

OXFORD

Idioms

Dictionary for Learners of English

牛津英语习语词典

[英语版]

新版 New Edition



外语教学与研究出版社

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

OXFORD

Idioms

Dictionary for Learners of English

牛津英语习语词典

[英语版]

外语教学与研究出版社

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

(京)新登字 155 号

京权图字: 01 - 2003 - 4171

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

牛津英语习语词典/牛津大学出版社编. - 北京:外语教学与研究出版社,2003

ISBN 7 - 5600 - 3428 - 4

I. 牛… II. 牛… III. 英语 - 习语 - 词典 IV. H313.3 - 61

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2003)第 030467 号

Originally published by Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford

© Oxford University Press 2001

This reprint of The Oxford Idioms Dictionary for Learners of English originally published in English in 2001 is published by arrangement with Oxford University Press for distribution in Mainland China only and not for export therefrom

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

牛津英语习语词典[英语版]

牛津大学出版社 编

* * *

责任编辑:张红岩

出版发行:外语教学与研究出版社

社 址:北京市西三环北路 19 号(100089)

网 址: <http://www.fltrp.com>

印 刷:北京外国语学院印刷厂

开 本:880×1230 1/32

印 张:15.5

版 次:2003 年 7 月第 1 版 2003 年 7 月第 1 次印刷

书 号:ISBN 7 - 5600 - 3428 - 4/H·1714

定 价:21.90 元

* * *

如有印刷、装订质量问题出版社负责调换

制售盗版必究 举报查实奖励 (010)68917826

版权保护办公室举报电话:(010)68917519

GUIDE to USING the DICTIONARY

Key to Dictionary Entries

Information about idioms in the dictionary is given in the form of entries under a keyword:

keyword

idiom

entry

American variant

note on the origin of an idiom

link to an idiom at another keyword

flying
a ,flying 'visit
a very brief visit: *The Prime Minister paid a flying visit to Brussels this afternoon.*

get off to a ,flying 'start; get off to a 'flyer
make a very good, successful start: *She got off to a flying start, gaining several points in the first few minutes.*

go 'flying (BrE, informal)
fall, especially as a result of not seeing sth under your feet: *Someone's going to go flying if you don't pick up these toys.*

with ,flying 'colours (BrE) (AmE with ,flying 'colors)
with great success: *We expect your son to pass the exam with flying colours.* ◊ *She came through her French test with flying colours.*

ORIGIN
In the past, a ship returned to port after a victory in battle decorated with flags (= colours).
keep the flag flying → flag

Finding an idiom

Look up the idiom you want at the first important, or 'full', word in it. This will be a noun, an adjective, a verb or an adverb. Ignore any grammatical words such as articles, prepositions, etc. For example, if you want to find **a leap in the dark**, look at the keyword **leap**. 'A' does not count as a 'full' word:

If you want to find a plural noun, such as **by leaps and bounds**, it will be at the keyword **leaps**:

leap
a leap in the 'dark
an action or a risk that you take without knowing anything about the activity or what the result will be: *Government ministers are being accused of taking a leap in the dark as they prepare to radically change the education system.*

leaps
by/in ,leaps and 'bounds
in large amounts or very quickly: *My knowledge of German increased by leaps and bounds when I lived in Germany for a year.* ◊ *Production is going up in leaps and bounds.*

Keywords are arranged in alphabetical order. If a noun and a verb are spelled the same, there will only be one keyword. For example the idioms **face to face** and **face the music** will be at the same keyword **face**. This is also the case with two words that have the same spelling even though they are pronounced differently, for example **a live wire** and **live and let live** are at the same keyword **live**.

If the first full word in an idiom is a verb, and the verb can be used with different subjects or in different tenses, you will find the idiom at the infinitive form of the verb. For example, the idiom ***eat like a bird*** is defined at **eat**, as you can say *She eats like a bird; I don't know how he stayed alive – he always ate like a bird.* etc. However, the idiom ***be barking up the wrong tree*** is defined at the keyword **barking** as it is always used in progressive tenses.

Sometimes it is difficult to know where an idiom begins and ends. For example, if you meet the sentence *They decided to bury the hatchet and be friends again*, you might look up **hatchet**, if that is the only word you do not know. However, the idiom is ***bury the hatchet***. To help you find it, a link to ***bury the hatchet*** is given at **hatchet**:

hatchet

a 'hatchet job (on sb/sth) (informal)
strong criticism that is unfair or intended to harm sb/sth: *The press did a very effective hatchet job on her last movie.*
bury the hatchet → bury

One 'full' word of an idiom can sometimes be replaced with another. For example, you can say ***beam from ear to ear***, or you can use ***smile*** or ***grin*** instead of ***beam***. In this case the idiom will be defined at the first full fixed word in it, **ear**, and is shown like this:

ear

be out on your 'ear (informal)
be forced to leave a job, home, etc. suddenly: *You'll be out on your ear unless your work gets a lot better, my lad.*
beam/grin/smile from ear to 'ear
be smiling, etc. a lot because you are very pleased about sth: *I like your graduation photo, with you grinning from ear to ear and your parents looking so proud.*

You will also find links at each of the verbs ***beam***, ***grin*** and ***smile***.

