s six pennies’ worth
to modestly supply one’s own facts or views

to throw in one’s two cents’ worth
to modestly supply one’s own facts or views

you can get lost
I intend to take no notice whatsoever of you or your views

you can jump in the lake
I intend to take no notice whatsoever of you or your views

OPPORTUNITY

a chink in someone’s armor
an opportunity to do something which otherwise could not be done

a chink in the wall
an opportunity to do something which otherwise could not be done

a foot in the door
the opportunity to do business
a golden opportunity
an unparalleled opportunity

toehold
an opportunity small in itself but with the potential to lead to bigger things

trap for young players
a good opportunity for the inexperienced or naive to make mistakes

window of opportunity
an opportunity temporarily available

ocean full of fish
plenty of opportunity

opening wide enough to drive a coach and four through
an excellent opportunity

this is the end of the road for someone
a person will have no further opportunity to do something

to crack in the wall
to represent a small unintended opportunity which can be exploited

to block someone's path
to interfere with a person's opportunity to advance himself

to blow something
unintentionally to destroy some opportunity

to carve out a niche for oneself
to deliberately create an opportunity to use one's talents effectively

to close the gate
to deny an opportunity which was previously available

to dip one's toe in the water
to gently explore an opportunity

to fill a vacuum
to take advantage of an opportunity not acted on by others

to find one's niche
to find the opportunity to use one's talents

to get only one bite at the cherry
to receive no further opportunity

to give someone enough rope to hang himself
to give a person the opportunity to do something which is likely to get him into severe trouble

to grab some opportunity with both hands
to seize some opportunity with great enthusiasm

to have a leg in
to have an opportunity which has the potential to lead to bigger things

to have other irons in the fire
to have the opportunity to do something else as an alternative

to have the ball at one's feet
to have unlimited opportunity

to keep one's eyes open for something
to be on the lookout for an opportunity to do something

to knock on doors
to seek out opportunities to do business

to miss the boat
to fail to exploit an opportunity

to miss the bus
to fail to exploit an opportunity

to miss the train
to fail to exploit an opportunity

to open up doors
to create opportunities

to put one's toe in the water
to gently explore an opportunity

to queer the pitch for someone
to spoil the opportunity a person has to do something

to run with the ball
to make the most of the opportunity

to shut the door on someone
to deny another person a desired opportunity
to turn back the clock
to have another opportunity to do something which should have been done already or to undo something which cannot be undone

your race is run
you have had your opportunity

PAST

a past master
an expert with long experience

a warhorse
an old soldier who likes to relive past wartime experiences

in Halcyon days
in past happier times (refers to the 14 days about the winter solstice when winds are calm and to the mythical bird said to breed in a floating nest at that time)

the chickens are coming home to roost
the consequences of past actions are becoming obvious

the melody lingers on
the benefit of past actions remains

to be a breath of fresh air
to be a pleasant change from the past

to conduct a postmortem on something
to review past actions with a view to learning lessons for the future (Latin, "after the death")

to even the score
to get one's own back for some past action

to start from scratch
to commence something without the benefit of any past activity

to wipe the slate clean
to forgive past indiscretions

PLEASURE

a willing horse
a cheerful worker

fun and games
amusement derived in the course of a serious activity

not to be all beer and skittles
not to be all pleasant and easy

the cheering could be heard a block away
there was great rejoicing

the party is over
the previous pleasant arrangements have been discontinued

to be a breath of fresh air
to be a pleasant change from the past

to be a stormy petrel
a person who disturbs a pleasant state of affairs by agitating for change

to be a tonic
to cheer someone up

to be full of beans
to be very cheerful

to be in good heart
to be cheerful, especially in adversity

to be meat and drink
to be very pleasurable

to be music to one's ears
to be comments which one is very pleased to hear

to be on a path strewn with roses
to lead a very pleasant life

to be tickled pink
to be very pleased

to bounce back
to resume a cheerful existence after some setback

to bring the house down
to greatly amuse an audience

to cast a cloud over something
to spoil the pleasure of an occasion

to drain every ounce out of something
to get the maximum use or pleasure out of something
to give someone heart
to cause a person to cheer up

to have an audience rolling in the aisles

to amuse an audience

to have someone in stitches
to greatly amuse a person

to kill oneself laughing
to be greatly amused

to lick one's chops
to look forward to something with pleasurable anticipation

to positively purr
(of a person) to be very pleased; (of an engine) to run very smoothly

to take the rough with the smooth
to accept the hardships of life along with its pleasant features

POSSIBILITY

a middle-of-the-road solution
a solution near the middle of a range of possibilities

as soon as someone's back was turned
at the moment it became possible to do something without a person's knowledge

bedrock price
lowest possible price

catch-22
a situation made impossible because it requires as a prior fulfillment something which does not exist until that condition is satisfied (title of a novel by Joseph Heller)

on the deathknock
at the last possible moment

one can't get a quart into a pint pot
one cannot do the impossible

one can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear
it is impossible to manufacture something of a high standard without appropriate raw materials

that has put paid to it
the project can no longer proceed

that is a long shot
there is only a remote possibility

the game is up
escape is now impossible

there is more than one way to skin a cat
this can be achieved in a variety of acceptable ways

to be a crack in the wall
to represent a small unintended opportunity which can be exploited

to be a gray area
to be in an undefined position straddling two or more possibilities

to be able to do something standing on one's head
to be able to do something very easily

to be able to do something with one hand behind one's back
to be able to do something very easily

to be able to eat someone for breakfast
to be able to outwit a person very easily

to be able to lay one's hand on something
to be able to locate something

to be able to spot trouble a mile away
to be able to spot trouble before it actually happens

to conjure up something
to produce something in circumstances where this seemed impossible

to draw a long bow
to state a conclusion which while possible is unlikely on the known facts

to draw blood from a stone
to do the impossible

to exhaust the field
to use up all the possibilities
to have a good nose for business
to be able to identify profitable business situations

to have a snowflake's chance in hell
to have no hope or possibility at all

to have an eagle eye
to be able to notice small mistakes very readily

to have broad shoulders
to be able to cope well with responsibility

to have one's foot on something
to be about to acquire something or to be able to acquire something

to lurk in the shadows
to have a low profile at the moment, but with the possibility of becoming much more conspicuous at any time

to move heaven and earth
to do everything possible

to paint oneself into a corner
to foolishly put oneself into a position from which escape is impossible

to produce something out of thin air
to get hold of something in circumstances where this seemed impossible

to push water uphill
to foolishly attempt the impossible

to tie someone's hands behind his back
to make it impossible for a person to act at all

to try to square the circle
to attempt the impossible (refers to a classical problem in geometry, namely, to construct with a compass a square of the same area as a given circle)

to paint oneself into a corner
to foolishly put oneself into a position from which escape is impossible

to produce something out of thin air
to get hold of something in circumstances where this seemed impossible

to push water uphill
to foolishly attempt the impossible

to tie someone's hands behind his back
to make it impossible for a person to act at all

to try to square the circle
to attempt the impossible (refers to a classical problem in geometry, namely, to construct with a compass a square of the same area as a given circle)

two can play at that game
it is possible to retaliate

POWER

a figurehead
the ceremonial chief officer of some organization without any real power (refers to the carving at the front of a ship)

a game of cat and mouse
negotiations between two parties of unequal bargaining power during which the stronger makes some temporary concessions to the weaker without, however, affecting the latter's eventual total defeat

a tall poppy
a person with great power or responsibility and/or in receipt of high remuneration

a toothless tiger
an authority which has been given totally inadequate powers for its task

if the mountain will not come to Mahomet then Mahomet will go to the mountain
on recognizing that one has insufficient power to effect one's most desired solution, one decides to make do with the next best alternative

more power to your elbow
may your praiseworthy efforts lead to success

one can't beat City Hall
the ordinary citizen is powerless against bureaucracy

the law of the jungle
the principles that those having power will use it at the expense of all others

the power behind the throne
a person exercising the real authority but without having the official right to do so (the antonym of "titular head")

the top dog
the person in the most powerful position
to be in the box seat
to be in a very powerful position to control activity

to flex one's muscles
to exert one's personality or powers

to have a long arm
to have far-reaching power

to hold the power to do something in the hollow of one's hand
to have the right to make crucial decisions

to keep someone in a straitjacket
to deny a person any discretionary powers at all

to trample someone underfoot
by virtue of one's great power to treat a person's rights with contempt and not to give them proper consideration

to wield a big stick
to exert power

under one's own power
without external help

PRACTICABILITY

a castle in Spain
an impractical proposition

a castle in the air
an impractical proposition

to be in an ivory tower
to be immersed in theoretical considerations and ignorant of the practical realities (Song of Solomon 7:4)

to jettison some proposal
to abandon some proposal as worthless or impracticable

to pay lip service to some rules
to disregard some rules in practice while acknowledging them in words

to put someone through the mill
to give a person practical experience

to start with a blank sheet of paper
to commence an exercise without being bound by any established practices

to turn sour
to become impracticable or unprofitable

PRAISE

a backhanded compliment
a polite expression seemingly of praise but really intended as an insult

more power to your elbow
may your praiseworthy efforts lead to success

to fish for compliments
to drop hints in the hope that one will receive praise or recognition

to get full marks for something
to deserve praise for something

to pull oneself up by one's bootstraps
to make a praiseworthy effort to better oneself unaided

to sing someone's praises
to commend a person exuberantly

PRETENSE

a castle in Spain
an impractical proposition

to act out a charade
ostentatiously to pretend to be doing something in an ethical fashion

to be mutton dressed up as lamb
to foolishly pretend to be younger

to play possum
to pretend that one is not present

to sail under false colors
to pretend that one's real character or beliefs are different from what they really are

to sweep something under the carpet
to pretend that some blemish does not exist

to touch a nerve
to mention something which another person would rather pretend did not exist

to turn a blind eye to something
to pretend something obvious does not exist (refers to action by Nelson when disregarding Admiralty signals)
### PRICE AND VALUE

#### THESSAURUS

**PREVENTION**

*I'll soon stop his little game*

his activities are not tolerated and I will ensure that they cease

*a bottleneck*

a factor obstructing an even flow

*a logjam*

a stoppage of activity caused by input in greater volume than allowed for

*a stitch in time saves nine*

preventive maintenance saves money in the long run

*cut it out!*

stop doing that!

