a bear with a sore head: irritated/bad mood
a bit of a dark horse: person with hidden abilities
a bitter pill to swallow: a difficult fact to accept
a different kettle of fish: a totally different situation from the one just mentioned
a dog's life: a difficult, hard life
a fish out of water: sb who feels uncomfortable
a long shot: a wild guess/ a risk
a memory like a sieve: a poor memory
a night owl: person who enjoys staying up late
a pain in the neck: annoying person/thing
a piece of cake: sth very easy to do
a red rag to a bull: action, comment, etc. liable to provoke sb
a red-letter day: a very important day
a sitting duck: an easy target
a storm in a teacup: a lot of fuss about sth that is not important
a wild-goose chase: a hopeless search
above board: honest
Achilles heel: weakest point of sb's character
against all odds: despite the difficulties
agree to disagree: stop arguing because there is no chance of agreement
all along: from the beginning until now
all but: nearly, almost
all in: exhausted
all in all: when everything is considered
all the same: yet, however
all told: altogether; in total
an old wives' tale: false belief
an unknown quantity: person or thing that one has no experience of
as a last resort: when all else has failed
as the crow flies: in a direct line/ by a direct route
at close quarters: from a short distance
at large: free, not caught
at the cutting edge: at the forefront of
bark up the wrong tree: have a false idea about sth
be ahead of one's time: have modern ideas
be all at sea: be in a state of confusion
be all fingers and thumbs: be awkward, clumsy
be all very well: appear satisfactory but in fact not be
be as busy as a bee: very busy
be as thick as a brick: be stupid
be beside oneself with anger: to be extremely angry
be born yesterday: be easily deceived/ naive
be broke: have no/very little money
be caught red-handed: be caught while committing a crime
be crying for sth: really want sth
be fit for: be good enough for
be for the high jump: about to be punished
be full of beans: be very lively
be green: be inexperienced
be in a quandary: be confused; undecided
be in sb's black books: out of favour
be in sb's shoes: be in sb's position
be in the dark about sth: be unaware of sth
be in the doghouse: be out of favour, in trouble
be in the know: be well-informed
be in the same boat: be in the same (usually bad) situation
be in two minds about sth: not be able to decide what to do
be on the cards: be likely to happen
be on the defensive: protect oneself because one feels insecure or threatened
be on the up and up: improve steadily
be out of practice: lacking practice
be over the moon: be elated
be second to none
be sound asleep
be the apple of sb's eye
be the perfect image of sb
be the splitting image of sb
be thrown off balance
be tickled pink
be up and about
be up in arms
be worn out
be/get soaked to the skin
be have a close shave
bear fruit
beat about/around the bush
beat sb black and blue
before one can say Jack Robinson
beg the question
behind bars
below the belt
bide one's time
big cheese
big-headed
bite off more than sb can chew
black and blue all over
black tie
blaze a trail
blessing in disguise
blow a fuse
blue-eyed boy
bolt from the blue
brainwave
break even
break the ice
bring sth home to sb
bring to one's knees
browned off
bury one's head in the sand
butter sb up
by and large
by definition
by force of habit
by trial and error
call it quits
call sb names
cast aspersions
catch sb red-handed
chair a meeting
chip off the old block
chop and change
claim to fame
clear the air
come clean
come out of one's shell
come to a head
come to a standstill
come to terms with
come to the fore
come to the point
cook one's goose
cost a bomb
cost an arm and a leg
cramp one's style restrict one's behaviour in some way
crocodile tears false tears
cross one's mind think of sth
cry over spilt milk grieve over sth that can't be put right
cut corners be less thorough
cut sb dead ignore sb
cut sb to the quick deeply hurt sb's feelings
cut to the bone reduced to the minimum
deal a blow to damage one's hopes
different as chalk and cheese totally different
does it show? is it obvious?
