



raining cats and dogs
Raining very heavily

17th century



break a leg
Good luck
(said before a performance)

1940s

IDIOMS IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH

Idioms are fairly common in everyday English

Idioms are often quite informal

Are idioms used in academic English?

A) WHAT ARE IDIOMS? ✓

B) IDIOMS IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH ✓

C) 21 ACADEMIC IDIOMS ✓

Idioms are expressions that are:

- fixed
- multi-word *mostly 3 or 4 words*
- well-established
- usually difficult to understand
(cannot deduce meaning from individual words)

Two studies have identified idioms used in academic contexts

Simpson, R., and Mendis, D. (2003) 'A corpus-based study of idioms in academic speech', *Tesol Quarterly*, 37(3), 419e441. Available online at: <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/90255/3588398.pdf?sequence=1>.

Miller, J. (2019) 'The bottom line: Are idioms used in English academic speech and writing?', *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 43 (2020) 100810. Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2019.100810>.

16th century

beg the question
To cause sb. to ask a question
OR
To assume something is true but it is not yet proven

Most frequent of these

Video available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6SEB4Nemms>

170 idioms for spoken academic English

36 idioms for written academic English

Julia Miller's study found that idioms in spoken academic texts occurred with a frequency of 835 per million words (0.1%)

Productive use of idioms (speaking/writing) will help students become part of the academic discourse community

Receptive knowledge (listening/reading) will help understanding spoken or written texts

- Academic Word List (10%)
- Academic Collocation List (1.4%)

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#19	2.68
#37	3.59

go hand in hand with

Be closely related to something and happening at the same time or as a result

#3	31.87
#3	37.74

on (the) one hand

Can always be omitted - but more common to use 'the'

2.58
1.80

from one point of view



on the other (hand)

from a different point of view

Nuclear energy, on one hand, can provide huge amounts of power. On the other, it produces toxic waste which must be treated very carefully.

Public transport has many benefits, for instance helping to reduce air pollution. On the other hand, it is less convenient than travelling by private car.

Can be omitted ONLY when used with 'on the one hand' - quite common to omit this word

20.34
10.19

#1	88.12
#1	64.11

RANK (WRITING)	FREQUENCY PER MILLION WORDS (WRITING)
RANK (SPEAKING)	FREQUENCY PER MILLION WORDS (SPEAKING)



#13	4.26
#22	5.39

come into play

to become an important factor

Globalisation is one of the reasons for increasing urban populations in developing countries. However, there are other factors that come into play, such as natural disasters and civil war.

#20	2.57
#20	5.39

As a rule of thumb, an increase of \$10 for a barrel of oil reduces global output by 0.5% after one year (Bloomberg Economics, 2011).

#16	2.98
#91	1.20

rule of thumb
An approximate way of doing or measuring something



#4	12.54
#11	6.59

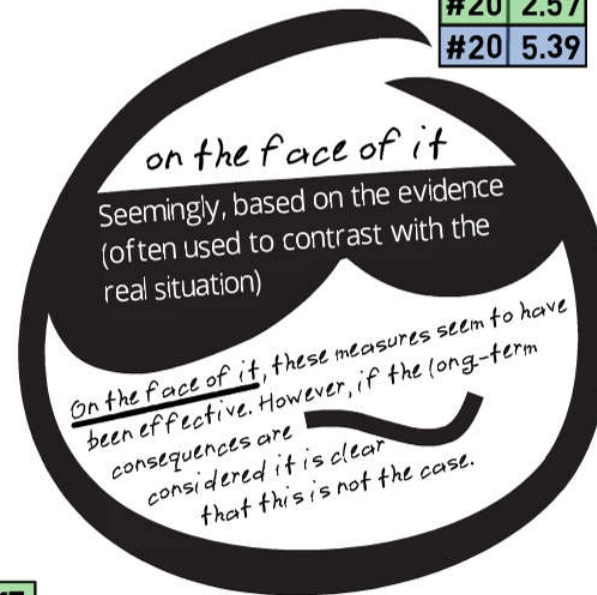


in the hands of (someone)

- i) Controlled/owned by someone ✓
- ii) In the care of someone

The stability of an economy lies in the hands of its investors and borrowers.