*stonewalling*

deliberate obstruction or delaying tactics

*stumbling block*

an impediment or difficulty preventing the easy completion of some project or a dilemma involving a moral issue

*the fat is in the fire*

action with certain unstoppable consequences has now been initiated

*to be on a treadmill*

to be involved in some unpleasant ongoing activity which cannot readily be stopped

*to be stopped in one's tracks*

suddenly and unexpectedly to be prevented from carrying on with a project

*to break down the barriers*

to do away with the prejudice preventing something

*to chop someone off at the socks*

to stop someone's proposals prematurely

*to come to a full stop*

to completely cease activity

*to fetter someone*

to stop a person acting on his own initiative

---

**PRICE AND VALUE**

*a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*

a benefit currently available is more valuable than a seemingly much larger benefit which may or may not be achieved in the future

*a jewel*

a valued assistant
a listening post
da place where information of strategic value can be collected

a treasure trove
a valuable discovery

bedrock price
lowest possible price

daylight robbery
the charging of grossly excessive prices

fire sale
a forced sale, realizing bargain prices

garage sale
sale of miscellaneous assets at cheap prices

highway robbery
the charging of grossly excessive prices

not a mite
not at all (refers to a Flemish coin of small value)

not to be worth a continental
to have no value (refers to currency notes)

not to be worth the candle
to be too expensive in relation to the true value

something has no guts in it
something has no real value to it

to be above water
(of securities) have a market value in excess of the cost price

to cast pearls before swine
to confer valuable benefits on someone who neither recognizes nor appreciates them

to charge a mint
to impose very high prices

to charge like a wounded bull
to impose excessive prices (a play on words; not a simile)

to charge the earth
to impose very high prices

to earn peanuts
to get a reward which is far too small in relation to the value of the services rendered

to go through the roof
(of a person) to be very upset or (of prices) to escalate greatly

to hand over something on a silver platter
to provide a valuable benefit for virtually nothing

to lose one's right arm
to lose some highly-valued assistance

to pay something back with interest
to return a small favor with a bigger favor or to extract retribution of greater value than the circumstances warrant

to pay through the nose
to pay an excessive price

to pick the eyes out of something
to choose the most valuable items from among a large number

to sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage
through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)

to sell someone a pup
to cheat a person in a transaction, especially by misrepresentation as to the true value of something

to skyrocket
(of a price or value) to increase greatly in a short time

yeoman service
valuable assistance over a long time

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

barefaced
shameless

to be done like a dinner
to be defeated and humiliated
to be in the doghouse
to be in disgrace
to be the apple of someone's eye
to be a person of whom another person is proud
to cut tall poppies down to size
to humiliate haughty persons
to hang one's head
to be ashamed of oneself
to put on airs and graces
to act in an affected manner
to rub it in
to humiliate another person by emphasizing his defeat
to rub someone's nose in it
to humiliate a person by highlighting something embarrassing to him
to swallow one's pride
to take action despite the humiliating nature of this course

PROBLEM

Bob's your uncle
that solves the problem

a can of worms
a heterogeneous collection of unexpected problems

a step in the right direction
the first in a series of measures designed to correct some problem

a time bomb
a source of serious problems which are certain to surface later on
growing pains
problems encountered by virtue of expansion

join the club!
you are only one of many people with similar problems

not to be Robinson Crusoe
to be one of a large number of people with a common problem (from Daniel Defoe's ROBINSON CRUSOE)

one's door is always open
people can take their problems to one at any time
teething trouble
problems in the early stages of a project
the sky fell in
a very serious problem arose
the squeaky wheel gets the most attention
those complaining the most loudly will get their problems sorted out first
to be left holding the baby
to be tricked into accepting responsibility for someone else's problems
to be the hard core
to be the central and most difficult problem
to come to grips with some problem
to be on the way to solving a problem
to cut the Gordian knot
to solve, especially by force, a virtually insoluble problem (refers to a complicated knot tied by Gordius and eventually cut by Alexander the Great)
to fiddle at the edges
to do some relatively minor things which do not deal with the substance of a problem
to get stuck into some problem
to attempt to solve a problem with great vigor
to get to first base
to succeed in getting others to start comprehending a problem
to heave a sigh of relief
to express satisfaction at the achievement of a solution to a difficult problem
to iron out something
to sort out a difficult problem
to jump a hurdle
to overcome a problem or difficulty
to jump that hurdle when one comes to it
to deal with a particular problem only when it becomes necessary to do so
to just hold one's head above water
to cope with problems but with little margin to spare or to stay solvent
to leave something up in the air
to continue with an unresolved problem
to make mountains out of molehills
to treat a minor problem as though it were a major disaster
to need something like a hole in the head
to be landed with a completely undesired problem
to play the cards as they fall
to deal with problems as they arise
to present a happy face to the world bravely to gloss over one's problems
to prey on one's mind
(of a problem) to keep worrying one
to put one's thinking cap on
to concentrate on finding a solution to a difficult problem
to take the bit between one's teeth
to face up a problem
to take the bull by the horns
to come to grips with the realities of a difficult problem
to try to square the circle
to attempt the impossible (refers to a classical problem in geometry, namely, to construct with a compass a square of the same area as a given circle)

PUNISHMENT

for one's sins
by way of punishment, as it were
heads will roll
transgressors will be punished
to be a glutton for punishment
to act irresponsibly in the face of inevitable retribution
to be for the high jump
to be threatened with a reprimand and punishment
to get off scot free
to go unpunished (refers to an exemption from tax)
to kiss the rod
to accept punishment meekly
to send someone to Coventry
to ostentatiously and collectively ignore a person by way of punishment
to thrash with a feather
to award only a minor punishment for a very serious offense

READINESS

a cash cow
a source of ready money
off the peg
(of clothes) ready-made
ready-made
easily fabricated or available without difficulty
to batten down the hatches
to get ready for expected difficulties
to be at hand
to be in the vicinity, ready to help
to be up to concert pitch
to be ready
to clear the decks
to get ready for action
to draw a deep breath
to get ready for exertion or for emotional news
to gird up one's loins
to get ready for action
to grit one's teeth
to get ready to suffer pain
to prepare one’s ground

to set the scene for something
to get things ready for something

to sharpen one’s ax

to get ready for a difficult task

to sharpen the knives

to get ready for a concerted attack on some principle

to spread one’s wings

to assert authority which has not yet been conferred by one’s superiors and for which one may not be ready

to warm up

to get ready

REFUSAL AND REJECTION

a doubting Thomas
a person who refuses to believe claims in the absence of proof (John 20:25)

not to lift a finger to help someone

to refuse to assist

that is not to be sneezed at

that is so significant that it should not be rejected


to be a dog in the manger

to spitefully deny something to others, notwithstanding its uselessness to oneself


to be an ostrich

to refuse to face up to an unpleasant truth (refers to the reputed habit of ostriches in danger)


to be like water off a duck’s back

to refuse to face up to an unpleasant truth (refers to the reputed habit of ostriches in danger)


to blackball someone

to reject a person as unsuitable


to bury one’s head in the sand

to refuse to face up to an unpleasant truth (refers to the reputed habit of ostriches in danger)
to slam the door in someone's face
ostentatiously to refuse to have any dealings with a person

to throw a blanket over a proposal
refuse to proceed with a proposal

to throw something out of the window
to completely reject an idea or proposal

to turn off the tap
to deny further access to supplies or information

to turn one's back on someone
to decline to further assist or deal with a person

to wash one's hands of something
to emphatically decline future responsibility

wild horses would not cause me to do something
I absolutely refuse to do something (refers to a form of torture)

REPUTATION

a black sheep
a disreputable member of an otherwise reputable group

a muckraker
a person who sets out to publicize misconduct of famous persons or institutions

a mudraker
a person who sets out to publicize features harming another person's reputation

by their fruits ye shall know them
their reputation will be based on their results (Matthew 7:20)

he must have a long spoon that sups with the devil
great care is needed when negotiating deals with disreputable parties

some mud will stick
reputations will be hurt even after accusations are proved false

to blot one's copybook
to spoil one's previously good reputation or record

to crucify someone
to unfairly do severe damage to a person's reputation or credibility

to have a black mark against one's name
to have a tarnished reputation

to look to one's laurels
to be careful not to lose one's reputation for some skill

to make a name for oneself
to earn a good reputation by virtue of some skill

to make something one's trademark
to earn a reputation for maintaining some stance

to paint someone black
to ruin a person's reputation

to put one's reputation on the line
to take a public stance in the realization that there is a risk that one's reputation will suffer if one is proved wrong

to rest on one's laurels
to use a reputation for success earned in earlier times as a substitute for current endeavor

to undermine someone's position
to injure another person's reputation and influence by unfair and secret tactics

RESPONSIBILITY

a tall poppy
a person with great power or responsibility and/or in receipt of high remuneration

charity begins at home
a person's first responsibility should be to his family
RESPONSIBILITY

one's opposite number
a person with similar responsibilities in another organization

someone would run a mile
a person would do anything to escape his responsibilities

that is on your head
you will have to accept responsibility for that

the ball is in someone's court
it is some other person's responsibility

the buck stops here
I accept full responsibility (sign on the desk of Harry S. Truman when president of the United States)

to abandon ship
to abrogate one's responsibilities or to abandon a project

to be a glutton for punishment
to act irresponsibly in the face of inevitable retribution

to be in someone's bailiwick
to be some other person's responsibility

to be in someone's shoes
to have another person's responsibility

to be left holding the baby
to be tricked into accepting responsibility for someone else's problems

to be one's baby
to be one's area of responsibility

to be one's pigeon
to be one's area of responsibility

to be tied down
to have responsibilities precluding alternative activities

to dump something in someone's lap
to impose some responsibility on another person

to engage in empire building
to set out to expand the size of the business or bureaucratic unit for which one is responsible, especially as a means of increasing one's own importance

to face the music
to accept responsibility when confronted by one's critics

to have blood on one's hands
to be the person responsible for someone else's predicament

to have broad shoulders
to be able to cope well with responsibility

to pass the buck
is an uncooperative spirit to decline responsibility for a matter on the grounds that someone else more properly has responsibility for it

to pin someone down
to find a person willing to accept blame or responsibility or to force a person to announce a decision or concede a point

to put a burden on someone's shoulders
to impose responsibilities on a person

to take a weight off someone's shoulder
to assist a person by relieving him of some responsibility

to tread on someone's corns
to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility

to tread on someone's toes
to upset another person by interfering in his area of responsibility

to walk away from something
to abrogate one's responsibilities in regard to some matter

to wash one's hands of something
to emphatically decline future responsibility

under someone's nose
in a person's immediate area of responsibility or in circumstances where he should have known something

uneasy lies the head that wears a crown
responsibility involves some risks and some burdens (from Shakespeare's HENRY IV)
RESULT

a South Sea bubble
an unrealistic financial venture which is bound to result in total loss

a landslide
an electoral result involving victory or defeat by an unexpectedly large margin

a litmus test
an event which allows the outcome of future events to be predicted more accurately

