

# Current English Idioms

徐栋良 高 红/编著


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# 前 言

英语习语是一种语言的独特表达方式,不能照字面意义翻译成另一种语言。例如,She just “laid an egg.”这句话的意思并非说她是只母鸡,而是指她惨遭失败。英语学习者往往即使知道某一个习语中各个字的意义,而且语法也掌握得很好,但对于整个习语的意思仍然百思不得其解。要想把英语学好、学通、学精,不仅要大量阅读各种有深度的书刊,还必须注意收集习语并精确掌握,灵活运用。这对于提高日常阅读、写作与会话能力都是不可或缺的。英语习语非常丰富,可以说俯拾皆是。本书从英语报刊杂志、英语词典和有关参考书中收集了当代英语中最常见的习语(其中相当一部分在国内出版的词典中尚未收入),并附中文注释。例句中尽量结合适当的情景和上下文,以使读者记得牢靠、用得准确。

由于当代英语的迅速发展与变化,人们的语言习惯在不断更新,一度被认为是惟一正确的“标准英语”已不再是无可争议,“标准英语”称霸天下的局面已被打破。今日的“标准英语”,明日就可能已经过时、令人不屑一顾;而许多所谓“非标准英语”,诸如富有生气和活力的俗语和俚语,已成为人们日常生活中喜闻乐见的表达形式。对于以英语为外国语的学习者来说,学习“活”的英语、不断更新已学的语言知识、永葆语言的青春是至为重要的。因此,本书除现代英语中常用的习语外,还收入了部分常用的俗语、谚语和俚语。对于一些出自神话故事、历史典故和文学作品的习语,我们加了必要的注释。

本书浅显易懂又妙趣横生,不仅对大中学生及英语爱好者学习英语习语大有裨益,而且能激发广大读者学习英语的兴趣。此外,本书也可作为英语教师及翻译工作者的辅助工具书。

限于时间和水平,疏漏谬误之处,在所难免,恳切希望读者和同行批评指正。

编 者

# 体 例 说 明

一、本书按英语习语字母次序排列。其先后次序以习语首词的字母次序为准。若第一个字母相同,则按第二个字母次序排列,以此类推。

二、除谚语和约定俗成的固定习语外,习语条目的词首不带冠词(a, the)和动词不定式符号(to)。

三、同一习语而表达方式不同的,或同一习语中可换用的词用斜线(/)隔开。

四、同一习语下的各英语释义用“;”分开。习语之后所列搭配用圆括号括起。译文中用一个以上汉字对等词释义时,凡意思相近的用逗号分开,意思较远的用分号分开。

五、出自神话故事、历史典故和文学作品的习语,在其例句后圆括号内的部分表示对释义的补充说明。

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## A

**a blessing in disguise**—what at first seems bad turns out later to be good 看似灾祸实则使人得福之事

Your failure in the college entrance examination may be *a blessing in disguise*. You can start to work and have more practical experience behind you. 你高考落榜或许是塞翁失马, 因为你可以开始工作, 从而积累较多的实际经验。

**above someone's head**—见 over one's head

**according to Hoyle**—according to the rules (玩惠斯特牌时)按照霍伊尔所定规则(的); 按照规则(的)

*According to Hoyle*, you should keep to the right. 按照惯例, 你应该靠右行驶。

**Achilles' heel**—the one fatal weakness or vulnerable spot named after the Greek hero Achilles who was invulnerable except for a spot on his heel 希腊神话中的英雄阿基里斯的接踵, 惟一的致命弱点  
He's an A student in math, physics and chemistry, but English is his *Achilles' heel*. 他是数学、物理和化学尖子, 但英语是他的弱项。

**a cold day in hell**—never 地狱变冷之日, 永不到来之时  
You'll be sorry if you leave her because it'll be *a cold day in hell* before you see her again. 如果你离开她, 你会后悔的, 因为你再也不会见到她了。

**act high and mighty/high-and-mighty**—to act proud and powerful; look down on others 盛气凌人

## A

A teacher should not *act high and mighty* with his students. 老师不应该在学生面前摆威风。

Lucy has few friends because she always *acts so high-and-mighty*. 露西几乎没有朋友,因为她总是摆出一副盛气凌人的架势。