dog eat dog ruthless competition, rivalry
dog-eared (of books) with the corners bent and turned down through use
don't give up your day job continue to do sth you know rather than trying sth new
don't hold your breath don't wait for sb/sth anxiously
donkey work boring, monotonous work
donkey's years a long time
down in the dumps depressed/miserable
down the drain wasted; lost
drive a hard bargain be a tough businessman
drive sb up the wall make sb angry/annoy sb
drop a brick say sth tactlessly
drop sb a line send sb a letter
ease off reduce in degree, speed or intensity
eat one's heart out feel jealous/ sad about sth
every nook and cranny everywhere
deface the music be criticised or punished for sth you have done
defair and square within the rules
defall head over heels fall in love quickly
defall into place become clear
defeel down in the mouth feel discouraged/depressed
defeel in one's bones feeling sth instinctively
defeel one's ears burning have a feeling that sb is talking about you
defew and far between scarce/rare
defight like cat and dog disagree violently
define kettle of fish confused state of affairs
flat broke penniless
flog a dead horse waste time doing sth useless
fly off the handle quickly become very angry
fly on the wall see/hear sth in a situation which does not involve you
for all in spite of
for all I care I don't care
for all I know as far as I know
for donkey's years for a very long time
for the time being temporarily
frosty welcome unfriendly reception
gatecrasher sb attending a party without an invitation
get a bit hot under the collar get angry, upset or embarassed
get a move on hurry up
get a problem off one's chest tell sb else about your problem
get cold feet lose courage to do sth
get cold feet be nervous or frightened because sth might fail
get nowhere fast make no progress
get off on the wrong foot argue or disagree at the beginning of a relationship
get on one's nerves irritate/annoy sb
get out of bed on the wrong side be in a bad mood
get out of hand become out of control
get rid of sth give sth unwanted away
get the hang of it get in the habit of doing sth
get the sack be dismissed from one's job
get the wrong end of the stick misunderstand completely what has been said
get wind of receive information about sth indirectly
get your own back
take/get revenge
give and take
compromise
give chapter and verse
give every exact detail
give sb the cold shoulder
ignore sb
give sb the slip
escape from sb
give the green light to sth
give permission to proceed with sth
give vent to
express sth freely
give way to
give in/yield
go back on one's word
not fulfil a promise
go by the board
be rejected
go for a song
be sold very cheaply
go to any lengths
do anything necessary to get sth you want
go to one's head
make conceited
go to the dogs
worsen
go without saying
be a foregone conclusion
golden opportunity
the best chance to gain sth
grease sb's palm
bribe sb
green belt
the area on the outskirts of a town adjoining the country
green with envy
very jealous
grey matter
brains; intelligence
grow out of sth
become too big for sth
hand in glove with sb
be in very close contact with sb
have a bee in one's bonnet
have an obsession about sth
have a frog in one's throat
inability to speak due to nervousness
have a job to do sth
find sth difficult to do
have a sharp tongue
tend to say unkind or hurtful things
have a yellow streak
be a coward
have an early night
go to bed early
have an eye for
be a good judge of sth
have an eye for
be good at judging the worth of sth
have at one's fingertips
have easily available
have butterflies in one's stomach
be very nervous about sth
have kittens
be nervous/anxious about sth
have many irons in the fire
have lots of plans in progress at the same time
have no fixed abode
be homeless
have no option but
must; have no choice
have one's heart in one's mouth
be extremely anxious about sth
have sb's hands full
be very busy with sth
have the cheek
dare to do sth
have the gift of the gab
be able to talk well
have time on one's hands
have free time
have words with sb
have an argument
hear it through the grapevine
find out information indirectly
hit the nail on the head
say exactly the right thing
hit the roof
get very angry
hit the sack
go to bed
hold one's horses
wait; be patient
ill at ease
embarrassed; uncomfortable
in a flash
very quickly
in a nutshell
briefly; in few words
in a rut
be stuck in a monotonous routine
in a tick
shortly, soon
in abeyance
halted temporarily
in arrears
have not paid the money they owe
in black and white
in writing
in broad daylight
in full view of the public
in clover
living a luxurious and comfortable life
in deep water
in trouble/difficulty
in full flow
talking at length
in public
in the presence of other people
in the abstract
in a general way
in the act of
while performing the act
in the air
in the balance
in the black
in the flesh
in the long run
in the nick of time
in the offing
in the red
it stands to reason
it's all Greek to me
jack of all trades
keep a straight face
keep an eye on sth
keep in check
keep one's chin up
keep one's fingers crossed
keep one's wits about one
keep sth quiet
keep sth under one's hat
keep up with the joneses
kick the bucket
kill time
kill two birds with one stone