a patchwork quilt
a result arising from many uncoordinated inputs

a photo finish
a close result in a contest

all roads lead to Rome
all alternatives will have the same outcome

backwash
consequence

by their fruits ye shall know them
their reputation will be based on their results (Matthew 7:20)

chicken and egg
two factors each of which results in the other

come hell or high water
regardless of the consequences

death blow
incident which results in the destruction of something

harvest
end result of labor

if the cap fits then wear it
if your circumstances correspond with those described then you must endure the consequences

one can't make bricks without straw
one cannot achieve results in the absence of adequate resources

one has made one's bed and one will now have to lie on it
one has to bear the consequences of one's actions

one might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb
further action will not increase the adverse consequences already in train (refers to the stealing of both sheep and lambs being capital crimes under old English law)

one shudders to think what the outcome might be
there is great concern as to the outcome

pie in the sky
a hoped-for result unlikely to be achieved

stalemate
a final result in which neither party to a dispute is victorious

the answer is a lemon
the outcome is inconclusive

the chickens are coming home to roost
the consequences of past actions are becoming obvious

the fat is in the fire
action with certain unstoppable consequences has now been initiated

the final straw
the latest step, which, when added to a large number of seemingly harmless previous steps, sets off a disaster resulting from the cumulative effect

the proof of the pudding is in the eating
the success of a venture will be measured by its results

the straw which broke the camel's back
the latest step, which, when added to a large number of seemingly harmless previous steps, sets off a disaster resulting from the cumulative effect
things look black
there is little hope of success or prosperity or a favorable outcome

to apply pressure on someone
to induce a person to do something which he would otherwise not do by implying adverse consequences if he does not cooperate

to be a laid-down misère
to be very easily accomplished and/or to be certain of outcome (refers to the declaration in certain card game undertaking to win no tricks)

to be a mixed blessing
to be an outcome with some desirable and some undesirable features

to be hell bent on something
to be very determined to achieve something, regardless of the adverse consequences

to be on tenterhooks
to anxiously await some result

to be shortsighted
not to recognize the likely consequences

to be the kiss of death
to be something intended to be helpful but resulting in total destruction

to be the luck of the draw
to be a chance result

to bear fruit
to result in success

to break one’s duck
to end a spell without results

to count one’s chickens before they are hatched
to treat as fact the expected results of a future proposal

to cover one’s hide
to provide excess or take other evasive action in an attempt to avoid the adverse consequences of one’s actions

to cry ‘‘wolf’’
to repeatedly raise an unjustified concern with the result that one will be ignored when the circumstances change

to dig one’s own grave
to take action which results in an unintended disaster for oneself

to get brownie points
to do a person a favor with the likely result that the recipient will do a favor in return in due course

to have egg on one’s face
to be embarrassed by the results of one’s own stupidity

to hedge one’s bets
to take action involving a cost but which is designed to reduce the possible adverse consequences of some activity

to hide under someone’s skirts
to let someone else take the consequences of one’s actions

to hold a knife at someone’s throat
to exert undue pressure on another person in an endeavor to achieve a result which would otherwise not be forthcoming

to hold a sword at someone’s throat
to exert undue pressure on another person in an endeavor to achieve a result which would otherwise not be forthcoming

to keep one’s fingers crossed
to hope for a good outcome

to let someone off the hook
to allow a person to escape the adverse consequences of his own actions

to nurse one’s bruises
to face up to the consequences of defeat

to open up the floodgates
to take action which will have massive consequences
to pay the price
to suffer the adverse consequences of one's acts or omissions

to prick up one's ears
to suddenly start paying attention to a conversation in progress as a result of a half-heard phrase

to raise merry hell
to prominently involve others in a matter in the expectation of significant results from this action

to reap as one has sown
to experience the consequences of one's own actions

to reap the whirlwind
to suffer the adverse consequences of a bad act

to score a hat trick
to have three successive favorable outcomes

to seal someone's fate
to cause a certain outcome adversely affecting a person

to shake a tree
to do something in order to see what will result

to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind
to make bad mistakes and to suffer the even worse consequences

to stew in one's juice
to suffer the adverse consequences of one's acts or omissions

to stir up a hornet's nest
to take action which results in unpleasant side-effects

to take a caning
to suffer the adverse consequences of one's acts or omissions

to throw one's weight about
to use one's real or imagined status in order to achieve certain results

to tip the balance
to provide further information or argument which results in an issue which could have been decided either way being determined in a particular way

to tip the scales
to be a factor which in combination with other factors results in a particular decision which would otherwise not have been reached

RETIRED

to provide further information or argument which results in an issue which could have been decided either way being determined in a particular way

to tip the scales
to be a factor which in combination with other factors results in a particular decision which would otherwise not have been reached

REVERSAL

to provide further information or argument which results in an issue which could have been decided either way being determined in a particular way

to tip the scales
to be a factor which in combination with other factors results in a particular decision which would otherwise not have been reached

REVERSAL
the die is cast
the course of action in train is irreversible

to backpedal
to reverse to some extent previously applied policies

to burn one’s bridges
to do something irreversible

to cross the Rubicon
to make an irreversible decision in regard to some commitment

to do a U-turn
to reverse one’s thinking

to do an about-face
to reverse a previously enunciated policy

to let the genie out of the bottle
to cause something irreversible to take place

to turn a complete somersault
to reverse one’s established policy

to turn around 180 degrees
to completely reverse a stance

to turn round
to reverse one’s policy

to turn something on its ear
to reverse something

to turn something on its head
to reverse something

to turn the tables on someone
to cause the relative positions of oneself and another person to be reversed

to turn the tide
to reverse the direction of something

volte face
a reversal of previously-held beliefs
(French, “a turning around”)

RISK

fools rush in where angels fear to tread
unsophisticated persons take unwise risks in circumstances where more knowledgeable persons would exercise caution

in for a penny—in for a pound
once something is commenced it ought to be finished; or if one is willing to take a small risk then one might as well take a bigger one

it is a case of sink or swim
the attempt is worthwhile, despite the risk of failure

it was touch and go
there were considerable risks—the objective was achieved, but only just

nervous Nellies
persons unwilling to take any risks

not to put all one’s eggs in one basket
to spread one’s risks

someone’s job is on the line
a person’s career path is under consideration and/or his present position is at risk

to be sitting on a volcano
to be safe for the time being but exposed to the risk of a sudden great disaster

to chance one’s arm
to take a great risk (refers to the stripes on the uniforms of non-commissioned officers)

to enter treacherous waters
to engage in an enterprise with risks which are not obvious

to go out on a limb
to put oneself at risk through foolish action

to go through fire and water
to undertake all attendant risks

to jump in feet first
to take a calculated risk

to play Russian roulette
to take stupid risks

to play it safe
to take no risks

to play with dynamite
to invite trouble by virtue of one’s risky conduct
to push one's luck
having already done well in something, to then take risks which can prejudice everything

to put one's money where one's mouth is
to back one's judgment by putting assets at risk

to put one's reputation on the line
to take a public stance in the realization that there is a risk that one's reputation will suffer if one is proved wrong

to stick one's neck out
to have the courage of one's convictions or to take a calculated risk

to take a punt
to take a calculated risk

to take the plunge
to expose oneself to certain risks

to throw a sprat to catch a mackerel
to risk a little in the hope of gaining much

uneasy lies the head that wears a crown
responsibility involves some risks and some burdens (from Shakespeare's HENRY IV)

SADNESS

heartache
sadness

heartbreak
despair

one's heart bleeds for someone
one feels truly sad for a person's fate

there is blood on the floor
this has caused great anguish

to beat one's breast
to express sorrow

to cast a shadow over something
to introduce a note of warning or sadness in regard to some matter

to cry one's eyes out
to express great sadness at a situation

to drown one's sorrows
to drink by way of solace and in an attempt to forget some misfortune

to set someone's teeth on edge
to cause a person to feel unhappy at a situation

to take something to heart
to learn to appreciate the significance of something or to be much saddened by something

with a heavy heart
in sorrow

you can eat your heart out
you are entitled to feel sad or jealous

SAMENESS

a nod is the same as a wink to a blind horse
fine distinctions are not appropriate here

a round robin
a series of checks from A to B, from B to C, from C to A, and so on, leaving all of them in the same net position as before

all roads lead to Rome
all alternatives will have the same outcome

birds of a feather flock together
persons of like interests gather in the same place

Box and Cox
two persons who are never around at the same time (from the name of a play)

by the same token
by way of corroboration

in one fell swoop
all at the same time

not to be in the same street as someone
not to be of comparable quality
to all sing from the same hymnal
to act consistently with each other
to be in harmony with someone
to act in the same way as another person
to be in the same boat
to share a common set of difficulties
to be in the same league
to have comparable skills
to be in tune with someone
to think on the same lines as another person
to be on the same wavelength
to think on similar lines
to be tarred with the same brush
to be damned merely because of one’s association with another person
to be with it
to think on the same lines as the current generation or to be fully informed
to follow suit
to do the same as others
to speak the same language
to have a good understanding and similar ideas
under one roof
under the same management

SATISFACTION

a seal of approval
confirmation that something is satisfactory
a warm inner glow
satisfaction at some achievement
I will have his guts for garters
I am extremely angry and dissatisfied with him
the nigger in the woodpile
the factor spoiling an otherwise satisfactory arrangement
to be a well-oiled piece of machinery
to be functioning very satisfactorily
to be cream on top of the milk
to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario
to be first class
to be very satisfactory
to be icing on top of the cake
to be an additional benefit in an already satisfactory scenario
to be on course
to be progressing satisfactorily toward one’s goal
to get rid of the dead wood
to terminate the services of unsatisfactory personnel
to heave a sigh a relief
to express satisfaction at the achievement of a solution to a difficult problem
to hit a sour note
to discover an unexpected flaw in an otherwise satisfactory piece of work
to jump for joy
to express great satisfaction
to make a noise about something
to complain or express dissatisfaction about something
to rub one’s hands with glee
to express great satisfaction