**act one's age**—to behave as grown-up as one really is and not act as if you were much younger than you are 举止和年龄相称

Mr. Thomas was throwing rocks with the children by the seaside. Then Mrs. Thomas said, "Kerry! *Act your age!*" and he stopped. 托马斯先生正在海边与孩子们玩扔石子。随后托马斯太太说:“凯瑞! 别像个小孩子似的!”他便不玩了。

**add fuel to the fire**—to do or say something that makes a bad situation even worse, or makes someone angrier 火上加油

She was already mad at him, and when he dated another girl, that really *added fuel to the fire*. 她已经对他很恼火了,所以当他和另一位姑娘幽会时,对她

而言这无疑是在火上加油。

**add insult to injury**—to make a bad situation worse; hurt the feelings of a person who has already been harmed 雪上加霜,更糟的是

We went shopping, and first it rained, then the car broke down and finally, to *add insult to injury*, our money was stolen. 我们去购物,起先下雨了,然后车坏了,最后更糟的是我们的钱被偷了。

**afraid of one's own shadow**—very easily frightened; always scared of small things 极其胆小,极易受惊

Jenny was even *afraid of her own shadow* since she was robbed and sexually assaulted. 自打詹妮被抢劫且遭到性攻击后,她连自己的影子都会害怕。

**against the clock/against time**—in a race with time so as to get something done before a particular time (为了如期完成任务等) 争分夺秒地



In a race *against the clock*, the police rushed the crime victims to the hospital. 警方将被害人火速送至医院。

**a little bird told me**—to get information from a mysterious or secret source 一个消息灵通的人对我说

—How did you know that?

Where did you get such information?

—*A little bird told me.*

—你怎么知道的？你是从哪儿得到这消息的？

——一位消息灵通人士告诉我的。

**a little knowledge is a dangerous thing**—a proverb meaning that a person with incomplete knowledge about something may think he knows it all and make grave mistakes 一知半解，危害不浅。He has read some medical books and had a course in first aid. He thought he knew how to treat his own illness, but he almost killed himself. *A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.* 他看过一些医学书而且学过急救课，所

以就认为知道怎样给自己治病了，可是差点儿送了命。要知道一知半解，危害不浅。

A

**all ears**—eager to listen; keenly attentive 倾听

Go ahead with your life story in Iraq; we are *all ears*. 快说说你在伊拉克的经历，我们洗耳恭听。

**all fingers and thumbs**—一见 all thumbs

**all in a day's work**—unpleasant but not unusual 不愉快、但习以为常、不足为奇的

Running an after-school program is a tough job, but it's *all in a day's work* for a teacher. 从事课外辅导工作非常艰苦，但对一位教师而言这都是分内的事。

**all one's geese are swans**—overestimating the value of one's possessions or ideas 言过其实。It's understandable that you think *all your geese are swans*. 你如此言过其实可以理解。

## A

**all over but the shouting**—finally decided, finished or won except for a celebration (指演出、竞赛等)大局已定、胜负已分(只剩下欢呼声、大会正式宣布等)

When he passed the comprehensive examinations with distinction, he said to himself, "It's *all over but the shouting*." 当他以优异成绩通过学位考试时,他自言自语道:“终于大功告成了。”

**all thumbs**—to be clumsy (as if each finger were a thumb) and not able to do delicate work.

不灵巧,笨拙

I'm *all thumbs* when it comes to embroidering. 要说刺绣我绝对是笨手笨脚的。

**and what have you**—and other things also 还有其他东西

They'll shop for food, clothes, *and what have you*. 他们要买吃的、穿的以及其他东西。

**and what not**—and other things also 还有其他东西

Her friend brought her cookies,

potato chips, *and what not*. 她朋友买了饼干、薯片及其他东西给她。

**an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth**—every blow or injury should be punished or paid back 以眼还眼,以牙还牙

Should we follow the rule of "*an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*," or should we forgive people who hurt us? 我们应该遵循“以眼还眼、以牙还牙”的原则,还是应该原谅曾经伤害过我们的人?

