

Introduction to Understanding Idioms and Everyday Expressions



- Define idioms as phrases with meanings beyond the literal words



- Explore how idioms differ from literal phrases



- Recognize and use common expressions in work, travel, and class



- Learn through practical application and self-paced practice



- Build natural English fluency with idiom competence

LITERAL MEANING

It's raining cats and dogs.



FIGURATIVE MEANING

It's raining very heavily.

It's raining cats and dogs today!

Yes, I'll take an umbrella.

BRIDGING LITERAL TO FIGURATIVE UNDERSTANDING





Why Idioms Matter for Fluency

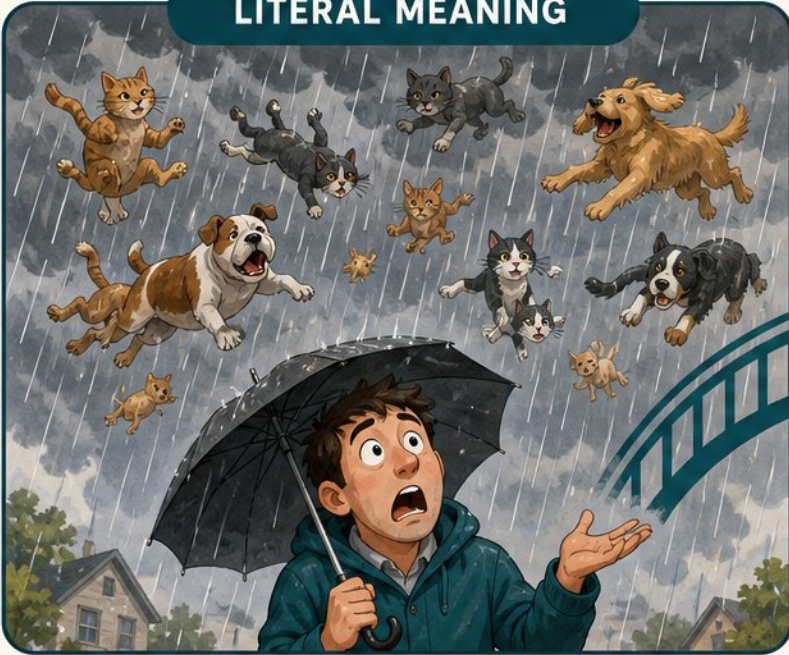
- Idioms signal natural, native-like communication
- Textbook English often sounds stiff or overly formal
- Idiom skills boost listening and workplace confidence
- Learning curve is normal — frustration is part of the process
- Mastery grows with exposure and consistent practice



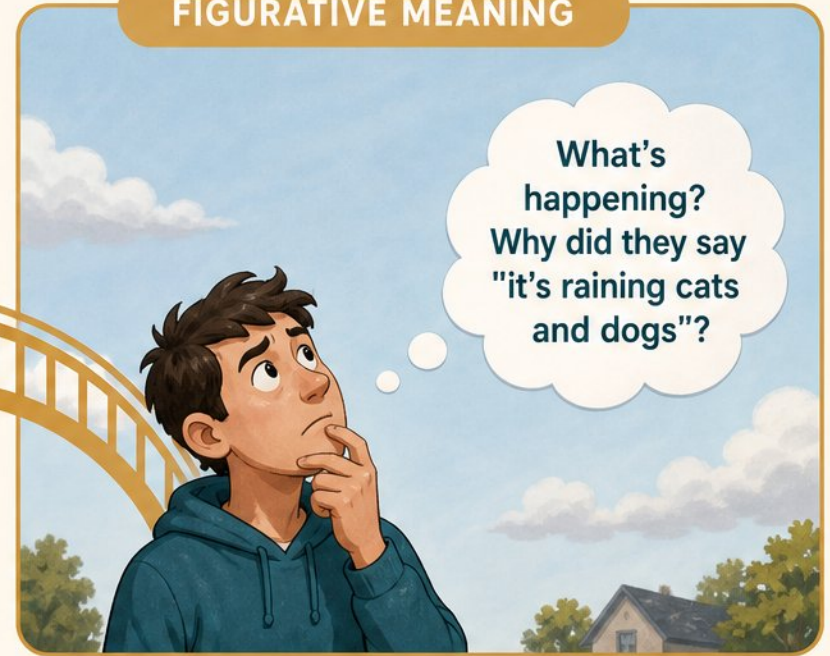
How Idioms Work:

Literal vs. Figurative Meaning

LITERAL MEANING



FIGURATIVE MEANING



CONTEXT
BUILDS THE
BRIDGE



- Words vs. intended meaning: "It's raining cats and dogs"



- Context reveals what's really happening



- Idioms are frozen—words can't change



- Visuals and examples make meanings stick

“

Everyday Expressions for Work



- **Touch base:** briefly contact or check in with someone



- **On the same page:** agree and share understanding



- **Think outside the box:** approach problems creatively



- **Cut corners:** do poor work to save time or money



- **Call it a day:** stop working after reaching a milestone



”

“

Everyday Expressions for Travel



- **Polish phrases:** Excuse me, Could you..., I'd like...