SECRECY

a word in someone’s ear
a confidential discussion
between you and me and the gatepost confidentially
Chinese walls
a system to ensure that different parts of some organization do not gain access to each other’s confidential information
cloak and dagger activity
secret activity
low-down
confidential information relevant to something
no names—no packdrill
the identities of the parties will be kept confidential in order to protect them

something is in the wind
something is going on secretly (this phrase uses the actual word "something")

to be a closed book
to be a secret

to be tight-lipped
to keep confidences or to be uncommunicative

to ferret something out
by diligent research to discover some secret

to have a card up one's sleeve
to secretly have information relevant to a transaction

to have a heart-to-heart talk
to have a confidential discussion on a highly personal matter

to hold one's cards close to one's chest
to keep one's plans and strategies secret

to keep something dark
to keep something secret

to keep something under one's hat
to maintain a confidence

to keep something up one's sleeve
to secretly retain something in reserve for use in the future or at a later stage of negotiations

to keep under wraps
to keep confidential

to let the cat out of the bag
to reveal an embarrassing secret (refers to the exposure of cheats at fairs, attempting to pass a cat wrapped in a sack off as a piglet)

to line one's pockets
to make, improperly and secretly, a profit out of some transaction

to seal one's lips
to keep a confidence

to tell tales out of school
to deliberately leak a secret

to undermine someone's position
to injure another person's reputation and influence by unfair and secret tactics

wheels within wheels
secret machinations

situations

a Mexican standoff
a situation where neither of two parties is making a move

a gambit
an opening move in a competitive situation which involves short-term losses in the expectation of long-term gains

a place in the sun
a favorable situation

a springboard
a situation from which one intends to make a rapid advance

a straight face
a facial expression which does not reveal one's thoughts in a humorous situation

a stranglehold
a firm grip on a commercial situation, effectively freezing out a competitor

catch-22
a situation made impossible because it requires as a prior fulfillment something which does not exist until that condition is satisfied (title of a novel by Joseph Heller)

every cloud has a silver lining
there are benefits even in seemingly adverse situations

out of the frying pan into the fire
from one bad situation to an even worse one
something is rotten in the state of Denmark
the situation is not correct (from Shakespeare's HAMLET)

that is the way the chips fall
that is the actual situation

that is the way the cookie crumbles
that is the actual situation

the nature of the beast
the reality of the situation

to add fuel to the fire
to make a bad situation worse

to be in command
to be on top of a situation

to be quick on one's feet
to cleverly take advantage of a situation

to bite the bullet
to face up to the difficulties of a situation

to breathe down someone's neck
to cause annoyance to another person by remaining in his vicinity or by supervising him too closely; or to be narrowly behind another person in some competitive situation

to cross a bridge only when one comes to it
to await the crystallization of a situation before sorting it out

to cry one's eyes out
to express great sadness at a situation

to feed the fire
to exacerbate a situation

to fight fire with fire
to counter a dangerous situation by making an equally dangerous move

to fish in troubled waters
to profit from a disturbed situation

to have a good nose for business
to be able to identify profitable business situations

to have the whip hand
to be in control of a situation

to inflame a situation
to aggravate a situation

to keep an eye on the ball
to monitor a fast-changing situation

to keep one's eye on something
to monitor a situation

to keep up with the ball
to stay on top of the situation

to knock someone off his perch
to displace a person from his leadership position in some competitive situation

to pour oil on troubled waters
to calm down a situation

to pour gasoline on the flames
to make a bad situation worse

to pull someone's chestnuts out of the fire
to retrieve a situation

to pull something out of the fire
to salvage something in a seemingly hopeless situation

to put a match to petrol
to make a bad situation worse

to put jam on someone's bread
to make a good situation even better

to put one's best face on something
to focus on the positive features surrounding a basically disastrous situation

to put someone in the picture
to fill a person in with the background of a situation

to ride out the storm
to come safely through some dangerous situation

to salvage something out of the wreck
to achieve some minor benefits out of a disastrous situation

to see the light
to understand the real situation

to see the score
to appreciate the reality of a situation
to see which way the wind is blowing
to establish the factors relevant to a
situation

to set someone’s teeth on edge
to cause a person to feel unhappy at a
situation

to squeeze the last drop out of some-
thing
to get the maximum advantage out of
some favorable situation

to strike while the iron is hot
to take advantage of a situation which
cannot last

to suck the lemon dry
to get the maximum advantage out of
some favorable situation

to underplay some situation
to hold something in reserve

SKILL

a chessmaster
da clever strategist

a dark horse
a person with unsuspected talents

a pea and thimble trick
a clever fraud committed in the pres-
ence of its victim without this being
obvious at the time

a shaggy-dog story
an amusing anecdote with an unex-
pected ending, often involving talking
animals given certain human skills

one’s long suit
one’s main skills

the blind leading the blind
persons without the necessary skills
for a task purporting to impart those
skills to others

to be a chess game
to be a complex exercise, requiring
great skill

to be child’s play
to be easy or to require only elemen-
tary skills and knowledge

to be great guns at something
to be very skilled at something

to be hot stuff
to be skillful or very passionate

to be in the same league
to have comparable skills

to be quick on one’s feet
to cleverly take advantage of a situation

to carve out a niche for oneself
to deliberately create an opportunity
to use one’s talents effectively

to find one’s feet
to develop one’s skills

to find one’s niche
to find the opportunity to use one’s
talents

to hide one’s light under a bushel
to keep others in ignorance of one’s
skills and experience

to keep one’s hands in
to engage in activities which rein-
force skills which one has previously
acquired

to look to one’s laurels
to be careful not to lose one’s reputa-
tion for some skill

to make a name for oneself
to earn a good reputation by virtue of
some skill

to raise something to a fine art form
to become very clever at doing some-
thing

to rub off on someone.
to benefit a person through an associ-
atation which increases his skills

to score a point
to make a clever contribution in the
course of debate

to separate the men from the boys
to distinguish between those with and
without certain skills
SMALLNESS

to take someone's measure
to sum up a person's character or skills

tour de force
feat of skill or strength (French, "feat of strength")

SLOWNESS

at a snail's pace
very slowly

the mills of God grind slowly
retribution may be delayed but is inevitable

to be slow off the mark
to be slow to start something

to drag one's feet
to perform unduly slowly

to drag one's heels
to perform unduly slowly

to drag the chain
to perform unduly slowly

to inch forward
to make slow but steady progress

to lose steam
to slow down

to sink slowly in the West
to fail gradually

to slowly bleed to death
to be heading in gradual steps toward total ruin

SMALLNESS

a backwater
a place of little activity

a bunfight
a minor and relatively friendly skirmish

a chink of light
a small hope of a solution or breakthrough

a dogfight
a small side-skirmish, especially between airplanes

a fat chance
little hope

a fox hole
space which is really too small for a person's needs or comfort

a handful
a small number

a pawn
a person of small importance who is manipulated by others

a tempest in a teacup
a controversy about a minor matter but one which looms large in the minds of the parties

a toehold
an opportunity small in itself but with the potential to lead to bigger things

a trickle
a small amount, in gradual stages

give him an inch and he will take a mile
make him a small concession and he will abuse it by taking much more

in for a penny—in for a pound
once something is commenced it ought to be finished; or if one is willing to take a small risk then one might as well take a bigger one

Lilliputian
small (refers to a place in Swift's GULLIVER'S TRAVELS)

not a jot
not even a small amount (refers to the Greek letter iota or i)

not to be a hanging matter
to be only a minor mistake

one's heart is not in some cause
one has little enthusiasm for some cause

people stayed away in droves
few people came

pintsize
small
tall oaks from little acorns grow
even major enterprises have to have
small beginnings (from “Lines written
for a School Declamation” by David
Everett)

the tail wagging the dog
a minor aspect with disproportionate
effect on a major aspect

there is no room to swing a cat
this place is very small (actually re-
fers to a cat-o'-nine-tails)

to be a big fish in a little pond
to be a person holding an important
office but in an unimportant organ-
ization

to be a crack in the wall
to represent a small unintended op-
portunity which can be exploited

to be a small cog in a large wheel
to be a relatively unimportant person
in a large organization

to be chicken feed
to be small and unimportant

to be the thin end of the wedge
by conceding a small point, to create
an undesirable precedent for much
larger issues

to be the tip of the iceberg
to be only a small portion of a much
larger but less obvious whole

to bend the rules
to overlook minor infractions of the
rules

to chisel away at something
to reduce the size of something in a
series of small stages

to cut no ice with someone
to have little effect on a person

to decimate
to greatly reduce in size (often used
in the sense of “to reduce to one
tenth,” although the original meaning
was “to reduce by one tenth”)

to earn peanuts
to get a reward which is far too small
in relation to the value of the services
rendered

to encapsulate some idea
to reduce the essential points of a
complicated proposal to a small num-
ber of words

to fiddle at the edges
to do some relatively minor things
which do not deal with the substance
of a problem

to find a needle in a haystack
to find something when the probabili-
ty of finding it is very small

to have an eagle eye
to be able to notice small mistakes
very readily

to hold someone on a short leash
to give a person very little authority

to live from hand to mouth
being in poor financial circumstances,
to survive with little by way of safety
margin

to look down the barrel of a gun
to be given little choice in a matter

to look for a needle in a haystack
to attempt something with a very small
chance of success

to make mountains out of molehills
to treat a minor problem as though it
were a major disaster

to miss the sharks while netting the
minnows
to succeed in minor aspects but fail in
the ones that really matter

to nitpick
to criticize a person in respect to very
minor matters

to only scratch the surface
to deal with only a small portion of a
much larger whole
to pay something back with interest
to return a small favor with a bigger favor or to extract retribution of greater value than the circumstances warrant

to push someone over the brink
by a small action to cause the absolute ruin (financially or emotionally) of someone already in peril

to salvage something out of the wreck
to achieve some minor benefits out of a disastrous situation

to sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage
through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)

to slug it out
to engage in a minor skirmish

to snap at someone's heels
to be a minor irritation to a person

to test the water
to try out an idea in a small way

to thrash with a feather
to award only a minor punishment for a very serious offense

to throw a sprat to catch a mackerel
to risk a little in the hope of gaining much

to throw out the baby with the bathwater
to discard a major benefit in the course of obtaining a comparatively minor advantage

to throw someone a few crumbs
to fob a person off with a few symbolic but unimportant concessions

to tinker at the edges
to make minor or cosmetic changes without affecting the substance

two men and a dog
very few people

SPEECH

a nod and a wink
a sign that understanding has been reached in a matter which in the interests of discretion has not been discussed aloud

a shaggy-dog story
an amusing anecdote with an unexpected ending, often involving talking animals given certain human skills

a word in someone's ear
a confidential discussion

burning question
a much discussed question

not to mince words
to speak bluntly

not to put too fine a point on it
speaking bluntly

shoot!
go on, speak!