**ants in one's pants**—extremely nervous or restless 坐立不安  
He has *ants in his pants* today.  
Is something wrong? 今天他一直坐立不安,出了什么事?

**a pile of**—见 a whole bunch

**apple of one's eye**—a well-loved person or object 掌上明珠;宝贝;珍爱物

His new sports car was the *apple of his eye*. He was always polishing it. 他那辆新跑车是他的最爱,他总是把它擦得锃亮。

**apple-pie order**—orderly or tidy arrangement; neatness 井然有序

A good secretary, Ann always keeps the office in *apple-pie order*. 安是一名称职的秘书,她一直把办公室的一切打理得井井有条。

**a rolling stone gathers no moss**—a proverb that describes a person who keeps changing jobs or residences and, therefore, will not be able to save money or things of his own 滚石不生苔,转业不聚财

Berry was a *rolling stone* that *gathered no moss*. She worked in many different jobs all over the city. 贝瑞是个生活多变、少有积蓄的人,她在这座城市已经换过许多不同的工作。

**as a duck takes to water**—very easily (the first “as” can be omitted) 像鸭子入水般地,很自然、轻而易举地(第一个 as 可以省略)

Pearl S. Buck adapted to Chinese culture *as a duck takes to water*. 赛珍珠很自然地适应了中国

文化。

**as bad as all that**—as bad as it seems (usually in the negative; the first “as” can be omitted) 像看上去的那么糟(通常用于否定式;第一个 as 可以省略)  
Don't worry. It can't be *as bad as all that*. 别担心,事情不会像看上去的那么糟。

**as bald as an eagle**—completely bald (the first “as” can be omitted) 头顶光秃秃的(第一个 as 可以省略)  
Mark's only thirty something, but he's *bald as an eagle*. 马克只有三十几岁,可他的头顶已光秃秃的了。

**as blind as a bat**—not able to see well because of very bad eyesight; completely blind (the first “as” can be omitted) 完全看不见东西(第一个 as 可以省略)  
My great grandmother is getting *blind as a bat* because of her cataract. 我的曾祖母因为白内障而几乎双目失明了。

**as busy as a beaver**—very busy

A

**A** (the first "as" can be omitted)  
忙得团团转 (第一个 as 可以省略)

Dean Lee is always *as busy as a beaver*. 李院长总是忙得团团转。

**as clean as a whistle**—completely free from dirt (the first "as" can be omitted) 一尘不染 (第一个 as 可以省略)

Our computer lab is *as clean as a whistle*. 我们的计算机实验室一尘不染。

**as clear as mud**—not understandable (the first "as" can be omitted)

一点也不清楚,使人莫名其妙 (第一个 as 可以省略)

What he has written about the accident is *as clear as mud*. 他写的有关事故的报告叫人一点也看不懂。

**as comfortable as an old shoe**—very comfortable, pleasant and relaxed (the first "as" can be omitted) 令人轻松愉快的,容易与之交谈(或共事)的 (第一个 as 可以省略)

This rocking chair is *as comfortable as an old shoe*. 坐在这把摇椅上真令人全身舒坦。

**as cool as a cucumber**—calm and unexcited (the first "as" can be omitted) 十分镇静 (第一个 as 可以省略)

During the emergency, the flight attendant remained *as cool as a cucumber* and helped the passengers land safely. 在那起紧急事故中,那位乘务员毫不惊慌,镇静地协助乘客们安全下机。

**as crazy as a loon**—very foolish or mad (the first "as" can be omitted) 非常愚蠢;完全不正常 (常用来指儿童;第一个 as 可以省略)

If you think you can win her heart with all your money, you're *as crazy as a loon*. 如果你认为可以用钱赢得她的芳心,那你真是太蠢了。

**as cute as a button**—intelligent, lively, often used in reference to small children (the first "as" can be omitted) 聪明,活泼 (第一个 as 可以省略)

Little Mary is *as cute as a button*. 小玛丽非常聪敏可爱。

**as dead as a dodo**—finished, not in existence any more (The dodo—a large bird of Mauritius which died out in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; the first “as” can be omitted) 绝种的; 完全过时的 (渡渡鸟—产于毛里求斯、绝种于十七世纪的一种大鸟; 第一个 as 可以省略)

