

# Talk a Lot

## Intermediate Book 1

### 200 Top Idioms in Spoken English Today (Page 1 of 4)

#### Non-Literal English:

according to... [e.g. John]  
across the board  
after all  
again and again  
against the clock  
agree to disagree  
as a matter of fact  
as long as  
as soon as  
as we speak  
at the drop of a hat  
at this point  
bark up the wrong tree  
be a big fish in a small pond  
be a breath of fresh air  
be a bundle of nerves  
be a chip off the old block  
be a dream come true  
be a drop in the ocean  
be a given  
be a labour of love  
be a last-ditch attempt  
be a piece of cake  
be a slip of the tongue  
be a weight off my mind  
be about to do sth  
be all ears  
be all fingers and thumbs  
be all the rage  
be as good as gold  
be as light as a feather  
be at your wits' end  
be better off  
be between a rock and a hard place  
be broke  
be caught in the act  
be downhill all the way  
be for the best  
be glad to hear it  
be in favour of  
be in over your head  
be in the black / in the red  
be in the dark about sth  
be in the middle of nowhere  
be in the money  
be in the same boat  
be into sth  
be like two peas in a pod  
be near the knuckle  
be neck and neck  
be off limits  
be on sby's mind  
be on the right track  
be on top form  
be on your last legs  
be open to sth  
be out of order  
be scared to death

#### Literal English and Examples:

as John says / in John's words | The film was terrible, according to John.  
extensive; comprehensive | The company will make changes across the board.  
used when an unexpected change occurs | We didn't go to the party after all.  
repeatedly | I've asked Michael to cut the grass again and again, without success.  
within a short time limit | The firemen worked against the clock to put out the fire.  
accept that we have different opinions | I don't want to argue with you, so let's agree...  
actually | "Have you ever been to Madrid?" "As a matter of fact, I went last month."  
if / provided that | I'll take you to the cinema, as long as you do all your homework.  
when | I'll phone you as soon as the plane lands.  
now / at this time | My parents are on their way here as we speak.  
without any hesitation | As a child Alice used to sing for us at the drop of a hat.  
now / at this time | At this point the match could go either way. [both teams could win]  
look for or enquire about sth in the wrong place | We realised that we'd been barking...  
be powerful in a small environment | Jeff needed a fresh challenge. He felt like a big...  
be a refreshing change | The redesigned surgery was a breath... for staff and patients.  
be very nervous | Before her first exam Kyra was a bundle of nerves.  
be like your parent | "Look at Paul with his dad. So alike." "Yes, he's a real chip off..."  
be sth that you've wanted to happen for a long time | Winning the lotto was a dream...  
be insignificant | Recycling my rubbish is just a drop... compared to what is required.  
be too obvious to mention | "Did you ask Jo to tidy up?" "No. I thought it was a given."  
be sth that you've worked on faithfully for a long time | The book was a I... for Terry.  
be the last time you try to do sth | They met to talk in a last... to save their marriage.  
be very easy | This crossword puzzle was a piece of cake.  
be sth that you didn't mean to say | Sorry, I shouldn't have said that. It was a slip...  
be sth that I feel relieved about | It was a weight... when we finally paid off that loan.  
be at the point of doing sth | We were just about to go out when the phone rang.  
be listening to you in a focused way | What happened last night? Tell me – I'm all ears!  
be clumsy | Carrie is terrible at sewing. She's all fingers and thumbs.  
be in fashion | Red cowboy boots will be all the rage this autumn.  
be very well-behaved | "Did Becky misbehave?" "No, she was as good as gold."  
be very light | I thought her suitcase would be heavier but it was as light as a feather.  
feel very anxious | You should've told us you'd be late. Your mum's been at her wits'...  
be in a better position | If we both worked, instead of just me, we'd be much better off.  
place have only two choices, both of which are difficult | We didn't know what to do...  
have no money | I'd like to help you, but I'm broke at the moment.  
be caught doing sth that you shouldn't be doing | The police arrived and we were...  
be easy from this time forward | Once we've finished the accounts, it'll be downhill...  
be the best outcome | I know you're sad that Ian's left you, but I'm sure it's for the best.  
be happy at a piece of news | "I've given up smoking!" "I'm very glad to hear it."  
support | I don't know anybody who's in favour of longer working hours.  
lack experience in an unfamiliar situation | At the interview I felt really in over my head.  
be in credit / in debt with your bank account | Hurray! We're out of the red at last!  
not know how to do sth | Nobody told us what to do. We were completely in the dark.  
be in an unfamiliar and remote place | "Where are we?" "I don't know. Looks like the..."  
gain or win a lot of money (unexpectedly) | Betty's in the money after winning at bingo.  
be in the same position as sby else | I know how Roger feels, because I'm in the...  
be a fan of sth, e.g. music / like sth very much | My nephew is really into Kings of Leon.  
be the same as / very similar to sby else | Sam and Fi are so alike aren't they? Like...  
be almost offensive | That joke was a bit near the knuckle. The audience didn't like it.  
be at the same position, e.g. two horses in a race | The two runners were neck and...  
be forbidden | I'm sorry, but due to your behaviour the computer is off limits for now.  
sby is thinking about you | You're on my mind, because I know things are tough now.  
be progressing in a positive way | The students are doing well – they're on the...  
be doing very well | Manchester United are on top form at the moment.  
be very tired or exhausted | By the end of the week the teacher was on her last legs.  
have a positive attitude towards sth | I'm open to discussing a new contract.  
be not in use / be wrong | This toilet is out of order. / His behaviour was out of order.  
be very scared | When the car started spinning on the ice I was completely scared...