speak softly and carry a big stick
be polite to your potential enemies but maintain an active and visible defense capability (from a speech by Theodore Roosevelt in 1901)

talk of the devil
here is the person we were just discussing

to bandy something about
to discuss something in a light-hearted manner

to bare one's soul
talkatively to give a revealing insight into oneself

to bite someone's nose off
to speak to a person aggressively

to break the ice
to take the initiative in starting discussions

to buy into some argument
to seek to participate in some discussion

to chew fat
to eat and talk together

498
to draw a veil over something
pointedly to avoid discussing something

to drop names

to slip names of celebrities allegedly known to the speaker into a conversation in an attempt to impress

to find one's tongue

to overcome one's shyness and speak

to get down to brass tacks

to discuss the aspects which really matter

to have a bone to pick

to have a grievance which requires discussion

to have a heart-to-heart talk

to have a confidential discussion on a highly personal matter

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?

we were discussing you

were your ears burning?
SPEED

at a break-neck pace
very fast

at a rate of knots
very fast

before you can say ‘Jack Robinson’
very quickly

before one can say ‘knife’
very quickly

by leaps and bounds
with surprisingly fast progress

fast and furious
in an exciting way, in quick succession

cut corners

tailspin


to go hot foot
to do something fast

to go post haste
to go very fast

to have to fly
to need to leave in order to reach the
next destination quickly

to keep an eye on the ball
to monitor a fast-changing situation

to lose money hand over fist
to lose money very fast and convinc-
ingly

to take shortcuts
to do something by a faster but less
thorough method

STANDARD

a benchmark
a standard by which something is
measured

a hallmark
a standard (refers to the official assay
mark on gold and silver, originally
put on at the Goldsmiths’ Hall)

a yardstick
a standard by which something is
measured

guiding light
yardstick for ethical behavior

not to be in the race
to lack the required standard

one can’t make a silk purse out of a
sow’s ear
it is impossible to manufacture some-
ting of a high standard without ap-
propriate raw materials

the Plimsoll line
the standard

the silly season
the holiday period, when hard news
is scarce and journalistic standards
are lowered
the touchstone
the standard
to be below par
to be less than the desired standard
to be beyond the pale
to be socially unacceptable, especially for unacceptable standards or behavior
to be up to scratch
to be of the required standard
to be up to the mark
to be of the right standard
to cut corners
to lower one's standards in order to complete something more quickly
to lift one's game
to raise the standard of one's performance
to play the last card in the pack
to lower one's standards in a final desperate effort
to really scrape the bottom of the barrel
to lower one's standards because one is short of important or relevant issues
to weed some group out
to get rid of some elements not meeting a desired standard

START

a baptism of fire
the commencement of an operation which presented great difficulty
from a to z
from start to finish
from alpha to omega
from start to finish (refers to the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet)
from go to whoa
from start to finish (refers to the command given to horses)
from the word "go"
from the beginning

in for a penny—in for a pound
once something is commenced it ought to be finished; or if one is willing to take a small risk then one might as well take a bigger one
it is on for young and old
the excitement has started
tall oaks from little acorns grow
even major enterprises have to have small beginnings (from "Lines written for a School Declamation" by David Everett)
the curtain rises on something
something is about to start
the rot set in
conditions started to deteriorate
to achieve a flying start
to get operational very quickly
to be back to scratch
to have to start all over again
to be first off the mark
to start ahead of all others
to be itching to go
to be highly enthusiastic and keen to start
to be slow off the mark
to be slow to start something
to be the dawn of a new day
to be the start of a different regime
to be the first cab off the rank
to start ahead of all others
to break the ice
to take the initiative in starting discussions
to come out into the open
to start being frank
to enter a long road
to commence a task which will take a long time
to enter the home stretch
to commence the last stage
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUPIDITY</th>
<th>THESAURUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to get in on the act</td>
<td>to start with a blank sheet of paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to participate in some activity started by others</td>
<td>to commence an exercise without being bound by any established practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get the show on the road</td>
<td>to turn the corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a planned activity</td>
<td>to commence being successful after initial failures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get to first base</td>
<td><strong>STRATEGY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to succeed in getting others to start comprehending a problem</td>
<td>a chessmaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to go back to square one</td>
<td>a clever strategist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to start all over again</td>
<td>a listening post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to jump the gun</td>
<td>a place where information of strategic value can be collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to start before one is meant to</td>
<td>opening gambit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to kick off</td>
<td>the first in a series of strategic moves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to start some action</td>
<td>(a tautological expression which also involves a misunderstanding of a technical chess term)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to leap in</td>
<td>to be in a commanding position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence an activity without considering the wisdom of doing so or the best way to proceed</td>
<td>to have a strategic advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to move on to greener pastures</td>
<td>to derail some strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a new, better career</td>
<td>to cause a strategy to fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to prick up one's ears</td>
<td>to go down a particular road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to suddenly start paying attention to a conversation in progress as a result of a half-heard phrase</td>
<td>to adopt a particular strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to set sail</td>
<td>to hold one's cards close to one's chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence a voyage</td>
<td>to keep one's plans and strategies secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to show someone the ropes</td>
<td>to play it by ear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to teach a beginner how to do something</td>
<td>to develop one's strategy to always fit in with circumstances as they change from time to time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to start from scratch</td>
<td><strong>STUPIDITY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence something without the benefit of any past activity</td>
<td>a death wish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to start off on the right foot</td>
<td>the contemplation of action so foolish that it is likely to lead to utter disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence an operation with great care to do it correctly</td>
<td>a simple Simon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to start the ball rolling</td>
<td>a foolish, gullible or half-witted person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commence and enthusiastically advance an activity involving people</td>
<td>a wild goose chase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to start to bite</td>
<td>a foolish search for something which does not exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to start to be effective</td>
<td><strong>502</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
beadledom
stupid officiousness

boneheaded
stupid

cock-eyed
stupid

hare-brained
wildly stupid

not to have an ounce of sense
to be stupid

people in glass houses should not throw stones
those who are less than perfect are foolish to criticize others

someone's brain needs washing
a person is very silly

to be mutton dressed up as lamb
to foolishly pretend to be younger

to be only ten pence in the shilling
to be slightly stupid

to burn one's fingers
to lose money through foolishness

to earn a dunce's cap
to do something stupid

to get under someone's skin
to annoy another person through stupidity

to go out on a limb
to put oneself at risk though foolish action

to go overboard
to act foolishly and in an excessive way

to have a bird brain
to be stupid

to have a loose tongue
to speak foolishly or indiscreetly

to have egg on one's face
to be embarrassed by the results of one's own stupidity

to judge a book by its cover
foolishly to go only by superficial appearances

to make an ass of oneself
to act stupidly in public

to need to have one's head read
to be foolish

to paint oneself into a corner
to foolishly put oneself into a position from which escape is impossible

to play Russian roulette
to take stupid risks

to play with fire
to invite trouble through one's foolish conduct

to push water uphill
to foolishly attempt the impossible

to put one's foot in it
to make a foolish mistake

to put one's foot in one's mouth
to say something foolish

to sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage
through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)

to shoot oneself in the foot
to act in a foolish way and thus harm one's own cause

to sign one's own death warrant
to foolishly do something which is inevitably bound to lead to utter disaster

to sow wild oats
to indulge in foolish behavior while a young adult

why keep a dog and bark oneself?
it is silly to pay for assistance and then do things personally

SUCCESS

a breakthrough
success in overcoming resistance to a proposal
SUCCESS

a field day
a very enjoyable and successful occasion

a flash in the pan
something which begins promisingly but does not last (refers to the priming of old guns)

a gambit
an opening move in the competitive situation which involves short-term losses in the expectation of long-term gains

a highflyer
an ambitious and/or successful person

a landslide
an electoral result involving victory or defeat by an unexpectedly large margin

a Pyrrhic victory
a win which costs more than if there had been a loss (refers to the battle at which King Pyrrhus of Epirus defeated the Romans at Asculum)

a roller coaster ride
a series of successes followed by failures

a walkover
an easy victory

chalk it up!
the success was unexpected

front-runner
person expected to win

it is in the bag
the enterprise has succeeded

it is mind over matter
one's resolve to overcome suffering will succeed

it is pointing in the right direction
success looks likely

more power to your elbow
may your praiseworthy efforts lead to success

stalemate
a final result in which neither party to a dispute is victorious

the proof of the pudding is in the eating
the success of a venture will be measured by its results

the royal road to success
the way of attaining success without effort

things look black
there is little hope of success or prosperity or a favorable outcome

to be a passport to success
to be a means of achieving success

to be going great guns
to be making very successful progress

to be home and hosed
to have won

to be on a winner
to have faith in, give support to and/or invest in a project which proves to be successful

to be on the crest of a wave
to enjoy success which may not last

to be successful beyond one's wildest dreams
to be far more successful than one could have expected

to be unable to take a trick
to be unable to achieve success in anything

to bear fruit
to result in success

to bring home the bacon
to be successful

to fight tooth and nail
to strive very hard to win

to get on stream
to now operate successfully following the end of a settling-in period
to get to first base
to succeed in getting others to start comprehending a problem
to go for the gold
to aim for victory (refers to Olympic medals)
to have a cast-iron case
to be absolutely assured of victory in legal proceedings
to have had a good innings
to have had a successful life
to have someone by the throat
to claim victory over an opponent
to have someone on toast
to be victorious over a person
to have the plug pulled out from under one
to have a successful activity destroyed by the actions of someone else
to hold a winning hand
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others
to hold all the aces
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others
to hold all the cards
to be assured of victory
to hold someone at bay
to successfully resist an attacker
to hold the trump card
to be in an unbeatable position to defeat others
to look for a needle in a haystack
to attempt something with a very small chance of success
to make a good fist of something
to be successful in a difficult task
to make a killing
to be in a very successful business venture
to make or break someone
to be a factor leading either to a person’s success or to his failure, with no intermediate position
to make the grade
to succeed
to miss the sharks while netting the minnows
to success in minor aspects but fail in the ones that really matter
to pan out
to succeed
to pass with flying colors
to be very successful
to pay off
to be successful
to play the trump card
to make a final move, thereby defeating one’s opponents
to pull something off
to achieve success in some enterprise
to raise the stake
to increase the amount of potential gain or loss in a project
to rest on one’s laurels
to use a reputation for success earned in earlier times as a substitute for current endeavor
to ride high
to be successful but vulnerable
to ride the wave
to be successful for the time being
to score a hat trick
to have three successive favorable outcomes
to show dividends
to be successful
to smell blood
to divine imminent victory
to stitch up a deal
to successfully conclude a deal
to strike gold
to have one’s efforts suddenly rewarded by great success
to strike pay dirt
to become successful
to strike the right chord
to appeal successfully to someone’s emotions

to throw a sprat to catch a mackerel
to risk a little in the hope of gaining much

to turn the corner
to commence being successful after initial failures

to win by a long chalk
to win very conclusively

to win hands down
to win very convincingly

to win some rounds
to be partly successful

to win the prize in a canter
to win very easily

to wrap up a deal
to bring a deal to a successful conclusion

when one’s ship comes in
when one’s business venture is successfully completed or when luck arrives