In the eighteenth century, power in the country was concentrated in the hands of a few corporations.



#5	10.17
#2	46.73

bear in mind

bear/bore/borne

Often combines with 'must'/'should'/'be important to'
+ followed by 'that'

remember/consider when making a decision

It is important to bear in mind that social distancing is only effective in combination with other measures.

21 ACADEMIC IDIOMS

BODY IDIOMS

ACTION IDIOMS

POWER IDIOMS

IDIOMS WITH 'GOLD'

IDIOMS WITH 'LINE'

OTHER IDIOMS

#8	7.84
#17	5.39

in the long run
over a long period of time

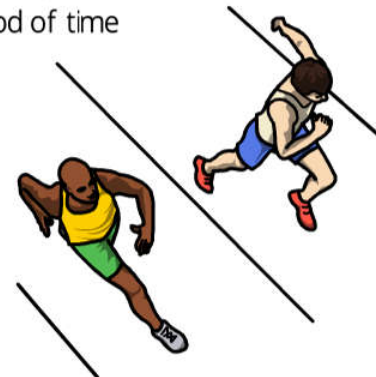


Esp. common in Economics,
also common in Business

Researchers concluded that
the new policy reduced the
company's growth by 25%
in the short run and 55%
in the long run.

#14	4.19
#55	3.00

in the short run
over a short period of time



#11	6.21
#19	5.39

*driving
force*

Someone/something with the power
to make things happen
*Nationalism was one of the driving forces
behind World War I.*

Often used
with 'behind'

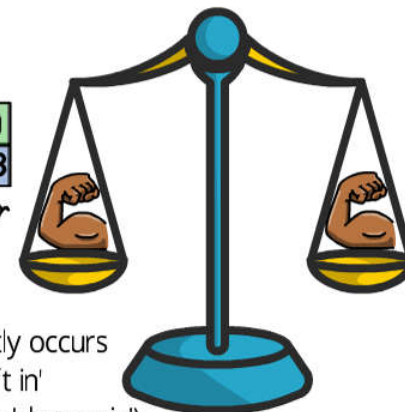
Esp. common in Politics,
History and Law

#12	6.20
#4	10.78

the balance of power

The way power is
distributed between
rival groups or
countries

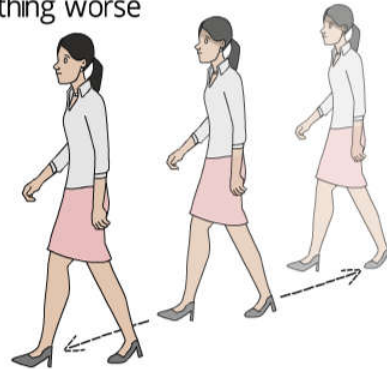
Frequently occurs
with 'shift in'
(meaning 'change in')



take (sth) a step further

#10	6.21
#9	7.19

↖ a step further/back
to make an improvement or advancement /
to make something worse



Freud took this idea a step further in his work 'The Interpretation of Dreams'.

The deal represented a step back for the company.

Esp. common in Economics

#9	6.66
#23	5.39

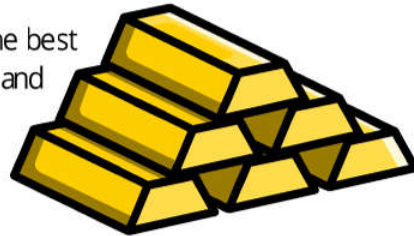
gold standard

Literal meaning

Idiomatic meaning

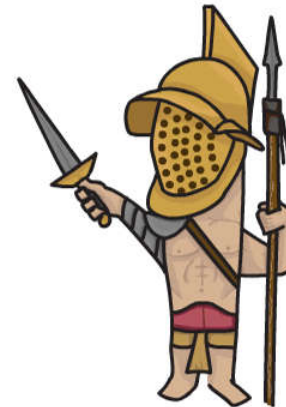
A monetary standard where the value of a currency is defined by a fixed amount of gold.