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### 200 Top Idioms in Spoken English Today (Page 2 of 4)

#### Non-Literal English:

#### Literal English and Examples:

be sick and tired of sth / sby	be angry and frustrated with sth / sby   I'm sick and tired of this wet weather!
be six of one and half a dozen of the other	both options are the same   "Where shall we eat?" "I don't mind. It's six..."
be the last straw	be the action that makes you get angry after a lot of provocation   His lie was the...
be the last word in sth	be the ultimate form of sth   His trousers were the last word in 80s chic.
be the spitting image of sby	look very similar or the same as sby else   George is the spitting image of Thom Yorke.
be under the weather	be slightly ill   Sorry, James won't be at work today. He's feeling a bit under the...
be up for grabs	be available to win   We've got ten pairs of concert tickets up for grabs, so call now!
be (well) up for sth	be very keen to do sth   The boys were well up for the gig. [pop music concert]
be up to sth	be doing sth   "What are you up to later?" "Not much. Do you want to go out?"
be worried sick	be very worried   Our granddad has gone into hospital. We're worried sick about him.
bear sth in mind	consider sth   When choosing a university we bore in mind last year's exam results.
beat around the bush	avoid saying sth   Please tell me the truth – don't beat around the bush!
before you know it	very soon   The bus'll be here before you know it.
bend over backwards	make a lot of effort for sby or to do sth   Your mum and I have bent over... to help you.
bite off more than you can chew	attempt to do more than you possibly can   By taking on three jobs he's bitten off...
bite the hand that feeds	be disloyal to sby who you should be grateful to   By selling company secrets he bit...
blow your own trumpet	promote your abilities in an arrogant way   I don't want to... but I'm the best singer.
break new ground	achieve sth new, esp. in the arts   As a movie director he broke new ground by...
break the news	be the first to tell sby some important news   I hate to break bad news, but dad's left.
breathe a sigh of relief	feel very relieved   When I saw that the car wasn't really damaged, I breathed a sigh...
by all means	yes / certainly / of course / sure / unquestionably   "Can I sit here?" "By all means."
by the way	incidentally / additionally / one more thing   "By the way, I can't baby-sit next Tuesday."
by word of mouth	by sby telling you   We found out about this event by word of mouth.
call a meeting	arrange a meeting / ask people to come to a meeting   I called a meeting for nine am.
call in sick	contact your employer to say that you are unwell   Lee called in... because he felt ill.
call it a day / night	stop doing sth because it's too late in the day   OK, thanks for working hard. Let's...
call sby names	call sby unpleasant nicknames, esp. swearwords   Mum! Tina keeps calling me names!
call sby's bluff	do sth which surprises sby else   By turning up at his party, Clare called her ex's bluff.
change your tune	change an opinion that you previously stated   "I like Thai food." "You've changed..."
change your mind	change an opinion or decision about sth   I've changed my mind. I will go with you.
clear the air	discuss and resolve a difficult situation or conflict   It's time we cleared the air.
come clean about sth	confess to doing sth   Jack came clean about the window, apologising for breaking it.
come in handy	be useful and/or convenient   The shovel came in handy for clearing the snow.
cost an arm and a leg	be very expensive   Karen's new leather armchair cost an arm and a leg.
