

Business - Work

ace up your sleeve	If you have <i>an ace up your sleeve</i> , you have something in reserve with which you can gain an advantage. <i>Our new product is an ace up our sleeve.</i>
hold all the aces	A person who <i>holds all the aces</i> is in a very strong position because they have more advantages than anyone else. <i>Given the high unemployment rates today, employers hold all the aces.</i>
ambulance chaser	A lawyer who finds work by persuading people injured in accidents to claim money from the person who caused the accident is called an <i>'ambulance chaser'</i> . <i>Peterson and Scott are well-known ambulance chasers - that's how they make their money!</i>
back to the salt mines	Saying that you have to go <i>back to the salt mines</i> is a humorous way of talking about returning to work, usually with some reluctance. <i>We get two days off at Christmas and then it's back to the salt mines!</i>
bait and switch	This term refers to a deceptive commercial practice of advertising a low-priced item to attract customers, then telling them that the product is out of stock and persuading them to buy a more expensive article. <i>This store is famous for its bait and switch tactics.</i>
in the black	To say that a person or organization is <i>in the black</i> means that they are financially sound, have a positive balance on their account and that they owe no money.
black market	The <i>black market</i> refers to the illegal buying and selling of goods or currencies. <i>Be careful of what you buy on the black market - it's not always good quality.</i>
blamestorming	A discussion among a group of people who try to determine who or what is to blame for a particular mistake, failure or wrongdoing, is called <i>'blamestorming'</i> . <i>A blamestorming session took place following the unfavorable reviews in the press.</i>
blank cheque	If you give someone a <i>blank cheque</i> , you authorize them to do what they think is best in a difficult situation. <i>Tom was given a blank cheque and told to negotiate the best deal possible.</i>

blue chip company	This term refers to a company with a solid reputation for the quality of its products and the stability of its growth and earnings. <i>It's usually safe to invest in a blue chip company.</i>
above board	If a situation or business is described as <i>above board</i> , it is open, honest and legal. <i>There are not secret negotiations. Our dealings have always been above board.</i>
boil the ocean	To "boil the ocean" means to waste time on a task or project that is unnecessary, not worth doing or impossible to achieve. <i>"I expect you to do the job well but don't try to boil the ocean!"</i>
get down to brass tacks	When people <i>get down to brass tacks</i> , they start to discuss the essential aspects of a problem or situation. <i>The situation was so serious that after a few polite exchanges they quickly got down to brass tacks.</i>
break your back	If you work extremely hard, or put a lot of effort into achieving something, you <i>break your back</i> to do it. <i>If you want the job done well, you should accept to pay more. He's not going to break his back for such a low price!</i>
bricks and mortar / bricks and clicks	An established trading company (office/shop) is referred to as a ' <i>brick-and-mortar</i> ' business. ' <i>Click companies</i> ' refer to internet-based operations. Companies which do both are called ' <i>bricks and clicks</i> '. <i>Click businesses are usually more flexible than brick-and-mortar operations.</i>
business as usual	After an unpleasant or unexpected event, this expression means that everything is continuing in a normal way, in spite of the difficulties. <i>It was business as usual at the supermarket the day after the hold-up.</i>
business before pleasure	This expression means that it is considered preferable to finish one's work before going to relax and enjoy oneself. <i>I'd love to have lunch with you but I've got a report to finish - business before pleasure I'm afraid!</i>
business is business	This is a way of saying that in financial and commercial matters, friendship or personal feelings should not be allowed to have any influence. <i>I'll hire your brother only if he is the best candidate. I'm sorry but business is business!</i>
can't stand the pace	If you <i>can't stand the pace</i> , you are unable to do things well when there is a lot of pressure. <i>She once worked for a famous fashion designer but she couldn't stand the pace.</i>
carve out a niche	A person or company who <i>carves out a niche</i> concentrates on a particular segment of the market, to which they supply a product or service, and develop their expertise in that area.