know the ropes
lay bare
lay the table
lend an ear
lend sb a hand
let sleeping dogs lie
let the cat out of the bag
like a bull in a china shop
like the back of one's hand
like water off a duck's back
live out of a suitcase
look at sth though rose-coloured spectacles
look down one's nose at sb
lose heart
lose one's head
lose one's nerve
lost cause
make a clean breast of
make a dog's dinner
make a flying visit
make a fool of oneself
make a killing
make a living
make a mountain out of a molehill
make a name for oneself
make allowances for
make amends for
make common cause with sb
make hay while the sun shines
make head nor tail of
make light of
make money hand over fist
make one's blood boil
make one's getaway
make quite a scene
make sb's day
make waves
meet behind closed doors
moon around
more to sb than meets the eye
mutton dressed as a lamb
no room to swing a cat
no wonder
not all it's cracked up to be
not be one's cup of tea
not count one's chickens before they're hatched
not have it both ways
not have the foggiest idea
not hold water
of all people
of its own accord
of no consequence
off colour
off the cuff
off the point
off the record
on a shoe string
on account of
on edge
on no account
on second thoughts
on the air
on the alert
on the ball
on the blink
on the dole
on the dot
on the face of it
on the level
on the quiet
on the spur of the moment
on this/that account
once and for all
once in a blue moon
one's flesh and blood
open to debate
out and about
out in the open
out of bounds
out of print
out of the blue
out of the frying pan into the fire
out of the question
out of turn
out-and-out
paint the town red
part and parcel of
part company with
pay sb's way
pick someone's brains
pitch black
play cat and mouse with sb
play it by ear
play one's cards right
play truant
plenty more fish in the sea
point the finger of suspicion
pop the question
look miserable
sb is more important or interesting than is first seen
dress in a style younger than or inappropriate to your age
no room at all
not surprising
not as good as people say it is
not suit one's taste
not assume sth before it happens
refuse to make a decision between two pleasant things
not know sth at all
not seem reasonable or in accordance with the facts
not worry about sth
invalid; not legally binding
used to express annoyance/surprise
automatically
of no value
look/be slightly unwell
without preparation
irrelevant
unofficial(ly)
on a very small budget
because of
tense/nervous/ anxious
under/in no circumstances
having changed one's mind
broadcasting
watchful and prepared
alert
stop working properly (of electrical equipment)
receiving unemployment benefit/social security
punctual, exact on time
judging by how sth appears
honest/sincere
secretly
without thinking about sth
for this/that reason
for the last time
very rarely
family member
not decided/settled
outdoors; travelling from one place to another
(of secrets) revealed, known
prohibited, forbidden (place)
(of books) not available anymore
suddenly and unexpectedly
from a situation to a worse/similar one
impossible
complete, total
have a great time
basic part of
end association
contribute your shares of a bill
ask sb to help with a problem
very dark
keep sb in a state of uncertain expectation treating them alternatively cruelly and kindly
act in a situation by responding to events rather than according to plan
act cleverly
stay away from school without permission
many more opportunities in life for love
blame sb for sth
make a proposal of marriage
pull a few strings: use influential contacts in order to obtain an advantage
pull one's leg: tease or trick sb
pull one's socks up: make a greater effort
put a damper on: ruin sth or make it less enjoyable
put down roots: settle down
put on a brave face: try to hide one's disappointment
put one's foot down: insist on sth
put one's foot in it: make a tactless comment
put one's heart and soul into sth: be devoted to sth
put sb's name forward: nominate sb
put the cat among the pigeons: cause trouble/controversy
put two and two together: arrive at the truth by looking at facts
put words into one's mouth: pretend that sb has said sth that they haven't actually said
rack sb's brains: think very hard about sth
rain cats and dogs: rain heavily
red herring: sth which distracts you from sth important
red tape: unnecessary bureaucracy
ring a bell: remind sb of sth
rise to the challenge: act and be successful even though sth is new
see eye to eye with sb: agree with sb
see fit: think suitable or right
see red: suddenly become very angry
see the back of: be glad to see sb leave
set in one's ways: fixed in one's habits
shed light upon: give new/further information
short and sweet: brief but pleasant (usually ironic)
show one's true colours: reveal one's real character
sleep like a dog: be sound asleep
sleep on it: think about sth
slip one's mind: forget about sth
slow on the uptake: slow to understand
smell a rat: suspect that sth is wrong
sour grapes: say unpleasant comments because of jealousy
speak volumes: be strong evidence of sb's feelings or merits
spill the beans: reveal a secret/the facts
stand in sb's way: prevent sb from doing sth
status symbol: property/possession that shows sb's high social rank wealth etc.
