

In expressions of figurative language, meaning cannot be derived from the conjoined meanings of the words. Rather, meaning is conveyed by suggesting that something is like something else. Therefore, the expression must be comprehended metaphorically. For instance, when someone says, “It’s raining cats and dogs,” it has nothing to do with cats and dogs. This idiom dating back to 17th century England means that it is raining hard. The reader must use context or prior knowledge to infer what the expression actually means.

Every language has its own unique figurative language usages. In this fast-paced, media-dominated age, many communication skills, including familiarity with figurative language, are waning. The high number and frequency of use of idioms should make them an important component of comprehension and language acquisition. Idioms often confuse native speakers, and they are especially challenging for ESL students.

STEP 1 – TEACH FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE DIRECTLY AND MODEL APPROPRIATE USAGE

Do not assume that idioms will be learned through informal exposure. Direct instruction is necessary to assure that students develop familiarity with common idioms. Model appropriate use of idioms in instruction.

STEP 2 – DEVELOP MANIPULATIVES OR PLAN REPETITIVE ACTIVITIES

Idioms are a unique and interesting language usage, and there are many ways that they can be incorporated into weekly classroom activities. Idiom match manipulatives assure that students are exposed to a wide variety of idioms. On the bottom of p. 217 are additional suggestions for teaching idioms or other types of figurative language.

TYPES OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

- **IDIOM** A saying that carries meaning based on its use in the language
My dad blew his stack when I broke the window. (became furious)
- **SIMILE** A comparison of two objects linked by the words “like” or “as”
Grandmother’s face turned white as snow when she heard the news.
- **METAPHOR** A comparison or analogy that does not contain “like” or “as”
Our teacher has a mountain of papers on her desk.
- **PERSONIFICATION** Endowing inanimate objects or ideas with life-like qualities
The wind roaring through the trees kept me awake.
- **HYPERBOLE** A gross exaggeration
The eerie noises in the haunted house scared the children to death.
- **SYNECDOCHE** A less inclusive word is used for a more inclusive word or visa versa
Mary wouldn’t hurt a fly, so she couldn’t have done it. (anything)

MANIPULATIVES IDIOM MATCH-UPS

Understanding idiomatic expressions facilitates comprehension since students tend to interpret language literally. Students read sentences and then find an idiom to replace the underlined words in each sentence. The origin of the idiom can be written on the back of the card.

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify and recall common idioms by reviewing how they are used and their origins
- Substitute literal words or phrases in sentences with idiomatic usages

CONSTRUCTION GUIDELINES

- Divide sheet into 10 horizontal strips (1.1 inch); draw vertical line at 5.5 inch
- Write sentence in left frame; underline sentence text that idiom will replace (Idiom Resource List, pp. 218–227)
- Write idiom in right frame; write origin on the back (sample on pp. 231–232)
- Activity is more challenging if idioms in each set have the same usage (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.)

Since Jack had <u>told lies</u> before, his coach did not believe him.	cried wolf
Our teacher <u>was right</u> when she said that book was boring.	hit the nail on the head
Mary <u>avoided the issue</u> rather than telling me the facts.	beat around the bush
Our class <u>studied</u> so we'd do well in the current-events contest.	boned up
Tim didn't finish everything because he <u>tried to do too much</u> .	bit off more than he could chew
The boys <u>got going</u> and picked up all the trash in the alley.	took the bull by the horns
I <u>used my connections</u> to get tickets to the sold-out show.	pulled strings
Ted <u>blamed others</u> every time he had a problem.	passed the buck
Susan found out about her surprise party because Jill <u>told</u> .	let the cat out of the bag
Last night it <u>poured</u> , so soccer practice was cancelled.	rained cats and dogs

RM PRODUCT: 530 IDIOM MATCH-UPS

ORIGIN ON BACK

During heavy rains in 17th-century England, some streets became filthy rivers carrying cats and dogs.