	<i>In today's competitive market it is better to carve out a niche and try to become the best in that area.</i>
cash cow	A product or service which is a regular source of income for a company is called a <i>cash cow</i> . <i>His latest invention turned out to be a real cash cow.</i>
cash in your chips	If you <i>cash in your chips</i> , you sell something, especially shares, either because you need the money or because you think the value is going to fall. <i>Andy cashed in his chips as soon as business started to slow down.</i>
too many chiefs, not enough Indians	This expression refers to a situation where there are too many people giving instructions and not enough people doing the work. <i>The business wasn't successful. There were too many chiefs and not enough Indians.</i>
clinch a deal	In a business relationship, if you <i>clinch a deal</i> , you reach agreement on a proposal or offer. <i>Paul's final argument enabled us to clinch the deal.</i>
cog in the machine	If you say that someone is a <i>cog in the machine</i> , you mean that, while they are necessary, they only play a small part in an organization or plan. <i>The police quickly realized that the suspect was just a cog in the machine.</i>
make cold calls	If you make <i>cold calls</i> , you telephone potential customers from a list of people you do not know. <i>In my first job I had to make cold calls using the telephone directory.</i>
copper-bottomed	To describe something such as a plan, a contract or a financial arrangement as <i>copper-bottomed</i> means that it is completely safe or reliable. <i>He signed a copper-bottomed agreement with a distributor.</i>
corner the market	If a company dominates an area of business, and leaves no room for competition, it is said to have <i>cornered the market</i> . <i>By importing large quantities and selling at low prices, they have cornered the market.</i>
creative accounting	This term refers to the presentation of a company's results in a way that, although generally legal, glosses over the problems and makes the results appear better than they are. <i>It was suggested that some creative accounting might help to attract investors.</i>
cut and dried	If you refer to a situation, problem or solution as <i>cut and dried</i> , you mean that it is clear and straightforward with no likely complications. <i>When the new manager arrived, he didn't find the situation as cut and dried as he had expected.</i>
cutting edge	This expression refers to the newest, most advanced stage in the development of something. <i>The company is at the cutting edge of aeronautics.</i>

dead wood	The term <i>dead wood</i> refers to people or things which are no longer considered useful or necessary. <i>The new manager wants to reduce costs by cutting out the dead wood.</i>
do the spadework	Someone who <i>does the spadework</i> does the preparatory work or the preliminary research. <i>Although I did all the spadework, my name was never mentioned.</i>
dog eat dog	This expression refers to intense competition and rivalry in pursuit of one's own interests, with no concern for morality. <i>The business world is tough today. There's a general dog-eat-dog attitude.</i>
in the doldrums	To say that a person, a business or the economy in general is <i>in the doldrums</i> means that the situation is gloomy and that nothing new is happening. <i>Despite the recent measures, the economy is in the doldrums.</i>
a done deal	This expression is used to refer to an agreement or decision which has been reached on a certain matter. <i>We're still considering several proposals, so it's not a done deal yet.</i>
done and dusted	When a project, task or activity is <i>done and dusted</i> , it is completely finished or ready. <i>I've nearly finished preparing the presentation. When it's all done and dusted I'll be able to relax.</i>
donkey work	This expression is used to describe the unpleasant, repetitive or boring parts of a job. <i>I do the donkey work - my boss gets the credit!</i>
doom and gloom	A general atmosphere of pessimism, and a feeling that the situation is not going to improve, is referred to as <i>doom and gloom</i> . <i>Fortunately it's not doom and gloom for all businesses, in spite of the economic situation.</i>
down the drain	To say that money, time or energy has gone <i>down the drain</i> means that it has been wasted or lost. <i>His years of research went down the drain when the company went bankrupt.</i>
drastic times call for drastic measures	When faced with a difficult situation, it is sometimes necessary to take actions which in normal circumstances would appear extreme <i>After Johnny's third accident, his father confiscated his car. Drastic times call for drastic measures!</i>
dream ticket	If you refer to two people as a <i>dream ticket</i> , you think they would work well together and be successful. <i>Clinton and Obama teaming up for the elections would be a dream ticket for many Democrats.</i>
dry /dummy run	If you organize a rehearsal, a trial exercise or a practice session of something, in realistic conditions, to see how well it will work before it is launched, you do a <i>dry run</i> .

Consequences - Effects

answer for	If someone has to <i>answer for something</i> , they have to accept responsibility for their actions. <i>He will have to answer for his dishonesty.</i>
be that as it may	This expression means that what the speaker says may be true but it will not change the situation. <i>OK. Fewer people may come because of the bad weather, but be that as it may, it's too late to cancel the show.</i>
can't make an omelet without breaking eggs	This expression means that it is impossible to make important changes without causing some unpleasant effects. <i>Some people will lose their jobs after the merger, but you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs.</i>
change the face of something	When an innovation, discovery or event <i>changes the face of something</i> , it alters it completely or in a major way. <i>Social networks have changed the face of modern communication.</i>
chickens come home to roost	If you say that <i>chickens have come home to roost</i> , you mean that bad or embarrassing things done in the past by someone are now causing problems for that person. <i>As tenants the couple were noisy and disorderly. Now they can't find a place to rent. The chickens have come home to roost!</i>
come to a bad end	If someone <i>comes to a bad end</i> , their actions lead to disastrous consequences which are sometimes deserved or predictable. <i>If that boy doesn't change his ways, he'll come to a bad end.</i>
come with the territory	To say that something <i>comes with the territory</i> means that it has to be accepted as part of a job or responsibility, even if it is unpleasant. <i>A successful actor has to expect intensive media coverage - that comes with the territory!</i>
come what may	If you declare that you will do something <i>come what may</i> , you are saying that you will do it whatever the consequences may be. <i>Come what may, I'm going to tell my mother-in-law what I think of her!</i>
(get) comeuppance	When someone <i>gets their comeuppance</i> , they receive the treatment they deserve (usually punishment or retribution) for their behavior or actions. <i>Any pupils found bullying the newcomers will soon get their comeuppance.</i>
cut both ways	Something that <i>cuts both ways</i> has both a positive and a negative effect at the same time.