- **Directions:** How do I get to...? Which way to...?



- **Dining:** A table for two, please / Could I see the menu?



- **Emergencies:** I need help! I've lost my passport.



- **Transportation:** Does this bus go to...? Is this seat available?



CONTEXT
SPOTLIGHT

Excuse me,
could you tell me
which way to
the city center?



”

Meaning from Context, Not Memorization

Context Spotlight

- Look for clues in surrounding words and tone
- Topic and situation signal whether meaning is literal
- Speaker intent helps reveal non-literal phrases
- Short dialogues show how context unlocks meaning
- Infer meaning first, then confirm with a dictionary

SCENE: KITCHEN

Topic clue: Cooking



"This soup
really **hits
the spot!**"

Yes, it's
exactly what
I needed.



Meaning: Very satisfying
(about food)

SCENE: SOCCER FIELD

Topic clue: Sports



"That pass
really **hits
the spot!**"

Great timing
and perfect
placement!



Meaning: Exactly right;
perfect

SCENE: FRIEND TALK

Topic clue: Support



"Your advice
really **hits
the spot.**"

I'm glad it
helped.



Meaning: Exactly what I
needed (emotionally)

“ Context changes meaning. Look for the clues, understand the intent. ”



Common Pitfalls and Confusable Pairs



- Avoid changing fixed wording or direct translation
- Mixing idioms creates confusing blends
- "Could care less" vs. "couldn't care less": true meaning
- "Count on" (trust) vs. "count in" (include)
- Casual idioms clash with formal writing



Confusable Pair #1

"Could care less"



vs.

"couldn't care less"



It means you care a little.

It means you don't care at all.

Confusable Pair #2

"Count on"
(trust)



vs.

"count in"
(include)



Include someone or something.

“

Idiom Families and Themes



- Group idioms by themes: time, emotions, weather, body, food
- One theme creates many expressions with shared imagery
- Theme-based grouping strengthens memory and recall
- Use a starter grid for workplace and travel contexts

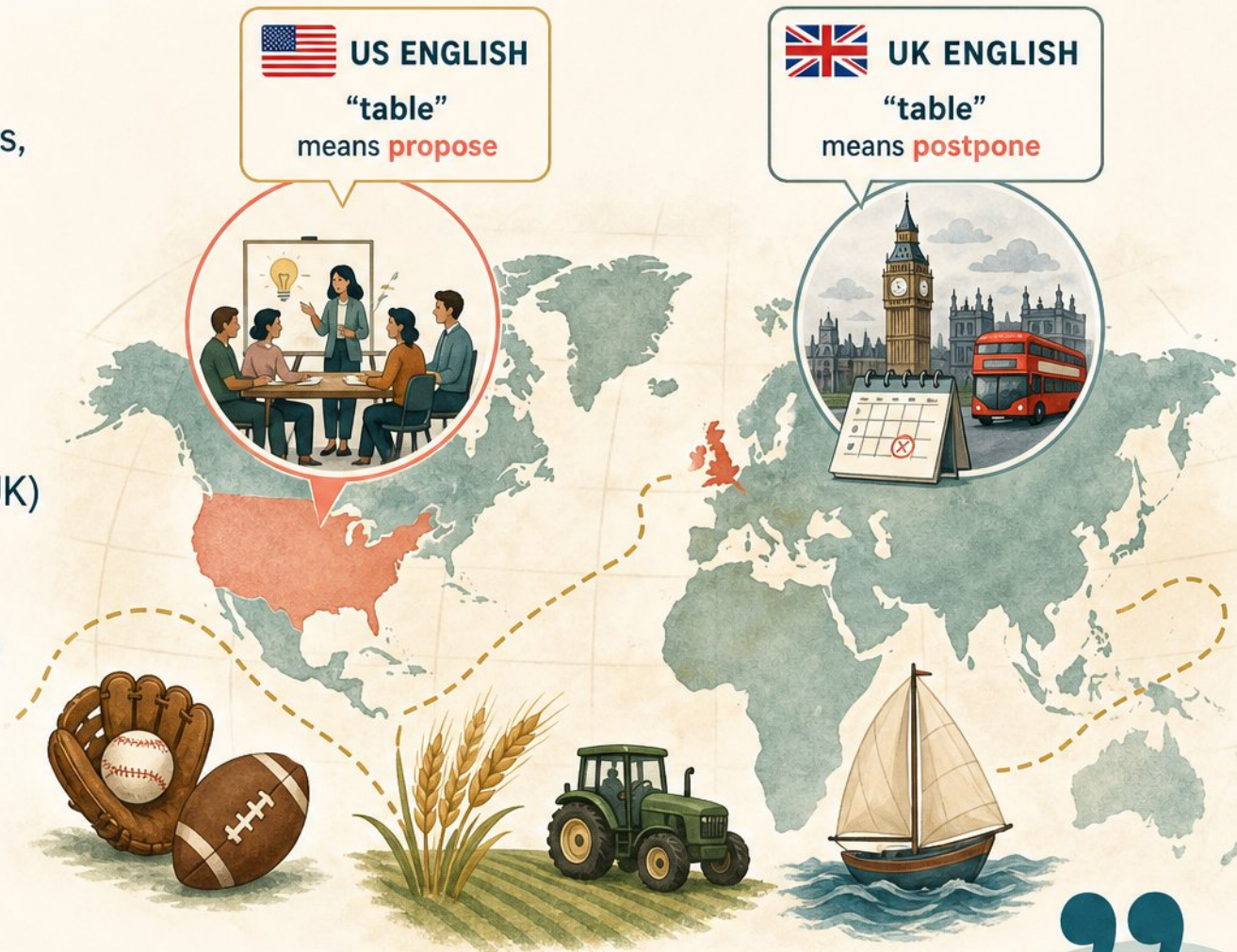
”