In other idioms, many different words are possible. For example, in the phrase ***in great measure***, **great** could be replaced by ***large***, ***full***, etc. This idiom is given in the dictionary as ***in great, large, etc. measure*** and you will find it at the first fixed word **measure**.

Some common verbs and adjectives such as **get**, **have**, **bad** and **good** have so many idioms that it is not possible to list them all at those words. Instead there is a note telling you to look at the next noun, adjective, etc:

have

Most idioms containing the verb **have** are at the entries for the nouns or adjectives in the idioms, for example ***have (got) an eye for sth is at eye***.

Some idioms only contain grammar words, or grammar words and very common verbs, for example **in and out of something**, or **have it out with somebody**. You will find these at the first word in the idiom:

in

anything/nothing/something 'in it

any/no/some truth in what is being said: *'Is there anything in the story that he is leaving the company?'* *'No, I'm sure there's nothing in it.'* *'Yes, I think there's something in it.'*

in and 'out of sth

(going) in and out of places all the time: *I've been in and out of the travel agency all this week, trying to arrange my holiday.* *◇ After the accident, he was in and out of hospital for a couple of years.*

If you cannot find an idiom when you look it up, try looking for it at one of the other important words in the idiom.

Idioms and links are given in alphabetical order under each keyword. Grammatical words like **a/an** or **the**, **sb/sth** and the possessive forms **your**, **sb's**, **his**, **her**, etc. as well as words in brackets () or after the symbol / are usually ignored.

Further Information and Practice

There is a 24-page section of study pages in the middle of this dictionary. You can use these on your own or in class with a teacher. They will help you to focus on certain idiomatic phrases and give you practice using them.

You will find answers to all the exercises in the 'Key to the Study Pages' section at the back of the dictionary.

CONTENTS

Guide to using the dictionary	iv-vi
Dictionary A-Z	1-458
STUDY PAGES	between pages 248 and 249
Contents	S1
That is to Say...	S2-3
It's as Easy as ABC	S4
As the Saying Goes...	S5
Look Here!	S6
It Takes all Sorts...	S7
We're in Business	S8
Just What the Doctor Ordered	S9
It's Hardly Rocket Science!	S10
It's the Bee's Knees!	S11
Be a Good Sport	S12
All Hands on Deck!	S13
Body and Soul	S14
Eat, Drink and be Merry	S15
True Colours	S16
Naming Names	S17
All Eyes	S18
All Ears	S19
Flavour of the Month	S20-21
Hands Up!	S22
Put Yourself to the Test	S23-24
Key to the study pages	459-465

AK 22/2

Aa

A

from A to 'B

from one place to another: *I don't care what kind of car it is as long as it gets me from A to B.*

from A to 'Z

very thoroughly and in detail: *We need an expert who knows the subject from A to Z.*

(as) easy as ABC/pie/falling off a log → easy
(earn/get) straight A's → straight

aah

um and aah (about sth) → um

aback

be taken a'back (by sb/sth)

be shocked or surprised by sb/sth: *She was completely taken aback by his anger.*

abandon

with gay abandon → gay

ABC

(as) easy as ABC/pie/falling off a log → easy

about

be about to do sth

be going to do sth immediately: *I was about to phone him when he walked into the room.*

how/what about ... ?

1 used when asking for information about sb/sth: *How about Ruth? Have you heard from her?* ◇ *I'm having fish. What about you?*

2 used to make a suggestion or offer: *How about going for a walk?* ◇ *You look cold. How about a nice hot drink?*

3 used for introducing sb/sth into a conversation or reminding sb of sb/sth: *I know she's very happy now, but what about him?* ◇ *'I've never been to Spain before.'* *'What about the conference you went to in Madrid?'*

how/what about 'that (, then)!' (informal)

used for expressing surprise, praise, great respect, etc: *'Have you heard Jane's been offered a film part in Hollywood?'* *'Well, how about that, then!'*

not be about to do sth

not be willing to do sth; not intend to do sth: *I've never done any cooking and I'm not about to start now.*

that's about 'all'/it

used to say that you have finished telling sb about sth and there is nothing to add: *'Anything else?'* *'No, that's about it for now.'*

above

above 'all ('else)

especially: *Don't spend too much money, don't forget to write, but above all, have a good time!* ◇ *He misses his family above all else.*

a,bove and be'yond sth (formal)

more than (your duty, etc.): *They showed commitment to the job above and beyond what was expected of them.*

be/get a'bove yourself (disapproving)

behave as if you are better or more important than you really are: *She's getting a bit above herself. She's only been working for me for two weeks and already she's telling me what to do!*

abreast

keep a'breast of sth

make sure that you know all the most recent facts about a subject: *It is almost impossible to keep abreast of all the latest developments in computing.*

absence

absence makes the heart grow fonder (saying)

used to say that when you are away from sb that you love, you love them even more

conspicuous by your absence → conspicuous
leave of absence → leave

accident

by 'accident

in a way that is not planned or organized: *We met by accident at the airport.* ◇ *Helen got into acting purely by accident.*

