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Super-Mini American Idioms

(美) 理查德·A·斯皮尔斯 (Richard A. Spears, Ph.D.) 著

清华大学出版社

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北京

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F 出版说明

FOREWORD

学习掌握纯正而又时尚的美式英语，是许多英语学习者的共同愿望。人们在学习的过程中会发现，在美语中存在着大量的习语、俚语和固定词组搭配。这一方面使得语言丰富多彩，另一方面却对非本土（本族）的学习者构成了巨大的障碍。此时，一本权威而规范的美语词典就非常必要。清华大学出版社外语分社引进的“纯正美语系列”词典将帮您全面解决这方面的难题。

该系列原版词典由世界知名的麦格劳-希尔（亚洲）教育出版公司及旗下 NTC 公司出版，清华大学出版社独家引进。词典编纂者理查德·A·斯皮尔斯原是美国西北大学语言学教授，是词典编纂学领域的专家，后长期担任 NTC 公司词典部主任。

这些词典有一个共同的目标：为使用者学习美国英语中的习语、俚语和短语动词提供精确、实用的帮助。为实现这一目标，编者努力使词典主要实现以下特色：

1. 所收词条来源于当代美国人日常使用的语言，具有清新现代之风；

2. 词条的释义简洁明了，所附例句和每一种词义相配合，提示其正确用法；

3. 在短语动词方面特别注重搭配，每一词条都附有完整的搭配形式，并对于后接的不同性质宾语（人或物）给予明确提示；

4. 所收词条均提供相互参照注释，以方便使用者查阅相关的同义词或近义词。

本系列词典既有大部头，又有袖珍本，在内容上它们相互补充。既可以作为案头的工具书，也可以在您需要的时候方便携带、随时查阅，更可以作为实用的教科书，值得从头至尾逐字逐条仔细阅读学习。我们衷心希望本系列词典能够成为您工作、学习和生活中的小帮手。

祝您学习进步、事业成功！

清华大学出版社外语分社

2007 年春

E 专家推荐

EXPERT'S WORDS

中文是一种大量使用成语、常用语和谚语的语言。因此在中译英方面，这类表达会给译者造成相当大的困难。很多学习者会试图在英语中找到对应的表达法，并努力应用在各种场合。确实存在很多在形式和用法上大致对应的中英文习语表达，例如中文有“破釜沉舟”，英语有“burn one's bridge”；中文有“血肉之躯”，英语有“flesh and blood”；中文有“跟着感觉走”，英语有“follow one's heart”。但是细究下去，我们能发现它们各自的含义和适用场合都有或多或少的区别。本词典正是

在这一点上显示了其优越性，它就像普通词典分别解释一个单词的不同用法一样，就词条在不同场合里的语义分别解释，并提供例句，学习者可借此全面掌握某一习语的确切意义和适用场合。

在语言学习中，能恰当而且自如地应用习语属于较高境界，本词典所收词条精炼且实用，易于掌握，有望帮助学习者达到这一目标。

北京外国语大学

申 丕

How to Use This Dictionary

1. Expressions are entered in an alphabetical order that ignores hyphens, spaces, and other punctuation. Each expression is entered in its normal form and word order. Entries that begin with short function words such as *a, an, as, at, be, by, do, for, from, have, in, off, on, out, under, and up* appear both in normal word order and in inverted word order, cross-referenced to the normal entry; for example, at the entry **active duty**, **on** the reader is referred to the entry **on active duty**.
2. A main entry may have one or more alternate forms. The main entry and its alternate forms are printed in **boldface type**, and the alternate forms are preceded by "AND." Two or more alternate forms are separated by a semicolon. Words enclosed in parentheses in any entry form are optional. For example: **break (out) into tears** stands for **break out into tears** and **break into tears**. When entry phrases are referred to in the dictionary, they are printed in *slanted type*.
3. Some of the entry phrases have more than one major sense. These meanings are numbered with **boldface numerals**. Numbered senses may also have additional forms that are shown in **boldface type** after the numeral. See, for example, **get something sewed up**.
4. Some entries have additional related forms within the entry. These forms are introduced by "ALSO," and cross-referencing leads the user to each of these embedded entries. See, for example, **get a black eye**.