SURPRISE

a bombshell
an unpleasant surprise

a thunderbolt
a surprise

he would turn in his grave
he would have been very surprised or displeased if he had known while still alive

not to bat an eyelid
to fail to express any surprise

someone’s eyes popped
a person expressed great surprise

the mind boggles
this is astonishing

to be an eye opener
to be a surprise

to catch someone off guard
to surprise a person (a fencing term)

to catch someone on the hop
to take a person by surprise

to raise one’s eyebrows
to express one’s utter astonishment

to rub one’s eyes
to express astonishment

to take one’s breath away
to greatly surprise or astonish

TRUTH

a skeleton in the cupboard
an unpleasant truth the knowledge of which has been deliberately suppressed

a tall story
an interesting but untrue and unbelievable table

a telltale sign
a visible indication revealing true facts despite efforts at concealment

apocryphal
fictitious but resembling truth and illustrating a point

out of the mouths of babes
(as indiscreetly revealed) the truth

to be an ostrich
to refuse to face up to an unpleasant truth (refers to the reputed habit of ostriches in danger)

to be too close to home
to be too near the truth to be welcome

to beat about the bush
to hide the unpleasant truth

to bring something into focus
to put some matter into its proper context and explain its true significance

to bury one’s head in the sand
to refuse to face up to an unpleasant truth (refers to the reputed habit of ostriches in danger)
to cloak something
to disguise the true nature of something

to drag someone by the head and ears
to force a person to reveal the true facts

to flush out the facts
to ascertain, after some effort, the truth of some matter

to open someone's eyes to something
to alert another person to the truth of something

to read between the lines
to appreciate the true significance of something not put into words

to sell someone a pup
to cheat a person in a transaction, especially by misrepresentation as to the true value of something

to show one's true colors
to disclose one's real character or beliefs

to speak with forked tongues
to utter half-truths with the intention of misleading the listener

to swallow the line
to accept as truth the story being proffered

to take something as gospel
to believe that something is true

to unmask someone
to discover a person's true identity

UNEXPECTED HAPPENINGS

a can of worms
a heterogeneous collection of unexpected problems

a landslide
an electoral result involving victory or defeat by an unexpectedly large margin

a pit of disaster
great and unexpected misfortune

a shaggy-dog story
an amusing anecdote with an unexpected ending, often involving talking animals given certain human skills

a wild card
an unexpected development

an Aladdin's cave
a place full of unexpected treasure

chalk it up!
the success was unexpected

it's a small world
it is surprising to meet people one knows in unexpected places

manna from heaven
unexpected benefits (Exodus 16:15)

the answer to a maiden's prayer
an unexpected but very welcome happening

to be a bolt from the blue
to be a totally unexpected event

to be one in the eye for someone
to represent an unexpected and unwelcome defeat

to be one out of the box
to be unexpectedly superb

to be shell-shocked
to be stunned by unexpected bad news

to be stopped in one's tracks
suddenly and unexpectedly to be prevented from carrying on with a project

to be the sting in the tail
to be the unexpected unpleasant conclusion

to catapult to fame
to achieve fame unexpectedly quickly

to catch someone in the net
to unexpectedly involve a particular person in the course of activity designed to involve many others

to come out of the blue
to be totally unexpected
to crawl out of the woodwork
to turn up unexpectedly and in large numbers
to cut the ground from under someone's feet
to unexpectedly withdraw support and in the process cause embarrassment or to demolish a person's case
to drop a brick
to make a sudden shattering and unexpected announcement
to founder on the shoals of something
to come to grief because of unexpected dangers
to hit a sour note
to discover an unexpected flaw in an otherwise satisfactory piece of work
to keep one's head
to remain calm in a crisis or to unexpectedly retain an elected or appointed position
to open up a Pandora's box
to do something which produces all sorts of undesired and unexpected side-effects (refers to the woman in Greek mythology who brought misery to mankind; the box contained human ills)
to pull a rabbit out of the hat
to produce an unexpected and seemingly miraculous but highly desirable solution
to pull the rug out from under someone
to unexpectedly withdraw support and in the process cause embarrassment
to take a nosedive
to suddenly and unexpectedly fall steeply
to throw a cat among the pigeons
to cause consternation by revealing an unpleasant and unexpected fact
to throw a spanner into the works
to cause an unexpected complication
to turn up trumps
to finish up better than expected or to experience unexpected good luck
to turn white
to express shock at unexpected news
to vanish into thin air
unexpectedly to disappear
windfall
unexpected good fortune

UNREALISTIC IDEAS
a South Sea bubble
an unrealistic financial venture which is bound to result in total loss
moonshine
unrealistic ideas
someone's eyes are bigger than his stomach
a person is unrealistic
to be in cloud cuckoo land
to be mad or to have unrealistic expectations
to bite off more than one can chew
to be overly ambitious and thus unrealistic as to one's capabilities
to chase rainbows
to be quite unrealistic
to have one's head in the clouds
to be unrealistic
to shoot for the stars
to be unrealistic
to talk turkey
to talk realistically
to want to jump all one's fences at once
to be unrealistic

UNWELCOME
a bible basher
a person who makes unwelcome attempts to force his religious beliefs on others
a blessing in disguise
an unwelcome but salutary experience
stiff cheese!
circumstances which may be unwel-
come but which will not be altered
and in respect of which no great sym-
pathy is felt
the affair blew up
certain unwelcome facts have become
publicly available
to be one in the eye for someone
to represent an unexpected and unwel-
come defeat
to be too close to home
to be too near the truth to be welcome
to penetrate someone’s thick skull
to make a person understand some-
thing difficult or acknowledge some-
thing unwelcome
to play gooseberry
to act as an unwelcome chaperon
to plead the Fifth Amendment
to refuse to answer an unwelcome
question (refers to the Fifth Amend-
ment of the United States Constitu-
tion, which provides protection against
self-incrimination)
to put someone back in his box
to make it clear to a person that his
views are not welcome
to rear its ugly head
to make an unwelcome appearance
to send someone away with a flea in
his ear
to give a person frank but unwelcome
facts (refers to fleas trapped in the
armor of ancient knights)

WAITING

hold your horses!
just wait a little!
to be on tenterhooks
to anxiously await some result
to bite one’s fingernails
to anxiously await a decision
to cool one’s heels
to be kept waiting
to cross a bridge only when one
comes to it
to await the crystallization of a situ-
tation before sorting it out
to have one’s beady eyes on something
to await the chance to acquire some-
thing to which one is not properly
entitled
to kick one’s heels
to be kept waiting
to mark time
to do nothing while awaiting develop-
ments
to see which way the cat jumps
to await developments
to sweat it out
to await one’s fate calmly
to wait for the other shoe to drop
to await the seemingly imminent and
inevitable (refers to a man undressing,
disturbing a neighbor by dropping one
shoe, then frustrating his expectation
by putting the other shoe down gently)
to wait in the wings
to be prepared to stay unobtrusive till
the appropriate time for action arrives
to wait two shakes of a lamb’s tail
to wait just a few moments
to wait with bated breath
to be excited in anticipation of some
event

WEALTH

a banana republic
a country with a poor economy
a goldmine
a source of much wealth or of many
facts
a pot of gold
wealth
life raft
financial assistance sufficient to avert insolvency

not to be made of money
not to be wealthy

not to have a brass razoo
to be very poor

not to have the wherewithal to rub two sticks together
to be very poor

rags to riches
the transition from poverty to wealth
to be a gay dog
to lead an idle life while flaunting the symbols of wealth
to be born with a silver spoon in one’s mouth
to be brought up by wealthy parents
to have money flowing out of one’s ears
to be very rich
to just hold one’s head above water
to cope with problems but with little margin to spare or to stay solvent
to live from hand to mouth
being in poor financial circumstances, to survive with little by way of safety margin
to stay afloat
to remain solvent

well-heeled
rich

WELCOME

any port in a storm
anything which helps to avoid difficulties is welcome

the answer to a maiden’s prayer
an unexpected but very welcome happening

the more the merrier
everyone is welcome

the red-carpet treatment
courtesies extended to a person to make him feel important and welcome
to be a sight for sore eyes
to be something welcome
to be better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick
to be particularly welcome
to come in out of the cold
to be welcomed into a group
to kill the fatted calf
to demonstrate welcome and forgiveness on a person’s return (Luke 15:23)
to pipe someone on board
to welcome a person

WORK AND EFFORT

a dry hole
an exercise which after much effort proves fruitless

a fifth columnist
a person using his position of trust to work for a rival cause

a scattergun approach
an effort going here, there and everywhere, instead of being properly targeted

a willing horse
a cheerful worker

an unholy alliance
a working relationship for a nefarious purpose between unlikely partners

blood, sweat and tears
hard work and much effort

donkey work
necessary but uninspiring routine work

elbow grease
hard manual work

flat out like a lizard
to be hard at work (a play on words, not a simile)

good chemistry
a good ability to work closely together
harvest
end result of labor

it is neck or nothing
a desperate effort is called for

it will all come out in the wash
the facts will emerge as work proceeds

more power to your elbow
may your praiseworthy efforts lead to success

Parkinson's law
the principle that work expands to match the work capacity available (title of a book by Prof. C. Northcote Parkinson)

put your back into it!
work energetically!