(whether) by ,accident or de'sign

if you say that sth happens by accident or design, you mean that you do not know if it has been planned or not: *Mary was wearing the same T-shirt as me—whether by accident or design, I never knew.*

an accident/a disaster waiting to happen → waiting

accidentally

acci,dentally on 'purpose (informal, ironic)

intending to do sth, but wanting to appear to have done it by accident: *'We'd just finished our meal when John realized he'd accidentally left his chequebook at home.'* *'Accidentally on purpose, you mean.'*

accidents

,accidents will 'happen (saying)

said when a small accident has happened, for example when sth has been broken, to show that you do not consider it to be serious, or to excuse

yourself for causing it: *'I'm so sorry, I've just broken a plate.'* *'Oh, never mind, accidents will happen.'*

a chapter of accidents → chapter

accompli

a fait accompli → fait

accomplished

mission accomplished → mission

accord

of your own ac'cord

without being asked or forced: *I didn't need to tell her to apologize, she did it of her own accord.*

account

of little/no ac'count (formal)

not considered important: *His past achievements were of no account when it came to competing with the younger men.*

on account of sb/sth; on sb's account

because of sb/sth: *Flights were delayed on account of the bad weather.* ◊ *I can't go, but don't stay in on my account.*

on 'no account; not on 'any account

not for any reason: *On no account (should you) try to fix the heater yourself. All repairs should be done by a trained engineer.*

on your own ac'count

1 for yourself: *In 1992 Smith set up in business on his own account.*

2 because you want to and you have decided, not sb else: *No one sent me, I am here on my own account.*

put/turn sth to good ac'count (formal)

make good use of money, an ability, etc: *He put his experience as a teacher to good account as a writer of children's books.*

take sth into ac'count; take account of sth

consider sth when making a calculation or decision: *It's clear he didn't take his family's wishes into account when deciding to change jobs.* ◊ *We mustn't forget to take account of price increases when we do the budget for next year.*

call sb to account (for/over sth) → call

settle a score/an account (with sb) → settle

square your / an account (with sb) → square

accounted

all present and accounted for → present

accounting

there's no accounting for 'taste(s) (saying)

used to express surprise at another person's likes and dislikes which are different from your own: *'She's just painted her whole room purple.'* *'Well, there's no accounting for taste!'*

accounts

by/from 'all accounts

used when the speaker does not have direct experience of the thing mentioned but is reporting the ideas, etc. of others: *I've never seen any of her films but she's a brilliant director, by all accounts.* ◊ *It was, from all accounts, a very interesting discussion.*

square accounts (with sb) → square

ace

within an ace of sth/of doing sth (BrE)

very close to sth: *We came within an ace of victory.*

have an ace in the hole ⇨ have (got) an ace/a trick up your sleeve → sleeve

play your ace → play

aces

have/hold (all) the 'aces (also hold all the 'cards)

be in a controlling position because you have certain advantages over another person: *The Labour candidate holds all the aces—he's local and well liked.*

❶ ORIGIN

This expression refers to card-playing. The ace usually has the highest value, and is associated with success.

Achilles

an/sb's Achilles' 'heel

a hidden weakness or fault in sb which may be used to harm them: *The opposition realized they had found the Prime Minister's Achilles' heel.*

❶ ORIGIN

This expression is named after the Greek hero Achilles. When he was a small child, his mother dipped him into the river Styx, which meant that he could not be injured. She held him by his heel, which therefore was not touched by the water. Achilles died after being wounded by an arrow in the heel.

acid

the acid 'test (of sth)

a situation which finally proves whether sth is good or bad, true or false, etc: *They've always been good friends, but the acid test will come when they have to share a flat.*

acorns

great/tall oaks from little acorns grow → oaks

acquaintance

make sb's acquaintance; make the acquaintance of sb (formal)

meet sb for the first time: *I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Mrs Baker.* ◊ *I made the*

acquaintance of several musicians around that time.

have a nodding acquaintance with sb/sth → **nodding scrape** (up) an acquaintance with sb → **scrape**

acquired

an acquired 'taste

a thing which you find unpleasant or do not appreciate at first but which you gradually learn to like: *Whisky is an acquired taste.*

Act

read (sb) the Riot Act → **read**

act

an 'act of 'God (law)

an event caused by natural forces which people cannot control or prevent, for example a hurricane, earthquake, etc: *The insurance policy covers your house against all types of damage, excluding those caused by acts of God.*

a 'balancing/'juggling act

a process in which sb tries to please two or more people or groups who want different things: *The UN must perform a delicate balancing act between the different sides involved in the conflict.*



Managing her home life and work was proving to be something of a juggling act.