Something that is the best example of its kind, and is used to measure how good other similar things are.



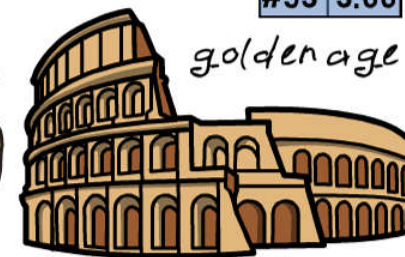
Esp. common in Medicine

Although endoscopic carpal tunnel release has become popular for the treatment of carpal tunnel syndrome, open carpal tunnel release remains the gold standard procedure.



#17	2.96
#53	3.00

golden age



A period of time when a particular art, business, etc. was very successful.

For non-history subjects, it is often enclosed by quotation marks " "

Used mainly in social sciences (e.g. History, Economics, Sociology)

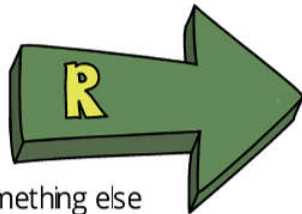
The period of 1950-1970 is considered to be the "golden age" of growth for industrialised countries, which enjoyed a 3.2% increase in real GDP per capita per year.

#6	9.27
#13	5.99

in its own right

On its own and not because of something else

Marketing for the brand originally depended heavily on the parent company; now, however, the brand is established in its own right and has its own marketing division.



'In light of' is often followed by 'this'



in (the) light of
Because of
(some new information)

#2	34.99
#21	5.39



#7	9.24
#12	6.59

along the lines of
Roughly similar to something

Although there is no formal convention for designating countries 'developed' or 'developing' (OECD, 2021), for analysis, the countries in this study will be divided along the lines of the OECD classification.

The experiment was extremely dangerous. In light of this, extra precautions for safety were taken.

In the light of the evidence, it is clear that major changes need to be made.

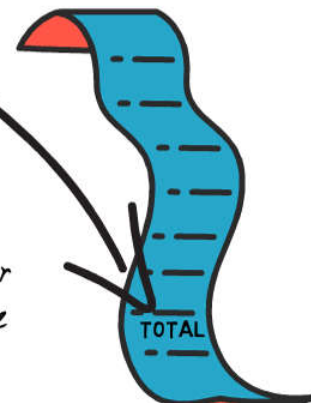
#21	2.50
#6	8.39

the bottom line

Literal meaning Idiomatic meaning

The line on an account statement showing a person/company's total profit or loss The most important aspect of something

When determining a CEO's performance, rather than focusing on profit, the bottom line of the position is the growth of the company.



A solution chosen only if there are no other options

The side effects of the medication are extreme and it should only be taken as a last resort.

#15	4.05
#47	3.00

last resort



ACADEMIC IDIOMS (WRITING)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. on the other hand | 16. rule of thumb |
| 2. in (the) light of | 17. golden age |
| 3. on the one hand | 18. bad news |
| 4. in the hands of | 19. go hand in hand with |
| 5. bear in mind | 20. on the face of it |
| 6. in its own right | 21. the bottom line |
| 7. along the lines of | 22. |
| 8. in the long run | 23. beg the question |
| 9. gold standard | |
| 10. a step further/back | |
| 11. driving force | |
| 12. the balance of power | |
| 13. come into play | |
| 14. in the short run | |
| 15. last resort | |

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ACADEMIC IDIOMS (SPEAKING)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. on the other hand | 16. sit on the fence |
| 2. bear in mind | 17. in the long run |
| 3. on the one hand | 18. bad news |
| 4. the balance of power | 19. driving force |
| 5. at the end of the day | 20. on the face of it |
| 6. the bottom line | 21. in (the) light of |
| 7. take on board | 22. come into play |
| 8. by and large | 23. gold standard |
| 9. a step further/back | |
| 10. take for granted | |
| 11. in the hands of | |
| 12. along the lines of | |
| 13. in its own right | |
| 14. across the board | |
| 15. at the back of one's mind | |