

**A  
COLLECTION  
OF  
CURRENT  
ENGLISH  
IDIOMS  
AND  
EXPRESSIONS**

英语新习语汇编

# A Collection of Current English Idioms and Expressions

## 英语新习语汇编

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外语教学与研究出版社

## 英语新习语汇编

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## FOREWORD

Since the end of World War II, new advances in all fields of science and technology, new political, economic and social developments, and the changing relationships between man and man (woman), and between man and his environment have given rise to the creation in the English language of tens of thousands of new words, new compounds, new idioms and expressions, as well as the use of old words in new senses, to express new concepts and ideas. Without proper reference books or dictionaries, it is often difficult to find out what some of these new terms mean, and idioms and expressions with their peculiarities of meaning and usage present an especial problem to many of our language workers coming into contact with them for the first time. This book is an attempt to meet their need and consists of more than 2400 entries "collected" from various dictionaries and books on new contemporary English. (See Appendix I for list of these books). The majority of the entries made their appearance and achieved widespread usage in the 1960s and 70s.

### TYPES OF ENTRIES

The entries are of two major types — idioms proper, and words or expressions of special connotation and reference.

The idioms are classified as follows:

A. Lexemic idioms, or idioms which correlate with familiar parts of speech,

*e.g.* **sick out** *vi.*

**home in (on)** *vi., vt.*

**be-in** *n.*

**grab bag** *n.*

**plastic** *adj.*

**state-of-the-art** *adj.*

**no way** *adv.*

B. Phraseological idioms,

*e.g.* **in the ball park**

**jump (leap) over the wall**

**slice the salami**

**where the action is**

C. Sentence idioms,

*e.g.* **Everything in the garden's lovely.**

**If I had only known.**

**Tell it like it is.**

**See you.**

**It's been real.**

Words or expressions of special connotation or reference refer to such terms as the following:

**Camelot**

**Peter Principle**

**Parkinson's Law**

**Telex**

**Zerox**

## METHOD OF ENTRY

The book contains main entries and cross-reference entries. An index of KEY-WORDS not in head-position in the idioms or expressions is given as an appendix. (See Appendix II.)

Where an idiom or expression can be used as more than one part of speech, the different usages are given under the main entry, except when spelling or clarity demands that separate entries be made.

## USAGE LABELS

No attempt has been made to discriminate strictly between formal or informal usage. Where a usage is specifically British or American, the term is labelled either (*Br.*) or (*U.S.*). Where a usage is considered not proper in "polite circles" it is labelled (*vul.*).

## EXAMPLES OF USAGE

The examples of usage quoted in this book have for the most part been extracted from my own limited reading, but in quite a number of cases it has been necessary to "collect" them from dictionaries and other sources. Such examples are marked with an asterisk(\*).

## EXPLANATIONS IN CHINESE

Only the basic or essential meaning of each idiom or expression is given in Chinese. Some of the terms were rather difficult

to explain in appropriate Chinese, and the explanations as they stand are far from ideal. It is hoped that the reader will be able to grasp the full and exact meaning and implications of the idioms and expressions from the English definitions themselves with the help of the examples of usage.

*The Editor*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

<i>abbr.</i>	abbreviation
<i>adj.</i>	adjective
<i>adv.</i>	adverb; adverbial
<i>Br.</i>	British
<i>coll.</i>	colloquial
<i>esp.</i>	especially
<i>excl.</i>	exclamation

<i>fig.</i>	figurative
<i>interj.</i>	interjection
<i>lit.</i>	literary
<i>mil.</i>	military
<i>n.</i>	noun
<i>prep.</i>	preposition
<i>sb.</i>	somebody
<i>sl.</i>	slang
<i>sth.</i>	something
<i>U.S.</i>	United States
<i>usu.</i>	usually
<i>vi.</i>	verb intransitive
<i>vt.</i>	verb transitive
<i>vul.</i>	vulgar



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## A

### **abort** *vt.*

- 1) cut short (an action or operation of an aircraft, guided missile, etc.) as because of some failure in the equipment  
因设备故障而中止(飞机、导弹等的飞行)
- The attempt to send the astronauts into space had to be aborted because of some failure in the life-support system.
- 2) fail to complete, bring to a successful end 夭折; 中途失败
- ... it reflected that even from the start some of them thought the war would be aborted.