“

Culture, Origins, and Regional Variation

- Idioms reflect history, sports, agriculture, and sailing
- Same phrase can differ in US vs. UK English
- Example: “table” means propose (US) or postpone (UK)
- Cultural curiosity aids memory and understanding
- Regional expressions can puzzle even native speakers



”

“

Practice: Using Idioms in Real Situations



- Role-play workplace and travel scenarios



- Swap direct speech for natural idioms



- Start with guided tasks, then free conversation



- Get feedback on meaning, accuracy, and fit



CONTEXT SPOTLIGHT

WORKPLACE SCENARIO

We need to meet this deadline.

Let's think this through.



TRAVEL DIALOGUE

We just missed the last train.

Don't worry, there's another way.



IDIOM
PROMPTS

bite off more
than you can
chew

get the ball
rolling

hit the road

go with
the flow

”

“

Building Your Idiom Toolkit



- Keep idiom notes: meaning, example, context, register



- Use free tools: The Free Dictionary, The Idiom Daily, Idiom Explorer



- Start with grouped lists by workplace and travel situations



- Practice regularly in context, not by memorizing lists



Self-Check and Error Correction

COMMON IDIOM ERRORS: BEFORE AND AFTER

BEFORE (COMMON MISTAKES)

✗ He changed his mind 180 degrees.

✗ She made a decision at the last minute.

✗ Don't judge a book by its cover literally.

✗ He is under the weather because of bad weather.

AFTER (CORRECT USAGE)

✓ He **did a complete** 180 degrees.

✓ She made a decision **on the spur of the moment**.

✓ Don't judge a book **by its cover**.

✓ He is under the weather **because he is not feeling well**.



SELF-CHECK CHECKLIST

- ✓ Recognize common errors: word changes, literal translation, mixed idioms
- ✓ Quick self-checks to find and fix mistakes
- ✓ Practice selecting correct idiom forms
- ✓ Self-monitor by paraphrasing and checking dictionaries

Creating a Personal Practice Plan



- Select 10–15 high-value idioms for work and travel



- Daily routine: one idiom per day, log it, use it



- Learn from podcasts, videos, and real dialogues



- Consistent small steps beat last-minute cramming

My Weekly Idiom Plan ❤️

MON	Idiom: _____ Usage log: _____	
TUE	Idiom: _____ Usage log: _____	
WED	Idiom: _____ Usage log: _____	
THU	Idiom: _____ Usage log: _____	
FRI	Idiom: _____ Usage log: _____	
SAT	Idiom: _____ Usage log: _____	
SUN	Idiom: _____ Usage log: _____	

Summary and Next Steps

- Idioms are fixed phrases with figurative meanings
- Learn them in context, not by rote memory
- Define 10–15 high-value idioms for your goals
- Practice daily with one idiom and a usage log
- Explore free tools: The Free Dictionary, The Idiom Daily, Idiom Explorer



PersonWise.

PersonWise • AI digital-human course platform



Scan the code or click anywhere to watch this course live, with voice Q&A

personwise.ai/t/c631d270/public