be/get in on the 'act (informal)

be/become involved in a particular activity only after it has become successful: *Sales of 'green' products have increased dramatically and now a lot of manufacturers are trying to get in on the act.*

do/perform/stage a disappearing/'vanishing act (informal)

go away or be impossible to find when people need or want you: *Ian always does a disappearing act when it's time to wash the dishes.*

get your 'act together; get sth/it to'gether (informal)

manage to organize or control sth (better than you have done previously): *If Sally got her act together she'd be a great musician.* ◊ *He's been trying to get his life together.* ◊ *He seems to be getting it together at last.*

a hard/tough act to 'follow

a person or a group that is so good or successful at sth that it will be difficult for anyone else who comes after them to be as good or successful: *The last head teacher achieved a lot—she'll be a hard act to follow.*

act/be your age → **age**

act/play the fool → **fool**

act/play the goat → **goat**

behave/act as if you own the place = think you own the place → **think**

catch sb in the act (of doing sth) → **catch**

clean up your act → **clean**

action

'action stations (spoken, especially BrE)

used as an order to get ready for action: *Action stations! There's a bus full of tourists arriving in five minutes.*

in 'action

working, operating, etc.; doing a particular activity: *John's a great cook—you should see him in action.*

out of 'action

not working or operating as normal because of illness, injury, damage, etc: *Jane's broken leg will put her out of action for a while.* ◊ *He can't give you a lift today—his car's out of action.*

a piece/slice of the 'action (informal)

a share or role in an interesting or exciting activity, especially in order to make money: *Foreign firms will all want a piece of the action if the new airport goes ahead.*

where the 'action is

where the most exciting or important events are happening: *I'd hate to live out in the country—I like to be where the action is.*

a course of action → **course**

spring (in)to life/action → **spring**

swing into action → **swing**

actions

'actions speak louder than 'words (saying)

what you do is more important than what you say: *I know we don't speak the same language, but you know what they say: actions speak louder than words!*

ad

'ad hoc (from Latin)

arranged or happening when necessary and not

planned in advance: *The meetings will be held on an ad hoc basis.*

ad infinitum (from Latin)

without ever coming to an end; again and again: *You cannot stay here ad infinitum without paying any rent.* ◊ *The problem would be repeated ad infinitum.*

② **NOTE**

The meaning of the Latin phrase is 'to infinity'.

ad nauseam (from Latin)

if a person says or does sth ad nauseam, they say or do it again and again so that it becomes boring or annoying: *Television sports commentators repeat the same phrases ad nauseam.*

② **NOTE**

The meaning of the Latin phrase is 'to sickness'.

Adam

not know sb from Adam → know

add

add fuel to the 'fire'/flames

do or say sth which makes a difficult situation worse, or makes sb even more angry, etc: *She was already furious and his apologies and excuses only added fuel to the flames.*

add insult to 'injury

hurt the feelings of, or harm, sb who has already been harmed in some other way: *She forgot to send me an invitation to her party and then added insult to injury by asking to borrow my jacket!*

addition

in addition (to sb/sth)

used when you want to mention another person or thing after sb/sth else: *In addition to these arrangements, extra ambulances will be on duty until midnight.* ◊ *There is, in addition, one further point to make.*

ado

without further/more a do (old-fashioned)

without delaying; immediately: *So without further ado, let's get on with tonight's show.*

advance

in advance (of sth)

before the time that is expected; before sth happens: *a week/month/year in advance* ◊ *It's cheaper if you book the tickets in advance.* ◊ *People were evacuated from the coastal regions in advance of the hurricane.*

be ahead of/before/in advance of your time → time

advantage

take advantage of sth/sb

1 make good use of sth; to make use of an opportunity: *We made sure that we took full advantage*

of the hotel facilities. ◊ *Take advantage of our special offer and get two books for the price of one!*

2 make use of sb/sth in a way that is unfair or dishonest: *He took advantage of my generosity* (= for example, by taking more than I had intended to give).

to sb's advantage

so that sb benefits: *The rise in the value of the pound will work to the advantage of those planning a holiday abroad this summer.*

to (good, better, etc.) advantage

in a way that produces a good result: *You would be spending your time to better advantage if you did what I suggested.* ◊ *That's a lovely picture but it's not seen to its best advantage on that wall. Why don't you hang it nearer the light?*

press home your advantage → press

turn sth to your (own) advantage → turn

advocate

(a/the) devil's advocate → devil

affairs

a state of affairs → state

afield

far/farther/further a field

far away from home; to or in places that are not near: *You can hire a car if you want to explore further afield.* ◊ *Journalists came from as far afield as China and Brazil.*

aforethought

with malice aforethought → malice

afraid

I'm afraid (that) ... (spoken)

used as a polite way of telling sb sth that is unpleasant or disappointing, or sth that you are sorry about: *I'm afraid I can't come to your party.* ◊ *'Have you got change for ten pounds?' 'I'm afraid not.'* ◊ *I've got some bad news, I'm afraid.* ◊ *'Is this the best you can do?' 'I'm afraid so.'*

after

after 'all

1 used to show that sth is the opposite of what you first intend to do or expect to happen: *I think I will have something to eat after all.* ◊ *We could have left our coats at home—it didn't rain after all.*