search for the Holy Grail
work toward a difficult goal (refers to a vessel supposedly used by Christ at the last supper and featuring in the Arthurian legends)

the royal road to success
the way of attaining success without effort

to be a busy bee
to work with great diligence

to be at the coal face
to be in the place where the real work is done

to be geared up to do something
to have equipment, labor and know-how in place adequate for some task

to be the salt of the earth
to be a person whose ordinary efforts benefit the community (Matthew 5:13)

to beaver away
to work diligently at some task

to break the back of a task
to complete the bulk of the work

to burn the candle at both ends
to work excessively long hours

to burn the midnight oil
to work late into the night

to caste one's bread upon the waters
not to expect gratitude or recognition for one's good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

to compete on all fours with someone
to strive on equal terms

to do the leg work
to carry out the tedious part of a project

to draw the nets closer
to intensify one's efforts

to fight tooth and nail
to strive very hard to win

to gain the upper hand
to attain, after some effort, an advantage over another person

to go along for the ride
to seek to benefit from a project in which others contribute the effort

to go the extra mile
to work beyond the call of duty

to have too much on one's plate
to be unable to cope with one's workload

to hit a sour note
to discover an unexpected flaw in an otherwise satisfactory piece of work

to keep one's head down
to work very diligently

to keep one's nose to the grindstone
to work with particular diligence

to keep out of someone's hair
to let another person get on with his work in his own way

to play the last card in the pack
to lower one's standards in a final desperate effort

to pull one's fingers out
to get on with a job with alacrity

to pull one's weight
to do one's proper share of the work requiring to be done
| to pull oneself up by one's bootstraps | to strike gold |
| to make a praiseworthy effort to better oneself unaided | to have one's efforts suddenly rewarded by great success |
| to pull oneself up by one's own shoelaces | to swing the lead |
| to make a superhuman effort | to cheat an employer by not working while being paid to do so |
| to pull out all stops | to take the rough with the smooth |
| to make maximum effort | to accept the hardships of life along with its pleasant features |
| to pull together | to win one's spurs |
| to work in harmony | to gain recognition after a period of effort (refers to the earning of a knighthood in battle) |
| to put one's back into something | to work hand in glove with someone |
| to work hard at achieving some goal | to work in close cooperation with a person or to be in collusion with a person to the detriment of others |
| to put one's best foot forward | to work one's fingers to the bone |
| to make a special effort | to work very hard |
| to put one's shoulder to the wheel | to work overtime at something |
| to make a strong effort | to spend a lot of time and effort at doing something |
| to ride on the back of someone | to work shoulder to shoulder |
| without effort to benefit from the prior efforts of others | to work with united effort |
| to roll up one's sleeves | to get on with a job energetically |
| to get on with a job energetically | to snow someone under |
| to overload a person with work | to overload a person with work |
| to spark on all cylinders | to spark on all cylinders |
| to work extremely well | to work extremely well |
| to steal someone's thunder | to work hand in glove with someone |
| to take credit for another person's good work (refers to a dispute over the copying of a machine invented by a 17th-century dramatist to reproduce the sound of thunder during a play) | to work hand in glove with someone |
| to stir a finger | to strike a blow |
| to make some minimum effort | to resume work |
| to strike a blow | to strike a blow for some principle |
| to resume work | to work toward the attainment of some principle |
| to strike a blow for some principle | to strike at the roots of something |
| to work toward the attainment of some principle | to work toward the destruction of something |
| to strike at the roots of something | to worry about something |

**WORRY**

| a headache | a cause for worry |
| a new lease on life | the prospect of a worry-free existence from now on |
| the prospect of a worry-free existence from now on | not to lose any sleep over something |
| not to lose any sleep over something | not to worry about some matter |
| not to worry about some matter | to drive someone out of his mind |
| to drive someone out of his mind | to cause great worry to a person |
| to cause great worry to a person | to prey on one's mind |
| (of a problem) to keep worrying one | to raise the specter of something |
| to raise the specter of something | to draw attention to a worrying expectation of something |
| to draw attention to a worrying expectation of something | to send a chill down someone's neck |
| to send a chill down someone's neck | to be worrying news |
| to be worrying news | to spend a sleepless night |
| to spend a sleepless night | to worry about something |
# Appendix 1

## Keywords Occurring Most Frequently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>head</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heart</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keep</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turn</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>face</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dog</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>throw</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>run</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fall</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ear</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fire</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blood</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horse</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mind</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cut</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stick</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pull</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nose</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finger</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>game</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tooth</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jump</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hold</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fly</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hang</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blow</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ground</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>way</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF THE CATEGORIES
PART II: THEMATIC SECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>HUMAN BODY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>ANIMALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>SPORT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>FOOD AND DRINK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>WAR AND MILITARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>BUILDINGS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>GEOGRAPHY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>CLOTHES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>NAUTICAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>RELIGION AND BIBLICAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>TRANSPORT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>PLANTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>METEOROLOGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SCIENCE AND MEDICINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>COLORS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>COMMERCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>MANUFACTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>MUSIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>FARMING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>THEATER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>FURNITURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>DEATH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>CARDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>MINING AND OIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>GAMBLING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>HISTORY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

515
### Part III: Thesaurus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 END</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 DIFFICULTY</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ACTIVITY</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 SUCCESS</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 FAILURE</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 WORK AND EFFORT</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 RESULT</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 ACHIEVEMENT</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 SMALLNESS</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 ENTHUSIASM</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 SITUATION</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 ARGUMENT</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 SPEECH</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 ADVANTAGE</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 START</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 CHANGE</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 BIGNESS</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 OPPORTUNITY</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 MONEY</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 IDEA</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 UNEXPECTED HAPPENINGS</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 POSSIBILITY</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 FACT</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>MYTHOLOGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>CIRCUSES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>AVIATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>ART</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>LAW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>CRIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>CHESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>SEX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>HERALDRY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3647</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>CLASSIFIED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>568</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>UNCLASSIFIED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4215</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Less than 1%.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 STUPIDITY</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 MISTAKE</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 BENEFIT</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 PROBLEM</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 OPINION</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 EASE</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 INTERFERENCE</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 EXPECTATION</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 AIM</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 REFUSAL AND REJECTION</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 PRICE AND VALUE</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 EXCESS</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 CRITICISM</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 DISPLEASURE</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 BEHAVIOR</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 SKILL</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43 PREVENTION</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 PLEASURE</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 INTEREST</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 DECISION</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 SPEED</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 RISK</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 INVOLVEMENT</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 BELIEF</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 SECRECY</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 LIKELIHOOD</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 TRUTH</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 DANGER</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 CORRECTNESS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 HOPE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57 ALTERNATIVE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58 SAMENESS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 ANGER</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 STANDARD</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 POWER</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62 HAPPINESS AND ENJOYMENT</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 EXPENSE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64 REVERSAL</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 READINESS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 MEMBERSHIP</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67 DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68 WEALTH</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

517
### Appendix 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>69 SATISFACTION</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 REPUTATION</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 WAITING</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72 FUTURE</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73 FACTOR</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74 EQUALITY</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 EMPLOYMENT</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76 CARE</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 UNWELCOME</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78 SURPRISE</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79 SADNESS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 NAIVETY</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 HARM</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82 FALSITY</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83 COURAGE</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84 AGREEMENT</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 ANNOYANCE</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86 CHANCE</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87 UNREALISTIC IDEAS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88 SLOWNESS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89 PRIDE AND HUMILITY</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 PAST</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 LEADERSHIP</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92 CONFUSION</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93 WELCOME</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94 JUDGMENT</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95 FRIGHT</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96 FRANKNESS</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97 WORRY</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98 STRATEGY</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99 PUNISHMENT</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 PRACTICABILITY</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 INFERENCE</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102 EXPERTISE</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103 PRETENSE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104 MISLEADING</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105 DISAPPOINTMENT</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106 APPROVAL</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107 RETIREMENT</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108 PRAISE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109 NONSENSE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110 ABUSE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111 REVENGE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112 MONITORING</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MATERIAL FOR PARTY GAMES

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the lists in this book can also be used as the raw material for various party games and similar pursuits. Twelve illustrations are set out below:

• A keyword—say, “horse” (or “ball,” “head,” “water,” etc.)—is selected. The object of the game is to see how many different metaphors using this keyword (whether included in this book or not) each player can recall within a short time limit. (Example: “to swap horses in midstream.”)

• A category—say, “music” (or “colors,” “domestic pets,” “numerals,” etc.)—is selected. The object of the game is to see how many different metaphors using words from this category (whether included in this book or not) each player can recall within a short time limit. (Examples: “to face the music” or “when the music stops,” music expressions used figuratively to convey non-music meanings.)

• A subject area—say, “defeat” (or “price,” “knowledge,” “responsibility,” etc.)—is selected. The object of the game is to see how many different metaphors using this particular subject area (whether included in this book or not) each player can recall within a short time limit. (Examples: “checkmate” or “to be on the ropes,” expressions which, while not being used literally, convey the meaning “defeat.”)

• The initial words (for example, “To beard...”) of some well-known metaphors are quoted. The object of the game is to provide the concluding words (“...the lion in his den”).

• A general topic is selected. The object of the game is to evolve the best paragraph using a certain minimum number of metaphors (say, ten). This would need to have regard to factors such as humor, originality and plausibility. (For an example of such a piece, see the passage in the box at the front of this book.) If desired, the players of this game could be given access to the book while drafting their paragraphs.
Appendix 3

• One or two pages of the current issue of a daily newspaper are designated. The object of the game is to see how many different metaphors occurring on these pages each player can recognize. An element of luck as well as skill can be introduced by giving different pages to different players (say, the corresponding pages of successive issues).

• A number of specific metaphors are selected. The object of the game is to best translate them into bureaucratic language. (Example: "To flog a dead horse" could become "To impose flagellation measures on an equine quadruped which is permanently devoid of its original capacities.")

• The above game can also be played in reverse, with the players being given the bureaucratic versions and required to work out, within a short time limit, what the corresponding customary "Plain English" expressions are.

• The names of well-known persons are designated. The object of the game is to evolve appropriate "last words" for each, based on metaphors. (Example: Einstein—"To an observer on earth, my clock will appear to have stopped.")

• A series of definitions is given—say, "to strive very hard to win," "to be quite ineffective," "to be terrified," "to be a member of a group knowing what is going on," "to fight an unwinnable case," and so on. The object of the game is to match each definition with a well-known metaphor. (Examples: "to fight tooth and nail," "to labor mightily and produce a mouse," "to have one's heart in one's boots," "to be in the swim," "to bang one's head up against a brick wall," and so on, respectively.)

• The above game is rather difficult. An easier version involves producing two lists of, say, 20 items each, both in random order—one of metaphors and the other of definitions. The object of the game is to match up the items in the two lists as quickly as possible.

