

**SRI CHITTEM NARSIREDDY MEMORIAL  
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**DEPT OF ENGLISH**

**STUDENT STUDY PROJECT**  
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Project Work

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## What is an Idiom?

An idiom is a phrase that, when taken as a whole, has a meaning you wouldn't be able to deduce from the meanings of the individual words. It's essentially the verbal equivalent of using the wrong math formula but still getting the correct answer.

The phrase "kill two birds with one stone" is an example of an idiom. Fluent and native English speakers understand that this doesn't refer to harming birds or using stones, but that someone is completing two tasks at once.

An idiom is a type of phrase or expression that has a meaning that can't be deciphered by defining the individual words. Appropriately, the word "idiom" is derived from the ancient Greek word "idioma", which means "peculiar phraseology". And that's exactly what it is - a phrase that's normal to fluent speakers (every language has its idiom) but strange to others.

people who struggle with idioms often can't see the forest for the trees, which is itself an idiom used to describe someone who's too involved with the details of a situation

and can't see the bigger picture at hand. It doesn't involve my forests or trees.

To understand idioms is to see the forest for the trees, or to look at the phrase as a whole rather than focusing on the individual words.

### 4 types of idioms

Generally speaking, there are four types of idioms: pure idioms, binomial idioms, partial idioms and prepositional idioms.

Some people may consider clichés, proverbs and euphemisms to be types of idioms as well, but we'll explain why they are different from idioms.

#### 1. Pure idiom

This is your typical idiom, the meaning of which can't be deduced by its individual components. When someone says, "spill the beans", they're asking someone to reveal a secret, not to pour out a can of beans. But you wouldn't know that by looking at each word of that phrase.

#### 2. Binomial idiom.

This idiom is a phrase that contains two words joined by a conjunction or a preposition. Some examples include

"by and large" (everything considered), "dos and don'ts" (guidelines on what to do and/or avoid in a certain situation), and "heart-to-heart" (a candid conversation between two people.)

### 3. Partial idiom

This idiom is one that's been shortened into one part, with the second part generally being understood by fluent speakers. People often use the partial idiom "when in Rome" with the understanding that the other person knows the second part: "do as the Romans do".

### 4. Prepositional idiom.

This idiom is a phrase that combines a verb and a preposition to create a verb with a distinct meaning. The phrase "agree on" is a prepositional idiom that combines the verb "agree" with the preposition "on" and is used to express that you share an opinion with someone.

### When are idioms used?

A speaker or writer often uses idioms to convey a message to someone else in a more creative way. Think of them as a type of spice that prevents your conversation or writing from being too bland. So instead of saying "you're correct" several times, you might throw in "you hit the nail on the head" or even "bingo" for a little variety.

In English, it's common to describe a backup of cars on the highway as "heavy traffic". It is not common to describe it as "crowded traffic". Although the phrases could reasonably be interpreted the same way, the collocation "heavy traffic" simply "sounds right" to English speakers.

Idiom examples.

Here are some common idioms in the English language, along with their meanings.

• Under the weather.

Meaning: Not feeling well.

• Break a leg.

Meaning: To wish someone good luck.

• Once in a blue moon.

Meaning: Rarely.

→ The ball is in your court.

Meaning: A decision is up to you.

→ You can say that again.

Meaning: That is true.

→ Beat around the bush.

Meaning: To avoid saying something.

→ Hit the sack

Meaning: To go to bed.