2 used when you are explaining sth, or giving a reason: *Can't I stay up late tonight? After all, there's no school tomorrow!* ◊ *You got a fair price for your car. It's six years old, after all.*

again

a gain and a gain

many times; repeatedly: *I've told him again and again to shut the door but he always leaves it open.*

then/there a'gain (*informal*)

used for introducing an extra piece of information which explains sth or gives another explanation for sth: *I thought he liked me, but then again maybe he didn't.*

age**act/, be your 'age** (*informal*)

(often used as a command) stop behaving in a childish way: *Paul, act your age or I won't take you to the cinema again!*

come of 'age

1 reach the age when you are considered by the law to be an adult: *He will inherit his father's money when he comes of age.*

2 (of an organization) become established: *With more and more people now aware of environmental issues, 'green' politics has really come of age.*

under 'age

not yet an adult according to the law: *We don't serve alcohol to teenagers who are under age/to under-age teenagers.*

at/to a ripe old age → ripe

(be) at a tender age → tender

the awkward age → awkward

feel your age → feel

the golden age (of sth) → golden

a/the grand old age → grand

in this day and age → day

look your age → look

of a certain age → certain

aggregate**on 'aggregate** (*BrE, sport*)

when the scores of a number of games are added together: *They won 4-2 on aggregate.*

agony

pile on the agony/gloom → pile

prolong the agony → prolong

agree**a, gree to 'differ**

(of two or more people) allow each other to have different opinions about sth, especially in order to avoid more argument: *Our views on this matter are so different—I think we'll just have to agree to differ.*

I, couldn't agree (with you) 'more

I completely agree (with you): *I couldn't agree with you more about the need to hire extra staff.*

agreement

a gentleman's agreement = a gentleman's agreement → gentleman

aid**in aid of sb/sth** (*BrE*)

in order to help sb/sth: *The children spent the day collecting money in aid of charity.*

what's (all) 'this, etc. in aid of? (*BrE, spoken*)
what is the purpose or cause of sth?: *What's all this crying in aid of?*

air**float/walk on 'air** (*informal*)

be very happy about sth: *When I passed my driving test, I was walking on air for days.*

in the 'air

(of an idea, a feeling, a piece of information, etc.) felt by a number of people to exist or to be happening: *Spring is in the air.* ◊ *There was a strong feeling of excitement in the air.*

(up) in the 'air

(of plans, etc.) uncertain; not yet decided: *I'm hoping to take a holiday this month but my plans are still very much up in the air.* ◊ *At the end of the meeting, the matter was left in the air.*

,on/, off the 'air

(being) broadcast/not (being) broadcast on radio or television: *'Going Live' will go off the air for the summer, returning for a new series in the autumn.*

appear, etc. out of thin air → thin

a breath of fresh air → breath

(build) castles in the air → castles

clear the air → clear

disappear, etc. into thin air → thin

(as) free as (the) air/as a bird → free

hot air → hot

in the open air → open

(as) light as air/a feather → light

pluck sth out of the air → pluck

with your nose in the air → nose

airs**,airs and 'graces** (*BrE, disapproving*)

behaviour which is elegant but unnatural and intended to impress others: *Her airs and graces didn't impress her fellow students at all.*

,give yourself/, put on 'airs

behave in a way which shows that you feel you are important: *The nice thing about her is that, in spite of being so rich, she doesn't put on any airs.*

aisle**go/walk down the 'aisle** (*informal*)

get married: *I never thought you'd be the first one to walk down the aisle—you used to say you'd never marry!*

NOTE

The aisle is the passage down the middle of a church between the two blocks of seats.

aisles

rolling in the aisles → rolling

aitches

drop your aitches → drop

Aladdin

an Aladdin's 'cave'

a place full of valuable or interesting objects: *He kept for his private pleasure an Aladdin's cave of stolen masterpieces.*

① ORIGIN

This expression comes from a story in *The Arabian Nights*. Aladdin was trapped in a cave full of gold and jewels by a magician.

alarm

a false alarm → false

alec

a smart alec/aleck → smart

alert

on red alert → red

alike

share and share alike → share

alive

a live and 'kicking' (informal)

still existing and strong or active: *The old prejudices were still very much alive and kicking.*

bring sth a'live

make sth interesting: *Maps and pictures bring the book alive.*

come a'live

1 (of a subject or an event) become interesting and exciting: *The game came alive in the second half.*

2 (of a place) become busy and full of activity: *The city starts to come alive after dark.*

3 (of a person) show interest in sth and become excited about it: *She came alive as she talked about her job.*

eat sb alive → eat

skin sb alive → skin

all

your 'all

everything you have: *They gave their all (= fought and died) in the war.*

all a'long

from the beginning: *I've said all along that this would happen.* ◊ *He knew who they were all along but he pretended he didn't.*

'all but

1 almost: *The snow all but covered the path, making it difficult to walk.* ◊ *The patient was all but dead when the doctor arrived.*

2 all (the people or things mentioned) except ...: *'Have you done your homework?' 'Yes, all but the last two questions.'*

all 'in

1 (of a price) with nothing extra to pay; inclusive:

The holiday cost £250 all in. ◊ *These are all-in prices—room, breakfast, service and tax.*