That absurd theory of his is *dead as a dodo* now. 他那种荒谬的理论现在就像渡渡鸟一样完全过时了。

**as dead as a doornail**—clearly dead; totally hopeless or without a chance of success (the first “as” can be omitted) 确实无疑地死了; 彻底失望或没有机会成功 (第一个 as 可以省略) The rabbit was *dead as a doornail*. 这只兔子完全死了。

After Ted left, the school team was *as dead as a doornail*. 泰德走了以后, 校队便没有赢的机会了。

**as different as night and day**—

entirely different (the first “as” can be omitted) 完全不同 (第一个 as 可以省略)

They both are contemporary women writers, but their literary styles are *as different as night and day*. 她俩都是当代女作家, 但她们的文学风格迥异。

**as dull as dishwater**—not inspiring; boring and tedious (the first “as” can be omitted) 非常单调乏味的 (第一个 as 可以省略) His lectures are *as dull as dishwater*. 他的讲座都非常单调乏味。

**as easy as duck soup**—easily accomplished without much effort (the first “as” can be omitted) 易如反掌 (第一个 as 可以省略)

That writing skills test was *as easy as duck soup*. 那次写作技巧测试再容易不过了。

**as easy as pie**—very easy to do (the first “as” can be omitted) 极容易, 非常简单 (第一个 as 可以省略)

The Japanese pronunciation is *as*

## A

*easy as pie* for most Chinese students. 对大多数中国学生来说,学会日语发音易如反掌。

The final exam was *easy as pie*.  
这次期末考试非常简单。

**as easy as rolling off a log**—very easy, with little or no effort (the first “as” can be omitted) 极容易(第一个 as 可以省略)  
She thought learning how to cook was *as easy as rolling off a log*. 她以为学会烹饪是轻而易举的事。

**as fit as a fiddle**—in very good health (The first “as” can be omitted) 非常健康;精神很好(第一个 as 可以省略)  
My uncle is *as fit as a fiddle* although he is a bit overweight. 虽然我叔叔太胖了点,但他非常健康。

**as flat as a pancake**—very flat or level (the first “as” can be omitted) 完全扁平的,非常平的(第一个 as 可以省略)  
In a traffic accident, a huge truck squashed a bicycle *flat as a pancake*. 在一起交通事故中,

一辆巨型卡车把一辆自行车完全压扁了。

**as gentle as a lamb**—very kind and tender (the first “as” can be omitted) 非常温柔(第一个 as 可以省略)

My friends have just come back from Africa and asked me, “Can you imagine that the lion is *as gentle as a lamb* in Africa?” 我朋友刚从非洲回来,他们问我:“你能想象非洲的狮子像羔羊一般温顺吗?”

**as good as done**—almost the same as being done (many different past participles can replace “done” in this phrase: as good as finished, painted, typed, written, etc.; the first “as” can be omitted) 差不多快做好了(很多过去分词可以替代该词组中的 “done”: 差不多完成了/画好了/字打好了/写好了,等等;第一个 as 可以省略)  
My business report is *as good as done*. I’m just putting the finishing touch on it. 我的商务报告快完成了,正在作最后的润饰。

**as good as gold**—very well-behaved (the first “as” can be omitted) 行为非常端正 (第一个 as 可以省略)

All her pupils are *as good as gold*. 她所有的学生都很有教养。

**as happy as a lark**—very happy and gay (the first “as” can be omitted) 兴高采烈 (第一个 as 可以省略)

My little sister is always *as happy as a lark*. 我的妹妹总是非常快活。

**as hard/tough as nails**—very hard and cold, without feeling or sentiment (the first “as” can be omitted) 铁石心肠、冷酷无情的 (第一个 as 可以省略)  
Bob works for a boss who is *as hard as nails*. 鲍勃在为一个铁石心肠的老板干活。