	<i>Banning cars in the town center can cut both ways : less traffic congestion but fewer customers in the shops.</i>
devil to pay	This is a way of announcing that there will be trouble if something happens. <i>Be careful. There'll be the devil to pay if you break anything!</i>
even the score	When a person decides to <i>even the score</i> , they try to get their revenge on someone who has cheated or done them harm. <i>When Jack discovered that Bob had cheated, he was determined to even the score.</i>
face the music	If you have to <i>face the music</i> , you have to accept the unpleasant consequences of your actions. <i>He was caught stealing. Now he has to face the music.</i>
fall from grace	To say that someone has <i>fallen from grace</i> means that they have done something wrong, immoral or unacceptable, and as a result have lost their good reputation. <i>The Finance Minister fell from grace as a result of a sex scandal.</i>
fall on one's sword	If you <i>fall on your sword</i> , you accept the consequences of an unsuccessful or wrong action. <i>The organizer of the referendum resigned when the poor results were announced. It was said that he' fell on his sword'.</i>
get your fingers burnt	If someone <i>gets their fingers burnt</i> , they suffer as a result of an unsuccessful action and are nervous about trying again. <i>He got his fingers burnt so badly in the last elections that he decided to withdraw from politics.</i>
open doors to/for	If something <i>opens doors</i> , it provides opportunities or possibilities for the future. <i>A degree from a top university generally opens doors to major companies.</i>
price you have to pay	The <i>price you have to pay</i> is what you have to endure in return for something you gain or achieve. <i>Lack of privacy is the price you have to pay for being a celebrity.</i>
one's own undoing	If you do something that is the cause of your own failure, loss or downfall, it is <i>your own undoing</i> . You can blame nobody but yourself. <i>If he continues to gamble like that, it will be his own undoing.</i>
open doors to something	If something <i>opens doors</i> , it provides opportunities or possibilities for the future. <i>A degree from a top university generally opens doors to major companies.</i>
pay dearly for	If you <i>pay dearly</i> for something that you do or say, you suffer a lot as a result of it. <i>If you leave your job now, you may have to pay dearly for it.</i>
pay dividends	If something you do <i>pays dividends</i> , it brings advantages or rewards at a later date.

	<i>The time he spent learning English paid dividends when he started looking for a job.</i>
price you have to pay	The <i>price you have to pay</i> is what you have to endure in return for something you gain or achieve. <i>Lack of privacy is the price you have to pay for being a celebrity.</i>
reap the harvest	If you <i>reap the harvest</i> , you benefit or suffer as a direct result of past actions. <i>When he won his first match, he began to reap the harvest of all the hard training.</i>
ripple effect	When an action has an effect on something, which in turn effects something else, it is said to have a <i>ripple effect</i> . <i>An increase in the price of oil will have a ripple effect on the economy as a whole.</i>
slap on the wrist	If you get a <i>slap on the wrist</i> , you receive mild punishment, or you are reprimanded for something you have done. <i>I got a slap on the wrist from my wife for leaving the kitchen in a mess.</i>
stand in good stead	To say that a skill, an ability or previous experience will <i>stand you in good stead</i> means that it will be beneficial to you in the future. <i>Being able to speak another language will stand you in good stead when looking for a job.</i>
stew in your own juice	If you let someone <i>stew in their own juice</i> , you leave them to worry about the consequences of their own actions. <i>Ricky spent last night in prison for starting a fight - let him just stew in his own juice!</i>
take the rap	If you <i>take the rap</i> , you accept blame or punishment for something, even if you are not responsible. <i>The whole class had to take the rap for the disorder.</i>
tit for tat	This expression refers to an injury or insult given in return for one received. <i>He kicked me, so I kicked him - it was tit for tat!</i>
you can't unring a bell!	This expression means that you cannot undo what has been done, so you must live with the consequences of your actions.