2 (old-fashioned, informal) very tired: *At the end of the race he was all in.*

all in 'all

when everything is considered: *All in all the film was a great success, despite the bad publicity.*

all of 'sth

(of size, weight, distance, etc.) at least: *'How old is she?' 'Oh, she must be all of fifty.'* ◊ (ironic) *He never visits his mother and she lives all of three miles away.*

all or 'nothing

a situation which will end either in complete success or complete failure

all 'over

1 everywhere: *We looked all over for the ring.* ◊ *The news was all over the office within minutes.*

2 what you would expect of the person mentioned: *That sounds like my sister all over.*

all 'round (BrE) (AmE all a'round)

1 in every way; in all respects: *a good performance all round*

2 for each person: *She bought drinks all round.*

all 'there (informal)

having a healthy mind; thinking clearly: *He behaves very oddly at times—I don't think he's quite all there.*

and 'all

1 also; included: *They're coming to stay for the weekend, dog and all.*

2 (spoken) too; as well: *And he stole £5 from me, and all.*

3 (informal) and other (connected) things: *She doesn't go out much in the evenings now, what with her work and all.*

and all 'that (rubbish, stuff, etc.) (informal)

and other similar things: *He was an intellectual—read Beckett and Barthes and all that.* ◊ *They're always kissing and all that romantic stuff.*

(not) at 'all

(used with a negative, in a question or in an if-clause) in any way; to any degree: *This isn't at all what I expected.* ◊ *Are you hungry at all?* ◊ *If you're at all unhappy about marrying him, then don't.*

be all about sb/sth (informal)

used to describe the subject or purpose of sth: *This book is all about Greece.* ◊ *Now then, what's this all about (= what is the problem)?* ◊ *It's all about money these days.*

be all sb can/could 'do (not) to do sth (informal)

be very difficult (not) to do sth: *His face looked so funny that it was all she could do not to laugh.*

(not) be/take all 'day, 'morning, etc. (to do sth); not have all 'day, etc. (informal)

(used as a request to hurry up) (not) take a long time (to do sth): *'Are you going to take all day shav-*

ing?' she shouted to him through the bathroom door.

◊ *Come on! We haven't got all day!*

be all for sth/for doing sth

believe strongly that sth should be done: *They're all for saving money where they can.*

be all 'go (BrE, informal)

be (a situation where people are) very active or busy: *It was all go in the office today.* ◊ *The election's on the eighteenth, so it's all go for the next three weeks.*

be all 'over sb (informal)

show a lot of affection for or enthusiasm about sb: *He was all over her at the party.*

be all the same to 'sb (also be all 'one to sb, old-fashioned)

not be important to sb: *If it's all the same to you, I'd prefer to go shopping on my own.*

in 'all

as a total quantity or number: *We've got six litres of milk in all.* ◊ *That's £10.29 in all, please.*

it's/they're all 'yours

used when passing the responsibility for sb/sth or the use of sth to another person: *'There you are, Mr Brown,' she said, taking him into the classroom full of children, 'they're all yours.'*

not all that 'good, 'well, etc.

not particularly good, well, etc: *He doesn't sing all that well.*

not as bad(ly), tall, etc. as all 'that

not as much as has been suggested: *They're not as rich as all that.*

,not at 'all

used to politely accept thanks or to agree to sth: *'Thanks a lot.' 'Not at all.'* ◊ *'Will it bother you if I smoke?' 'Not at all.'*

of all the 'cheek, 'nerve, stupid things to 'do, etc. (informal)

used to express annoyance, impatience, etc. at what another person has done or said: *Of all the idiots, leaving his car unlocked in the middle of town!*

NOTE

This expression is often used without a noun, especially to show that sb is annoyed: *She said I was fat? Well, of all the ...!*

all-clear

give sb/get the all-clear

give sb/get a sign that a particular situation is no longer dangerous: *She got the all-clear from the doctor and was sent home from the hospital.*

ORIGIN

This idiom refers to the signal that is sounded in wartime when a bombing raid is over.

alley

be (right) up your alley = be (right) up your street → street
a blind alley → blind

allow

allow 'me (spoken)

used to offer help politely: *I'll just take these bags upstairs. 'Allow me.'*

give/allow sb/sth free/full rein → rein

allowances

make al'lowances for sb

not judge sb too strictly because of certain problems or difficulties: *The court was asked to make allowances for the age of the accused.*

almighty

God almighty → God

alone

go it a 'lone (informal)

do sth, especially sth difficult, without the help or support of others: *Andrew decided to go it alone and start his own business.*

leave/let sb/sth alone = leave/let sb/sth be → leave

let alone → let

let well enough alone = leave/let well alone → well

along

along with sth

in addition to sth: *Tobacco is taxed in most countries, along with alcohol.*

aloud

think aloud → think

always

as 'always

as usually happens or is expected: *As always, Polly was late for school.*

amends

make a'mends (to sb) (for sth/for doing sth)

do sth for sb in order to show that you are sorry for sth wrong or unfair that you have done: *I'm sorry I upset you—how can I make amends?* ◊ *He finished third in the 200 metres, but hopes to make amends in the 100 metres.*