I can't win him over—he's *as tough as nails*. 我说服不了他——他非常强硬, 很难对付。

**as hungry as a bear**—very hungry (the first “as” can be omitted) 很饿 (第一个 as 可以省略)

After a football game, he felt *as hungry as a bear*. 足球赛后, 他饿极了。

**asleep at the switch**—not paying attention to one's job; failing to do one's duty at the right time 玩忽职守

Mark was fired because he was *asleep at the switch*. 马克被解雇了, 因为他玩忽职守。

**as mad as a hatter**—not able to think right; completely insane (the first “as” can be omitted) 无法正常思考; 完全疯了 (第一个 as 可以省略)

You're *as mad as a hatter*. 你完全疯了。

**as mad as a wet hen**—very angry (the first “as” can be omitted) 非常生气 (第一个 as 可以省略)

His rudeness made her *mad as a wet hen*. 他的粗鲁行为使她非常生气。

**as meek as a mouse**—very gentle and harmless (the first “as” can be omitted) 非常温和、没

**A** 有恶意 (第一个 as 可以省略)

He's tall, big and muscular, yet he is *as meek as a mouse*. 他身材高大、体格健壮,不过温和又善良。

**as nutty as a fruitcake**—very silly or stupid; crazy in behavior or dress (often in a humorous way; the first “as” can be omitted) 愚蠢的;举止或衣着极怪的(常带有幽默的口吻;第一个 as 可以省略)

That guy is *as nutty as a fruitcake*. 那家伙简直是个傻瓜。

The whole plan is *as nutty as a fruitcake*. 整个计划都太妄狂了。

**as plain as day**—very easy to see or understand (the first “as” can be omitted) 非常明显或易懂(第一个 as 可以省略)

The new traffic regulations are *as plain as day*. 新的交通规则非常清楚明了。

**as plain as the nose on one's face**—extremely obvious or clearly evident (the first “as”

can be omitted) 一目了然、显而易见的(第一个 as 可以省略)

I think you know who did it. It's *as plain as the nose on your face*. 我想你知道这是谁干的,这不明摆着嘛。

**as quiet as a mouse**—making almost no noise, being shy and not talking much (the first “as” can be omitted) 因为害羞而很少说话,悄无声息(第一个 as 可以省略)

The new girl in our class is *as quiet as a mouse*. 我们班新来的女孩沉默寡言。

**as regular as clockwork**—with perfect regularity and precision like the workings of a clock (the first “as” can be omitted) 极有规律的(第一个 as 可以省略)

My secretary has a tight schedule, and everything she does has to be *as regular as clockwork*. 我的秘书日程安排很紧凑,她所做的一切都必须极有规律。

**as scarce as hen's teeth**—very



scarce (the first “as” can be omitted) 很稀少(第一个 as 可以省略)

In the desert, trees are *as scarce as hen's teeth*. 在沙漠中, 树木非常稀少。

**as sharp as a tack**—very intelligent; quick-witted (the first “as” can be omitted) 非常聪明、富于机智的(第一个 as 可以省略)

Dick is *as sharp as a tack*; he got straight A's every semester. 迪克聪颖过人, 每学期他的成绩都是全优。

**as sick as a dog**—terribly sick (the first “as” can be omitted) 病得很厉害(第一个 as 可以省略)

*Sick as a dog*, she asked the doctor to tell her how long she could live. 她病得很厉害, 所以要求医生告诉她还能活多久。

**as snug as a bug (in a rug)**—very cozy and comfortable (the first “as” can be omitted) 非常舒适、极其安逸的(第一个 as 可以省略)

She feels *as snug as a bug in a rug* in her new couch, sipping at her drink and watching TV. 她非常悠闲地躺在新沙发上, 边喝饮料边看电视。

**as sound as a dollar**—very reliable or dependable (the first “as” can be omitted) 非常可靠(第一个 as 可以省略)

This printer is *as sound as a dollar*. 这台打印机经久耐用。

**as stubborn as a mule**—not willing to change one's mind, very set in one's ideas (the first “as” can be omitted) 非常执拗(第一个 as 可以省略)

Those diehards were *as stubborn as mules*. 那些死硬派非常顽固。

**as the crow flies**—in a straight line, by the shortest way 沿直线, 不绕道

Passenger: How far is it to the airport?

Taxi Driver: It's about eighty miles *as the crow flies*. 乘客: 这儿到机场有多远?

出租车司机: 不绕道的话约 80