• One or two pages of the current issue of a daily newspaper are designated. The object of the game is to produce within a specified time limit fresh headlines for as many articles on these pages as possible, using for this purpose the metaphors which best fit in with the articles concerned. Judging would need to take into account the suitability and effectiveness of the metaphors chosen.
Appendix 4

METAPHORS DERIVED FROM THE BIBLE

ACTS to be on the road to Damascus
   to see the error of one’s ways (Acts 9:3)

BABEL a tower of Babel
   a noisy and confused assembly (Genesis 11)

BIRD a little bird told me
   I heard from an unnameable informant (Ecclesiastes 10:20)

BIRTHRIGHT to sell one’s birthright for a mess of pottage
   through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of
   little value (Genesis 25)

BREAD to cast one’s bread upon the waters
   not to expect gratitude or recognition for one’s good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

CAIN the mark of Cain
   disgrace (Genesis 4:15)

CAIN to raise Cain
   to create a disturbance (Genesis 4:5)

CALF to kill the fatted calf
   to demonstrate welcome and forgiveness on a person’s return (Luke 15:23)

CAST to cast one’s bread upon the waters
   not to expect gratitude or recognition for one’s good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

CHEEK to turn the other cheek
   to show that one has not been intimidated (Matthew 5:39)

CLAY to have feet of clay
   to be vulnerable (Daniel 2:33)

CLOTHING to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing
   to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous although masquerading as something
   harmless (Matthew 7:15)

CROWN to wear one’s crown of thorns
   to have one’s own difficulties (John 19:5)
Appendix 4

DAMASCUS to be on the road to Damascus
to see the error of one’s ways (Acts 9:3)

DANIEL to have feet of clay
to be vulnerable (Daniel 2:33)

DANIEL to see the writing on the wall
to appreciate the inevitability of some event (Daniel 5)

DOUBT a doubting Thomas
a person who refuses to believe claims in the absence of proof (John 20:25)

EARTH to be the salt of the earth
to be a person whose ordinary efforts benefit the community (Matthew 5:13)

ECCLESIASTES a fly in the ointment
a flaw (refers to dead flies turning perfumes rancid) (Ecclesiastes 10:1)

ECCLESIASTES a little bird told me
I heard from an unnameable informant (Ecclesiastes 10:20)

ECCLESIASTES to cast one’s bread upon the waters
not to expect gratitude or recognition for one’s good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

ELEVEN at the eleventh hour
at the last moment (actually “at the twenty-fourth hour” would be more logical) (Matthew 20:9)

EXODUS a tooth for a tooth
retaliation (Exodus 21:24)

EXODUS an eye for an eye
retaliation (Exodus 21:24)

EXODUS fleshpots
sumptuous living (Exodus 16:3)

EXODUS manna from heaven
unexpected benefits (Exodus 16:15)

EXODUS with a high hand
arrogantly (Exodus 14:8)

EYE a mote in someone’s eye
a fault in another person which is trifling in comparison to an unrecognized major fault in oneself (Matthew 7:3)

EYE an eye for an eye
retaliation (Exodus 21:24)

FLESHPOT fleshpots
sumptuous living (Exodus 16:3)

FLY a fly in the ointment
a flaw (refers to dead flies turning perfumes rancid) (Ecclesiastes 10:1)

FOOT to have feet of clay
to be vulnerable (Daniel 2:33)
Appendix 4

FORBID forbidden fruit
something particularly desired just because it is not allowed (Genesis 2:17)

FRUIT by their fruits ye shall know them
their reputation will be based on their results (Matthew 7:20)

FRUIT forbidden fruit
something particularly desired just because it is not allowed (Genesis 2:17)

GENESIS a Sodom and Gomorrah
a place of vice (Genesis 18:20)

GENESIS a tower of Babel
a noisy and confused assembly (Genesis 11)

GENESIS forbidden fruit
something particularly desired just because it is not allowed (Genesis 2:17)

GENESIS the mark of Cain
disgrace (Genesis 4:15)

GENESIS to hold out an olive branch
to make peace overtures (Genesis 8:11)

GENESIS to raise Cain
to create a disturbance (Genesis 4:5)

GENESIS to sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage
through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)

GOAT to separate the sheep from the goats
to distinguish between those with and without certain attributes (Matthew 25:32)

GOLIATH a Goliath
a giant or a person whose ability and achievements exceed that of most other people (1 Samuel 17)

GOMORRAH a Sodom and Gomarrah
a place of vice (Genesis 18:20)

HAND to put one's hand to the plow
voluntarily to undertake some task (Luke 9:62)

HAND with a high hand
arrogantly (Exodus 14:8)

HEAVEN manna from heaven
unexpected benefits (Exodus 16:15)

HIGH with a high hand
arrogantly (Exodus 14:8)

HOUR at the eleventh hour
at the last moment (actually "at the twenty-fourth hour" would be more logical) (Matthew 20:9)
IVORY to be in an ivory tower
to be immersed in theoretical considerations and ignorant of the practical realities (Song of Solomon 7:4)

JAMES something would try the patience of Job
something is very vexatious (James 5:11)

JERICHO walls of Jericho
something seemingly solid but actually destructible (Joshua 6:20)

JEREMIAH Jeremiah
a person who looks on the gloomy side of everything (refers to the prophet Jeremiah in the Old Testament)

JOB something would try the patience of Job
something is very vexatious (James 5:11)

JOHN a doubting Thomas
a person who refuses to believe claims in the absence of proof (John 20:25)

JOHN to wear one’s crown of thorns
to have one’s own difficulties (John 19:5)

JOSHUA walls of Jericho
something seemingly solid but actually destructible (Joshua 6:20)

JUDAS to play Judas
to betray a person (Matthew 26)

JUDGES a shibboleth
a doctrine once held as essential but now abandoned as having outlived its usefulness (a word used as a test to determine to which tribe an Israelite belonged) (Judges 12:6)

KILL to kill the fatted calf
to demonstrate welcome and forgiveness on a person’s return (Luke 15:23)

KINGS to need the wisdom of Solomon
to be faced with the need to make a difficult decision (1 Kings 3:16-28)

KNOW by their fruits ye shall know them
their reputation will be based on their results (Matthew 7:20)

LITTLE a little bird told me
I heard from an unnameable informant (Ecclesiastes 10:20)

LUKE a good Samaritan
a person going out of his way to do a kindness to others (Luke 10:33)

LUKE to kill the fatted calf
to demonstrate welcome and forgiveness on a person’s return (Luke 15:23)

LUKE to put one’s hand to the plow
voluntarily to undertake some task (Luke 9:62)

MANNA manna from heaven
unexpected benefits (Exodus 16:15)
MARK *the mark of Cain*

disgrace (Genesis 4:15)

MATTHEW *a mote in someone’s eye*

a fault in another person which is trifling in comparison to an unrecognized major fault in oneself (Matthew 7:3)

MATTHEW *at the eleventh hour*

at the last moment (actually “at the twenty-fourth hour” would be more logical) (Matthew 20:9)

MATTHEW *by their fruits ye shall know them*

their reputation will be based on their results (Matthew 7:20)

MATTHEW *to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing*

to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous although masquerading as something harmless (Matthew 7:15)

MATTHEW *to be the salt of the earth*

to be a person whose ordinary efforts benefit the community (Matthew 5:13)

MATTHEW *to play Judas*

to betray a person (Matthew 26)

MATTHEW *to separate the sheep from the goats*

to distinguish between those with and without certain attributes (Matthew 25:32)

MATTHEW *to turn the other cheek*

to show that one has not been intimidated (Matthew 5:39)

MESS *to sell one’s birthright for a mess of pottage*

through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)

MOTE *a mote in someone’s eye*

a fault in another person which is trifling in comparison to an unrecognized major fault in oneself (Matthew 7:3)

OINTMENT *a fly in the ointment*

a flaw (refers to dead flies turning perfumes rancid) (Ecclesiastes 10:1)

OLIVE *to hold out an olive branch*

to make peace overtures (Genesis 8:11)

PATIENCE *something would try the patience of Job*

something is very vexatious (James 5:11)

PLOW *to put one’s hand to the plow*

voluntarily to undertake some task (Luke 9:62)

POT *fleshpots*

sumptuous living (Exodus 16:3)

POTTAGE *to sell one’s birthright for a mess of pottage*

through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)
RAISE to raise Cain
to create a disturbance (Genesis 4:5)

ROAD to be on the road to Damascus
to see the error of one’s ways (Acts 9:3)

SALT to be the salt of the earth
to be a person whose ordinary efforts benefit the community (Matthew 5:13)

SAMARITAN a good Samaritan
a person going out of his way to do a kindness to others (Luke 10:33)

SAMUEL a Goliath
a giant or a person whose ability and achievements exceed that of most other people (1 Samuel 17)

SELL to sell one’s birthright for a mess of pottage
through foolishness to exchange something of substance for something of little value (Genesis 25)

SEPARATE to separate the sheep from the goats
to distinguish between those with and without certain attributes (Matthew 25:32)

SHEEP to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing
to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous although masquerading as something harmless (Matthew 7:15)

SHEEP to separate the sheep from the goats
to distinguish between those with and without certain attributes (Matthew 25:32)

SHIBBOLETH a shibboleth
a doctrine once held as essential but now abandoned as having outlived its usefulness (a word used as a test to determine to which tribe an Israelite belonged) (Judges 12:6)

SODOM a Sodom and Gomorrah
a place of vice (Genesis 18:20)

SOLOMON to need the wisdom of Solomon
to be faced with the need to make a difficult decision (Kings 3:16-28)

SONG to be in an ivory tower
to be immersed in theoretical considerations and ignorant of the practical realities (Song of Solomon 7:4)

THOMAS a doubting Thomas
a person who refuses to believe claims in the absence of proof (John 20:25)

THORN to wear one’s crown of thorns
to have one’s own difficulties (John 19:5)

TOOTH a tooth for a tooth
retaliation (Exodus 21:24)
**TOWER** to be in an ivory tower
to be immersed in theoretical considerations and ignorant of the practical realities (Song of Solomon 7:4)

**TRY** something would try the patience of Job
something is very vexatious (James 5:11)

**TURN** to turn the other cheek
to show that one has not been intimidated (Matthew 5:39)

**WALL** to see the writing on the wall
to appreciate the inevitability of some event (Daniel 5)

**WALL** walls of Jericho
something seemingly solid but actually destructible (Joshua 6:20)

**WATER** to cast one’s bread upon the waters
not to expect gratitude or recognition for one’s good works (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

**WEAR** to wear one’s crown of thorns
to have one’s own difficulties (John 19:5)

**WISDOM** to need the wisdom of Solomon
to be faced with the need to make a difficult decision (1 Kings 3:16-28)

**WOLF** to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing
to be a hypocrite or to be dangerous although masquerading as something harmless (Matthew 7:15)

**WRITE** to see the writing on the wall
to appreciate the inevitability of some event (Daniel 5)
"YES, PRIME MINISTER"

The following extract from the "Conflict of Interest" episode of "Yes, Prime Minister," the popular BBC television series which uses scripts written by Jonathan Lynn and Antony Jay, is reproduced with the permission of BBC Enterprises Limited.

It features a discussion between Sir Desmond Glazebrook, a leading banker who is keen to become Governor of the Bank of England, and James Hacker, the British Prime Minister.

Glazebrook:

City's a funny place, Prime Minister. You know, if you spill the beans you open up a whole can of worms. I mean, how can you let sleeping dogs lie if you let the cat out of the bag? You bring in a new broom and if you're not very careful you find you've thrown the baby out with the bathwater. Change horses in the middle of the stream, next thing you know you're up the creek without a paddle.

Hacker:

And then what happens?

Glazebrook:

Well! Obviously the balloon goes up. They hit you for six. An own goal, in fact.