5. Alternate forms of the definitions are separated by semicolons, and some definitions are followed by comments or explanations in parentheses. See, for example, **add fuel to the fire**.

6. In some cases where the entry phrase refers to either people or things—as expressed by “**someone or something**”—the numbered senses can be used with people only or things only. In such cases the numbered sense begins with “[with *someone*]” or “[with *something*].” See, for example, **cut someone or something to the bone**.

7. Each entry or sense has at least two examples printed in *italics*.

Terms and Symbols

□ (a box) marks the beginning of an example.

ALSO: introduces an additional variant form within an entry, which is related to the main entry, but has a slightly different meaning or form. See point four in “How to Use This Dictionary.”

AND indicates that an entry phrase has variant forms that are the same or almost the same in meaning as the entry phrase. One or more variant forms are preceded by AND. See point two in “How to Use This Dictionary.”

cliché describes an expression that is used too frequently and too casually.

Compare to means to consult the entry indicated and examine its form or meaning in relation to the entry phrase containing the “Compare to” instruction.

informal describes a very casual expression that is most likely to be spoken and not written.

proverb describes a frequently quoted fixed saying that gives advice or makes a philosophical observation.

rude describes an expression that is insulting or harsh.

See means to turn to the entry indicated.

See also means to consult the entry indicated for additional information or to find expressions similar in form or meaning to the entry phrase containing the "See also" instruction.

See under means to turn to the entry phrase indicated and look for the phrase you are seeking within the entry indicated.

slang describes an expression that is recognized as casual or playful. Such terms are not considered appropriate for formal writing.

C 目录

CONTENTS

Foreword	II
出版说明	
Expert's Words	IV
专家推荐	
How to Use This Dictionary	VI
词典使用说明	
Terms and Symbols	VIII
术语和符号标识	
Dictionary A-Z	1-247
词典正文	

A

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. a proverb meaning that something you already have is better than something you might get. ☐ *Bill has offered to buy my car for \$3,000. Someone else might pay more, but Bill made a good offer, and a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.* ☐ *I might be able to find a better offer, but a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.*

according to Hoyle according to the rules; in keeping with the way it is normally done. (Refers to the rules for playing games. Edmond Hoyle wrote a book about games. This expression is usually used for something other than games.) ☐ *That's wrong. According to Hoyle, this is the way to do it.* ☐ *The carpenter said, "This is the way to drive a nail, according to Hoyle."*

a chip off the old block a person (usually a male) who behaves in the same way as his father or resembles his father. (The father is the "old block.") ☐ *John looks like his father—a real chip off the old block.* ☐ *Bill Jones, Jr., is a chip off the old block. He's a banker just like his father.*

act high-and-mighty to act proud and powerful; to act haughty. ☐ *Why does the doctor always have to act so high-and-mighty?* ☐ *If Sally wouldn't act so high-and-mighty, she'd have more friends.*

Actions speak louder than words. a proverb meaning that it is better to do something about a problem than just talk about it. ☐ *Mary kept promising to get a job. John finally looked her in the eye and said, "Actions speak louder than words!"* ☐ *After*

active duty

listening to the senator promising to cut federal spending, Ann wrote a simple note saying, "Actions speak louder than words."

active duty, on See on active duty.

act of God an occurrence (usually an accident) for which no human is responsible; an act of nature such as a storm, an earthquake, or a windstorm. ☐ *My insurance company wouldn't pay for the damage because it was an act of God.* ☐ *The thief tried to convince the judge that the diamonds were in his pocket due to an act of God.*

act one's age to behave more maturely; to act as grown-up as one really is. (This is frequently said to a child or a teenager.) ☐ *Come on, John, act your age. Stop throwing rocks.* ☐ *Mary! Stop picking on your little brother. Act your age!*

add fuel to the fire AND **add fuel to the flame** to make a problem worse; to say or do something that makes a bad situation worse; to make an angry person get even more angry. ☐ *To spank a crying child just adds fuel to the fire.* ☐ *Bill was shouting angrily, and Bob tried to get him to stop by laughing at him. Of course, that was just adding fuel to the flame.*

add fuel to the flame See the previous entry.