### **above-ground** *adj.*

conforming to Establishment or official standards  
符合现存体制下各种标准的; 官方的; 公开的

\*— above-ground publications of the corporate world

### **absurd** (*the absurd or the Absurd*)

- 1) *n.*

(a literary and philosophical term for) the belief that man exists in an irrational and meaningless universe, that man's life has no meaning outside his own existence 荒诞派 (一种现代资产阶级的文学和哲学流派的观点, 鼓吹“个人的孤独”, “人生无意义”等)

— ... to settle into a discussion of the tradition and significance of the Absurd. (*The Times*, London)

2) *adj.*

concerned with the absurd in literature and drama

荒诞派文学或戏剧的

\*— the “absurd” theatre of Ionesco and Beckett

**ace in the hole**

available secret resources; *sb.* or *sth.* important that is kept as a secret till the right time, so as to bring victory or success 秘密王牌; 秘藏的法宝

— It hardly helped him to know that his mother saw in him her ace in the hole, the last card she could play in a game in which all the other cards seemed stacked against her. (H. Swados)

**acid** *n.* (*sl.*)

the drug LSD which causes hallucinations, etc. 致幻剂 LSD (麦角酸二乙基酰胺)

\*— I really thought I was through with drugs, at least acid ... for sure ... (*The Atlantic*)

**acidhead** *n.* (*sl.*)

user or addict of the drug LSD 有 LSD 毒瘾的人

\*— I asked the policemen if he could tell me where to go to watch the acidheads taking a trip. (*Punch*)

**acid rock** *n.*

a type of rock ‘n’ roll music with sound and lyrics suggestive of drug-taking or psychedelic experiences

迷幻摇摆乐 (以震耳欲聋的噪音为特征的疯狂摇摆舞音乐)

**acid trip** *n.* (*sl.*)

a hallucinatory experience resulting from taking LSD

吸毒幻游 (服了致幻剂 LSD 以后引起的幻觉)

- \*— ... he sometimes receives telephone calls from kids on bad acid trips thinking of suicide. (*The New York Times*)

**acoustic perfume** *n.*

another term for **white noise**, which see

见 **white noise**

- \*— When the noises to be overcome are only mildly offensive or not too great in volume, they can sometimes be masked by an overlay of pleasant sound, which thus has a function similar to that so gallantly fulfilled by perfume ... hence the name “acoustic perfume.”

(*Collier's Encyclopedia Year Book, 1968*)

**across the board**

- 1) (of pay increase) inclusive; for all employees of an organization (at the same time and in the same percentage of increase) (指增加工资) 包括所有雇员在内的

— “Build the hospital and put through the raise — across the board and retroactive for six months.” (J. Black)

- 2) throughout (an area, state, region, etc.); affecting everybody; all-inclusive 遍及(某个地区, 国家, 区域等); 全面的

— The slump is not across the board. (*Time*)

— That was the amount Powell Pierce was ready to offer for across-the-board cooperation from Gerlach and National Energy Resources Secretary Rowan Engelhardt. (J. Black)

**add up** *vi.*

make sense; signify; mean 讲得通; 有意义; 要紧

— “It don’t add up,” was the most he could say.

(H. Swados)

**adrenalin** *n.*

originally, glandular substance that arouses, stimulates, feelings of excitement in a person, now used figuratively to mean “sense of excitement, tenseness, etc.”

原意为引起人体产生激动的感觉的肾上腺素, 现转义为“激动感”、“紧张感”等

— And he would go off into battle...and his aides would sense the excitement, the adrenalin was really pumping.

(D. Halberstam)

— He could feel the adrenalin coursing through his system as he introduced himself and was introduced to counsel, assistant counsel, senators, administrative assistants, committee staff. (H. Swados)

**advance**

1) *n.*

the making of arrangements ahead of time for the reception of a visiting political candidate, for one’s superior, etc. 打前站

\*— In political campaigning, “bad advance” means that a Presidential candidate flies into a key city, lands at the wrong airport, and rides in a closed car down back streets to a huge stadium, where he addresses a lonely handful of party workers over a broken mike, while the press is still looking for him at the other airport. (Walter Cronkite)

— *The New Yorker*)

2) *vt., vi.*

prepare for a political candidate's visit; do advance work for a candidate, superior, etc. 打前站

\*— Campaigning does not often go as smoothly as this, but when Jerry Bruno was “advancing” for John Kennedy ... and others, it sometimes came close. (*The New Yorker*)

\*— ... during the 1960 Presidential campaign and the Kennedy administration, he [Bruno] ... “advanced” thirty-four cities. (*Ibid.*)

**advance man (person)** *n.*

an aide who does advance work for a political candidate, superior, etc. 先遣人员; 打前站的人

— His wife acts as secretary, seamstress ... and “advance person” for all of their out-of-town trips.