American

as A,merican as apple 'pie

used to say that sth is typical of America: *For me, baseball is as American as apple pie.*

amiss

not come/go a'miss (BrE)

be useful or pleasant in a particular situation: *A little luck wouldn't go amiss right now!*

take sth a'miss (BrE)

feel offended by sth, perhaps because you have understood it in the wrong way: *Would she take it amiss if I offered to help?*

amok

run amok → run

amount**any a'mount/'number of sth**

a large quantity of sth: *There was any amount of food and drink at the party.* ◊ *You won't have any difficulty selling your car—there are any number of people who would buy it.*

no a'mount of sth

used for saying that sth will have no effect: *No amount of encouragement would make him jump into the pool.*

amount/come to the same thing → thing

amused**keep sb a'mused**

give sb interesting things to do, or entertain them so that they do not become bored: *Playing with water can keep children amused for hours.*

analysis**in the ,last/final a'nalisis**

used to say what is most important after everything has been discussed, or considered: *In the final analysis, humour is a matter of individual interpretation.*

anchor

weigh anchor → weigh

angels

be on the side of the angels → side

anger

do sth more in sorrow than in anger → sorrow

answer**the answer to sb's prayers**

a thing or a person that sb has waited for or wanted for a long time: *If you've been looking for a good quality fleece at a reasonable price, this one could be the answer to your prayers.*

not take no for an answer

refuse to accept that sb does not want sth, will not do sth, etc: *You're coming and I won't take no for an answer!*

a dusty answer → dusty

answers**have/know all the 'answers**

be or seem to be more intelligent or know more than others: *He's an economist who thinks he knows all the answers.*

ante**raise/up the 'ante**

increase the level of sth, especially demands or

sums of money: *His ex-wife has upped the ante in her alimony suit against him.*

NOTE

The *ante* is the amount of money that players bet in a card game such as poker.

ants**have (got) ants in your pants (informal)**

be unable to stay still because you are anxious or excited about sth: *Relax and enjoy yourself—you've really got ants in your pants about something tonight!*

anything**anything 'but**

certainly not; just the opposite (of): *Ecologists are anything but optimistic about a change in the Government's attitude towards 'green' issues.* ◊ *'I suppose the weather in Scotland was terrible.'* 'Oh no, anything but.'

anything 'goes

there are no rules about how sb should behave; anything is acceptable: *John always has to wear a suit and tie to the office, but where I work anything goes.*

anything 'like

(used with a negative, in a question or in an if-clause) in any way similar to; nearly: *If the meal's anything like the one we had there, you'll really enjoy it.* ◊ *The car isn't anything like as fast as yours.*

(as) easy, clear, quick, etc. as anything (informal)

extremely easy, clear, quickly, etc: *It was only a small gift but Phil was as pleased as anything with it.*

like 'anything (BrE, informal)

very much or very enthusiastically: *My head hurt like anything.*

not for 'anything (informal)

definitely not: *I wouldn't give it up for anything.*

or anything (spoken)

or another thing of a similar type: *If you want to call a meeting or anything, just let me know.*

apart**be 'poles/'worlds apart**

be widely separated; have no interests that you share: *Politically, the two leaders are poles apart.* ◊ *After hours of discussion and negotiation, they're still poles apart.*

come/fall apart at the 'seams (informal)

begin to fail or collapse: *The Government's economic policy is falling apart at the seams.* ◊ *After only six months, their marriage has come apart at the seams.*

be miles apart → miles

joking apart/aside → joking

rip sb/sth apart/to shreds, bits, etc. → rip

ape

go 'ape (also **go 'apeshit**, Δ) (slang, especially AmE) become extremely angry or excited: *The manager went ape when the team lost yet another game.*

apologies

make no apology/apologies for sth → apology

apology**an apology for sth**

a very poor example of sth: *I'm sorry this is a bit of an apology for lunch—we'll have a proper meal tonight.*

make no 'apology/a 'apologies for sth

if you say that you **make no apology/apologies** for sth, you mean that you do not feel that you have said or done sth wrong: *Having grown up in the north of the country, I make no apologies for saying that people there are more friendly than people in the south.*

appearances**keep up ap'pearances**

hide the true situation and pretend that everything is still going well: *When she lost all her money, she was determined to keep up appearances.*

to all ap'pearances

if sth/sb is judged only by what you can see: *The house was, to all appearances, empty.* ◊ *Although to all appearances they were the 'ideal couple', in fact they were very unhappy.*

appetite

whet sb's appetite → whet

apple**the apple of sb's 'eye**

a person, usually a child, who sb loves very much; a favourite child: *The second child, John, was the apple of his mother's eye.*

as American as apple pie → American

a rotten apple → rotten

upset the/sb's apple cart → upset

approach

a/the softly-softly approach → softly-softly

approval**on ap'proval**

(of goods) not paid for and to be returned, usually within a few days, if the customer decides not to buy them: *I've got it on seven days approval, so if you don't like it I can take it back.*

a seal of approval → seal

apron

(tied to) your mother's, wife's, etc. 'apron strings

(too much under) the influence and control of your

mother, wife, etc: *The British prime minister is too apt to cling to Washington's apron strings.*

area

a disaster area → disaster

a grey area → grey

a no-go area → no-go

argue**'argue the 'toss** (BrE, informal)

continue to disagree about a decision, especially when it is too late to change it or it is not very important: *Look, just do it your way. I've got better things to do than stand here all day arguing the toss with you.*

argument

for the sake of argument → sake

ark**be out of the 'ark; went out with the 'ark** (BrE, spoken)