add insult to injury to make a bad situation worse; to hurt the feelings of a person who has already been hurt. (A cliché.) ☐ *First, the basement flooded, and then, to add insult to injury, a pipe burst in the kitchen.* ☐ *My car barely started this morning, and to add insult to injury, I got a flat tire in the driveway.*

A fool and his money are soon parted. a proverb meaning that a person who acts unwisely with money soon loses it. (Often said about a person who has just lost a sum of money because of poor judgment.) ☐ *When Bill lost a \$400 bet on a horse race, Mary said, "A fool and his money are soon parted."* ☐ *When John bought a cheap used car that fell apart the next day, he said, "Oh, well, a fool and his money are soon parted."*

afraid of one's own shadow easily frightened; always frightened, timid, or suspicious. (Never used literally.) ☐ *After Tom was robbed, he was even afraid of his own shadow.* ☐ *Jane has always been a shy child. She has been afraid of her own shadow since she was three.*

A friend in need is a friend indeed. a proverb meaning that a true friend is a person who will help you when you really need some help. ☐ *When Bill helped me with geometry, I really learned the meaning of "A friend in need is a friend indeed."* ☐ *"A friend in need is a friend indeed" sounds silly until you need someone very badly.*

against the clock in a race with time; in a great hurry to get something done before a particular time. ☐ *Bill set a new track record, running against the clock. He lost the actual race, however.* ☐ *In a race against the clock, they rushed the special medicine to the hospital.*

air, in the See *in the air*.

air, off the See *off the air*.

air, on the See *on the air*.

air someone's dirty linen in public to discuss private or embarrassing matters in public, especially when quarreling. (This *linen* refers to problems as if they were sheets and tablecloths or other soiled cloth.) ☐ *John's mother had asked him repeatedly not to air the family's dirty linen in public.* ☐ *Mr. and Mrs. Johnson are arguing again. Why do they always have to air their dirty linen in public?*

air, up in the See *up in the air*.

a little bird told me learned from a mysterious or secret source. (Often given as an evasive answer to someone who asks how you learned something. Rude in some circumstances.) ☐ *"All right," said Mary, "where did you get that information?" John replied,*

A little knowledge

"A little bird told me." □ *A little bird told me I'd probably find you here.*

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. a proverb meaning that incomplete knowledge can embarrass or harm someone or something. □ *The doctor said, "Just because you've had a course in first aid, you shouldn't have treated your own illness. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."* □ *John thought he knew how to take care of the garden, but he killed all the flowers. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.*

all fours, on See *on all fours*.

all in a day's work part of what is expected; typical or normal. □ *I don't particularly like to cook, but it's all in a day's work.* □ *Putting up with rude customers isn't pleasant, but it's all in a day's work.* □ *Cleaning up after other people is all in a day's work for a chambermaid.*

all over but the shouting decided and concluded; finished except for a celebration. (An elaboration of *all over*, which means "finished.") □ *The last goal was made just as the final whistle sounded. Tom said, "Well, it's all over but the shouting."* □ *Tom worked hard in college and graduated last month. When he got his diploma, he said, "It's all over but the shouting."*

All roads lead to Rome. a proverb meaning that there are many different routes to the same goal. □ *Mary was criticizing the way Jane was planting the flowers. John said, "Never mind, Mary, all roads lead to Rome."* □ *Some people learn by doing. Others have to be taught. In the long run, all roads lead to Rome.*

all skin and bones See under *nothing but skin and bones*.

All's well that ends well. a proverb meaning that an event that has a good ending is good even if some things went wrong along the way. (This is the name of a play by Shakespeare. It is now used as a cliché.) □ *I'm glad you finally got here, even though your car had a flat tire on the way. Oh, well. All's well that ends*