

# Part 2

## Selected Idioms by Category

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**I**n this part, selected idioms are organized into categories. The idioms were chosen because they are commonly used and understood by native English speakers in the United States. These lists are not meant to be complete; many more idioms could be added to these categories. In addition, some of the idioms below could be put into more than one category. Teachers might use these categories for organizing exercises or focusing discussions. There are sample questions using these categories on pages 105-118.

### People

#### DESCRIPTIONS OF PEOPLE (NOUNS)

Apple of one's eye  
Big shot  
Big fish in a small pond  
Big wheel  
Bigwig  
Blue-blood  
Blue-collar worker  
Bull in a china shop  
Chip off the old block  
Eager beaver  
Fish out of water  
Good egg  
Head honcho  
Heavyweight  
Jack of all trades  
Lame duck  
Low man on the totem pole  
Old fuddy-duddy  
Salt of the earth  
Stuffed shirt  
White-collar worker

#### ABOUT PEOPLE (ADJECTIVES)

All wet  
Filthy rich  
First-rate  
Footloose and fancy free  
Green around the gills  
Keyed up  
Knee-high to a grasshopper  
Too big for one's britches  
Up to snuff  
Upper crust  
Wet behind the ears

### Conversation

All kidding aside  
Beat around the bush  
Bend someone's ear  
Butt in  
Butter someone up  
Clam up  
Clear the air  
Clown around  
Get a word in edgewise

Gift of gab  
 Give someone a ring  
 Give someone a song and dance  
 Heart to heart  
 Hit the nail on the head  
 Hold one's tongue  
 Lend someone an ear  
 Make a long story short  
 Make a mountain out of a molehill  
 On the tip of one's tongue  
 Pass the buck  
 Pick someone's brain  
 Pull rank  
 Pull strings  
 Pull the rug out from under someone  
 Pull the wool over someone's eyes  
 Put someone on the spot  
 Say a mouthful  
 See eye to eye  
 Shoot the breeze  
 Spill the beans  
 Spring something on someone  
 Stand one's ground  
 Stick one's nose in  
 Straight from the horse's mouth  
 Stretch the truth  
 String someone along  
 Talk a blue streak  
 Talk turkey  
 Turn a deaf ear  
 Wing it

## Emotions/Feelings

### SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS

Blue-blood  
 Blue ribbon  
 Carry a torch for someone  
 Charmed life, lead a  
 Cream of the crop  
 Dressed to kill  
 Footloose and fancy-free  
 Go to town  
 Gravy train  
 Happy-go-lucky  
 Have/got it made  
 Head over heels in love  
 In the chips/money  
 In the pink  
 Keep up with the Joneses  
 Lap of luxury, live in the  
 Life of Riley  
 Midas touch  
 On cloud nine

Pop the question  
 Roll out the red carpet  
 Seventh heaven, in  
 Sitting pretty  
 Strike it rich  
 Sweep someone off his/her feet  
 Through thick and thin  
 Tickle someone's fancy  
 Tickled pink  
 Tie the knot  
 Top of the line, the  
 Upper crust  
 With flying colors

### ANGER/BEING UPSET

At the end of one's rope  
 At loggerheads  
 Ax to grind  
 Blow off steam  
 Boiling point  
 Chew someone out  
 Fly off the handle  
 Get up on the wrong side of the bed  
 Get someone's dander/hackles up  
 Give someone a hard time  
 Give someone a piece of one's mind  
 Give someone a taste of his own medicine  
 Go bananas  
 Hopping mad  
 Hot under the collar  
 Lose one's cool  
 On the warpath  
 Put one's foot down  
 Put the squeeze/screws on/to  
 Speak one's mind

### ILL HEALTH

Black and blue  
 Blue  
 Burned out  
 Down and out  
 Fall off the wagon  
 Go to pot  
 Go to seed  
 Go to the dogs  
 Know if one is coming or going, not  
 Look/feel like death warmed over  
 Off one's rocker  
 On one's last legs  
 Under the weather

### NEGATIVE SITUATIONS

In a bind  
 In a jam  
 In a rut

In Dutch  
In hot water  
In over one's head  
In the doghouse

## Time

At the drop of a hat  
Burn the midnight oil  
Days are numbered,  
(someone's/something's)  
Down to the wire  
Eleventh hour  
From the word go  
In the long run  
In the nick of time  
Jump the gun  
Mark time  
On hold, put something  
On ice, put something  
Once in a blue moon  
Shake a leg  
Slow/quick off the mark  
Spur of the moment, on the  
Step on it  
Time on one's hands, have some  
Time to kill, have some  
Under the wire  
Until the cows come home

Pinch pennies  
Put one's money where one's mouth is  
Sales pitch  
Save (something) for a rainy day  
Sell like hotcakes  
Strike it rich  
Take someone to the cleaners  
Tighten one's belt  
Wait for one's ship to come in

## Job/Work

Back to the drawing board  
Burn the candle at both ends  
Get down to business  
Keep one's nose to the grindstone  
Old-boy network  
Pencil/paper pusher  
Pink slip  
Pull rank  
Rank and file

## Money

Black market  
Bottom line, the  
Bring home the bacon  
Buy (something) for a song  
Cost (someone) a mint/an arm and a leg  
Cut corners  
Drop in the bucket  
Dutch treat (Go Dutch)  
Feather one's nest  
Feel the pinch  
Flat broke  
Go broke  
Hit pay dirt  
Hit the jackpot  
In the black  
In the chips/money  
In the red  
Make ends meet  
Midas touch  
Money to burn  
Pay through the nose  
Penny pincher