stay clear of: avoid sb/sth
stew in one's own juice: suffer the consequences of one's own action
sth comes in handy: be very useful/practical
straight from the horse's mouth: from the most direct source
strike a chord: make sb feel sympathy
strike gold: come across sth useful
sweet tooth: enjoy eating sweet things
swim like a fish: swim very well
take it easy: not work too hard/relax
take one's time: not to hurry
take sb for granted: not appreciate sb
take sth into account: consider sth
take sth on the chin: bravely accept criticism
take sth to heart: take personally/be influenced by
take sth with a pinch of salt: not believe sth completely
take the bull by the horns: deal with sth boldly and directly
take things to pieces: dismantle things
take to one's heels: run away
talk the hind legs off a donkey: talk for a long time, uninterrupted
the black sheep of the family: a disgraced family member
the ins and outs: the details of an activity
the last straw: the last and worst episode in a chain of bad experiences
the life and soul of sth: the most lively and amusing person present somewhere
the lion's share: the biggest part/portion
the pot calling the kettle black: accusing sb of a fault one has oneself
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the rat race</td>
<td>the competitive nature of modern urban life</td>
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<tr>
<td>the tip of the iceberg</td>
<td>small evident part of a much larger, concealed situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>the year dot</td>
<td>a long time ago</td>
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<tr>
<td>thick-skinned</td>
<td>insensitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>through thick and thin</td>
<td>whatever happens</td>
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<tr>
<td>throw a party</td>
<td>have/hold a party</td>
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<tr>
<td>to no effect</td>
<td>unsuccessful</td>
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<tr>
<td>tongue in cheek</td>
<td>not serious, ironic</td>
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<tr>
<td>tooth and nail</td>
<td>fiercely</td>
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<tr>
<td>touch and go</td>
<td>with uncertain result</td>
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<tr>
<td>turn a blind eye to sth</td>
<td>ignore</td>
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<tr>
<td>turn over a new leaf</td>
<td>make a new start</td>
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<tr>
<td>under the weather</td>
<td>depressed/unwell</td>
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<tr>
<td>until one is blue in the face</td>
<td>as hard/long as one possibly can</td>
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<td>until the cows come home</td>
<td>for a long time</td>
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<tr>
<td>up and coming</td>
<td>likely to be successful</td>
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<tr>
<td>up in the air</td>
<td>existing, but not talked about</td>
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<tr>
<td>ups and downs</td>
<td>good things with bad ones</td>
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<tr>
<td>wash sb’s hands of sb</td>
<td>refuse to be involved with sb</td>
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<tr>
<td>wet behind the ears</td>
<td>inexperienced</td>
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<tr>
<td>wet blanket</td>
<td>dull person who spoils people’s happiness</td>
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<tr>
<td>whet sb’s appetite</td>
<td>make sb eager to have/experience more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>white elephant</td>
<td>useless/unwanted possession</td>
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<tr>
<td>white-collar job</td>
<td>office/clerical work</td>
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<tr>
<td>with a view to doing sth</td>
<td>with the intention or hope of doing sth</td>
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<tr>
<td>with flying colours</td>
<td>with great success</td>
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<tr>
<td>without fail</td>
<td>do sth no matter what</td>
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<tr>
<td>work a miracle</td>
<td>make sth almost impossible happen</td>
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<tr>
<td>work to rule</td>
<td>adhere strictly to the rules as a form of protest</td>
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</tbody>
</table>