(*Army Times*)

**Afro-Saxon**

1) *n.*

a black man who is part of the white establishment or is in favor of working within the white establishment 埃弗罗·撒克逊人 (指在白人机构工作的, 或赞成在白人机构内工作的黑人)

\*— Many West Indians maintain that black power against black governments makes little sense. But militants dismiss their present leaders as “Afro-Saxons” and press for revolutionary change. (*Time*)

2) *adj.*

consisting of Afro-Saxons; having the outlook or attitude of Afro-Saxons 由埃弗罗·撒克逊人组成的; 持埃弗罗·撒克逊人观点的

**after service** *n.*

free repair service guaranteed to a customer for a specified period of time after a purchase is made

(商品售出以后一定时间内的)包修服务

**ageism** *n.*

discriminatory practices against the aged 对老年人的歧视

\*— Indeed there is a distinct discrimination against the old that has been called ageism. ... ageism is just “not wanting to have all these ugly old people around.” (Psychiatrist Robert) Butler believes that in 25 or 30 years, ageism will be a problem equal to racism. (*Time*)

**aggro** *n.* (*Br. sl.*)

1) aggressiveness 爱挑衅; 粗暴; 盛气凌人

\*— The styling for all mannequins, black or white, is more sophisticated, more gentle, both in England and in Europe. Afro with no aggro, you could say. (*The Times*, London)

2) aggression. Also spelled **agro** 侵犯行为

\*— Ardrey enters the debate quite specifically when dealing with violence and aggression. The latter, he implies, is a term which includes the striving of plants and animals to grow ... Thus to Ardrey life itself is no more than one long aggro ... (*Science Journal*)

\*— The skinheads live for “agro” (causing “aggravation”) and “bovver” (street fighting). While they favor the

boot as a primary weapon, they also use their heads to “nut” or butt a victim, and whatever other weapons come to hand: bricks, rocks, bottles, knives, and razors.

(*Time*)

**Agro-boy** *n.* (*Br. sl.*)

another name for **skin-head** (which see)

- \*— In the lower depths the Agro-boys have already emerged to present a caricature of working-class conservatism and prejudice ...

**air bridge** *n.*

a link or passage formed between two or more places by aircraft 空中桥梁(由飞机组成的联结两地或两地以上的空中通道)

- \*— An air bridge formed by 159 chartered flights linked Rotterdam and Glasgow with Milan yesterday.

(*The Times*, London)

**air miss** *n.*

(British) official designation for a narrow escape from collision by two aircraft flying too close to each other 空中飞机险撞

- \*— Yesterday's accident, with at least half a mile separating the two aircraft, falls into the category of an “air miss” rather than a “near miss” ... (*The Times*, London)

**alarm bells** *n. pl.*

a signal of danger or warning that causes apprehension 警钟

- \*— To be sure, everybody connected with the scheme avoids



with horror this kind of language, and some of my informants will be provoked with me for using terms which will touch off alarm bells on Capitol Hill.

(*Harper's*)

**all-at-once-ness** *n.*

the condition or state in which many things happen (or are experienced) at the same time 同时发生; 同时体验

- \*— Instead of the “alphabet and print technology,” which fostered fragmentation, mechanization, specialization, detachment and privacy, we now have an “electric technology” which fosters unification, involvement, “all-at-once-ness” and a lack of goals.

(*The New York Times*)

**all balls** (*sl.*)

space flight term for “all zeroes” (宇宙飞行俚语)“都是零”

- “What’s the reading?”  
“All balls.”

**all wet**

completely wrong, mistaken 完全弄错; 大错特错

- In the old days, before closed circuit TV, you could always tell the LSO that he was all wet, that you really weren’t coming in with your nose that low. Now he’s got the goods on you right there on the screen. (H. A. Muligan)

**almost** *n. (coll.)*

sth. that one nearly succeeded in getting or achieving, but