TIP USE MULTIPLE STRATEGIES TO EXPOSE STUDENTS TO IDIOMS

- Idiom of the day – select and use an idiom at the start of a day or period; encourage students to use it at least once that day (give bonus points for doing so)
- Give extra credit for using idioms in assignments
- Find examples of idioms in printed material or on television; discuss use and meaning
- Tell a story laden with idioms, asking students are to write down idioms they identify; see who finds the most
- Add-on story – list several idioms on the board; discuss meanings; start a story, using one of the idioms; each person adds to the story and uses another idiom in the process
- Illustrating idioms literally to contrast the literal and figurative meanings
- Write idioms on index cards; have students draw a literal illustration on another card; group these pairs in sets and allow students to match the pairs

RESOURCE LIST IDIOMS – FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

IDIOM	MEANING	ORIGIN
ants in his/her pants	restless, can't sit still	Ants in one's pants would make one jump around and be restless.
apple of one's eye	that which is held dearest	Because it is essential to sight, the eye's apple, or pupil, is to be cherished and protected.
at the end of the rope	out of patience	An animal at the end of its tether cannot go any further.
bark up the wrong tree	follow an incorrect course	Hunting dogs were trained to tree raccoons and bark, but often the raccoon fooled them and escaped.
batting a thousand	doing a perfect job	1,000 is the perfect average in baseball, with a base hit every time at bat.
beat around the bush	not getting to the point	Hunters need to proceed slowly and carefully if approaching a bush to beat out a bird.
behind the eight ball	out of luck	The eight ball in a pool game must be sunk last or the person loses.
between the devil and the deep blue sea	between two dangers	Wooden ship decks have long seams at the edges called devils. Sailors repairing them risk falling overboard.
bite off more than one can chew	try to do more than one has time or ability for.	One who takes a very large bite is trying to chew too much in a mouthful.
bitter pill to swallow	hard to accept	Some bitter ingredients in pills cannot be masked and are hard to swallow.
blow off steam	release anger or tension	Early steam engines had no safety valves, so engineers pulled a lever to release pressure.
blow one's stack	vent anger, lash out	A steamboat's smokestack could blow off if the boiler overheated.
bone to pick	an area of contention	Two dogs will fight over a single bone tossed between them.
bone up	refine, study	Bones were once used to polish shoes; to study would polish one's knowledge.
born with silver spoon in one's mouth	wealthy	Sterling silver is expensive; babies in rich families may have had silver baby spoons.
break the ice	to initiate and be friendly	Sometimes it is necessary for ships to break up the ice so other ships can pass.
bring the house down	applauding enthusiastically	The applause a performer receives may seem like it could cause a building to collapse.
burn the candle at both ends	doing too much	Candles would burn quickly and run out of energy if the wick was lit on both ends.
bury the hatchet	let bygones be bygones	When peace was made between two Indian tribes, it was customary to bury the chiefs' tomahawks.

<p>Mother was <u>furious</u> when she caught me lying to her.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ID-2</p>	<p>mad as a wet hen</p> <p style="text-align: left;">ID-2</p>
<p>Everywhere I look, this neighborhood seems to be <u>deteriorating</u>.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ID-2</p>	<p>going to pot</p> <p style="text-align: left;">ID-2</p>
<p>I try to avoid Jill when I see her because she is <u>annoying</u>.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ID-2</p>	<p>a pain in the neck</p> <p style="text-align: left;">ID-2</p>
<p>Greg was <u>incompetent</u> when he first tried water skiing.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ID-2</p>	<p>a fish out of water</p> <p style="text-align: left;">ID-2</p>
<p>Getting the yard cleaned up was <u>easy</u> once we got going.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ID-2</p>	<p>a piece of cake</p> <p style="text-align: left;">ID-2</p>
<p>Sandra was <u>rich</u> so she traveled all over the world.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ID-2</p>	<p>born with a silver spoon in her mouth</p> <p style="text-align: left;">ID-2</p>
<p>Often bad habits are so <u>ingrained</u> that changing them is difficult.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ID-2</p>	<p>dyed in the wool</p> <p style="text-align: left;">ID-2</p>
<p>My Grandmother said I was <u>small</u> last time she saw me.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ID-2</p>	<p>knee-high to a grasshopper</p> <p style="text-align: left;">ID-2</p>
<p>Our teacher said she was <u>losing it</u> because of the confusion.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ID-2</p>	<p>going bananas</p> <p style="text-align: left;">ID-2</p>
<p>It seems harder than ever to get ahead in this <u>tough</u> world.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ID-2</p>	<p>dog-eat-dog</p> <p style="text-align: left;">ID-2</p>