(of an object or a custom) extremely old or old-fashioned: *She was using a dictionary that was straight out of the ark.*

ORIGIN

This idiom refers to a story in the Bible. The ark was a large boat which Noah built to save his family and two of every type of animal from the flood.

arm**cost/pay an arm and a 'leg** (informal)

cost/pay a lot of money: *We want to redecorate the living room, but I'm afraid it's going to cost us an arm and a leg.*

keep sb at 'arm's length

avoid becoming too friendly with sb: *He's the kind of man who's best kept at arm's length, in my opinion.*

put the 'arm/'bite on sb (AmE, informal)

ask sb for sth, especially money: *To pay for the tax reductions, the government will put the bite on smokers and motorists.*

(a list) as long as your arm → long

chance your arm → chance

the long arm of the law → long

a shot in the arm → shot

twist sb's arm → twist

would give your right arm for sth/to do sth → right

armchair**an armchair critic, traveller, etc.**

a person who knows about a subject only from what they have heard or read and not from personal experience: *He's what you might call an 'armchair traveller', having never actually been outside Europe.*

armed

armed to the 'teeth (with sth) (*informal*)
carrying a lot of weapons or a lot of things needed for a particular purpose: *The tourists got out of the coach, armed to the teeth with cameras, binoculars, and guidebooks.*

armour (*BrE*) (*AmE armor*)

a chink in sb's armour → chink
a knight in shining armour → knight

arms

up in 'arms (about/over sth) (*informal*)
very angry and protesting very strongly (about sth): *Local residents are up in arms over plans to build a new motorway.*

a babe in arms → babe
fold sb in your arms → fold
lay down your arms → lay
throw up your hands/arms in horror, despair, etc. → throw with open arms → open

arrive

arrive/come on the scene → scene

arrow

(as) straight as an arrow → straight

arrows

the slings and arrows (of sth) → slings

arse**My arsel** (*BrE, A, slang*)

used by some people to show they do not believe what sb has said: *An appointment at the dentist my arse! She's gone shopping!*

kiss sb's arse → kiss
lick sb's arse → lick
not know your arse from your elbow → know
a pain in the arse/bum/backside → pain
think the sun shines out of sb's arse/backside → think
work your arse off → work

arsed**can't be 'arsed (to do sth)** (*BrE, A, slang*)

not want to do sth because it is too much trouble: *I was supposed to do some work this weekend but I couldn't be arsed.*

📌 **NOTE**

A more polite way to express this is 'can't be bothered (to do sth)'.

art

have (got) sth down to a fine art → fine
state of the art → state

artistic

artistic/poetic licence → licence

as**as against sth**

in contrast with sth: *They got 27% of the vote as against 32% at the last election.*

as and 'when

whenever; at the moment when: *We'll deal with individual problems as and when they arise.*

as for sb/sth

turning to the subject of sb/sth: *I like Sue very much, but as for her boyfriend—I wouldn't care if I never saw him again!*

'as from (also **'as of especially AmE**)

used to indicate the time or date from which something starts: *As from next Monday she'll have a new secretary.* ◊ *We shall be at our new address as of mid-June.*

as 'if (*spoken*)

used to express anger at or disapproval of a suggestion, an explanation, etc., or to deny a possibility: *As if I really cared!* ◊ *'Don't tell Tom I said that, will you?' 'Oh, as if (I would).'*

as if/as though

in a way that suggests sth: *He behaved as if nothing had happened.* ◊ *It sounds as though you had a good time.*

as it 'is

as the situation is at the moment (often in contrast to what was expected): *I wanted to have this report ready by tomorrow but as it is, it may not be done until Thursday.* ◊ *We won't be able to buy a new car this year—we can only just afford a holiday as it is.*

as to sth

used when you are referring to sth: *As to tax, that will be deducted from your salary.*

as you 'do (*BrE*)

used as a comment on sth that you have just said to say that it is normal behaviour: *He smiled and I smiled back, as you do.* ◊ (*ironic*) *She's just gone off to the Bahamas for three weeks on holiday. As you do!*

it isn't as if/as though; it's not as if/as though

used to show that a particular explanation for sth is not the correct one: *It isn't as if he didn't recognize me! He just walked straight past me as I stood there.*

ashes

put on, wear, etc. sackcloth and ashes → sackcloth
rake over the ashes/the past → rake
rise from the ashes → rise

aside

joking apart/aside → joking

ask**'ask for trouble/it** (*informal*)

(usually used in the progressive tenses) behave in