do the trick	be suitable for a particular purpose   This cloth will do the trick for cleaning my glasses.
feel on top of the world	feel very positive, e.g. in great health   "You look well!" "Thanks. I feel on top of the...!"
figure sth out	take time to consider sth   It took me a while, but I finally figured out why I dislike jazz.
find your feet	feel comfortable doing sth   It looks like the new recruits have found their feet at last.
flog a dead horse	repeat sth successful too many times   With this third sequel they're just flogging...
for good	forever   I got on the boat and it sailed away, separating Lia and her friend for good.
for goodness' sake	[exclamation showing frustration and/or anger]   Please hurry up, for goodness' sake!
for now	until a fixed period of time has passed   I won't tell him about your problem – for now.
for sure	certainly / absolutely / definitely   "Are you going clubbing later?" "For sure!"
get a taste of your own medicine	experience the same harm that you caused sby else   I hope she gives you a...
get away from it all	go away on holiday, esp. from a stressful job   Let's book a holiday and get away...
get carried away	do sth too much or for too long   We left late because we got carried away chatting.
get over it!	don't keep talking about sth   You're never going to be a dancer, so get over it!
get through sth	function during a difficult situation   After the flood we just try to get through each day.
get up on the wrong side of the bed	be in a bad mood from when you wake up   Paula got up on the... today.
get used to sth	feel more and more comfortable with sth new   I'm getting used to my new mobile.
give sby a hand	help sby   "Could you give me a hand on Thursday? I'm moving house." "Sure."
give your right arm for sth	be very keen to get sth   I would give my right arm for the chance to play for City.
go back to the drawing board	start sth again from the beginning   OK, this isn't working out. Let's go back to the...
go easy on sby	be kind to sby when you should be firmer   Please go easy on Kara. Her mum's unwell.
have a chip on your shoulder	believe that you are better than others   Sue's had a chip... since her promotion.
have a lot on your plate	have a lot of responsibilities   I'm sorry – I can't meet you tomorrow. I've got...
have a place of your own	live in your own home   After we got engaged, we bought a place of our own.
have a seat / take a seat	sit down   Hello, Mr. Johnson. Please have a seat.
have everything but the kitchen sink	be very well-equipped   Their caravan had everything but the kitchen sink.

# Talk a Lot

## Intermediate Book 1

### 200 Top Idioms in Spoken English Today (Page 3 of 4)

#### Non-Literal English:

have no idea  
have nothing to do with sby / sth  
have sth in common  
head home  
hit the roof  
how's it going?  
in a manner of speaking  
in a way  
in ages  
in case  
in (more) detail  
in effect  
in fact  
in general  
in order to  
in other words  
in so far as  
in some ways  
in terms of  
in the heat of the moment  
in the meantime  
in the nick of time  
in time  
in total  
it wouldn't hurt to do sth  
joking apart  
keep an eye on sby / sth  
keep your chin up  
kind of  
know a place like the back of your hand  
know sby / sth inside and out  
let the cat out of the bag  
make a [big] difference  
make sense  
make sure  
money for old rope  
more or less  
not a chance  
not at all  
not be able to help (doing) sth  
not be able to make head nor tail of sth  
of course  
on the other hand  
on time  
once again  
once in a while  
out of the blue  
over my dead body!  
par for the course  
pigs might fly!  
pull sby's leg  
put a sock in it!  
put on a brave face  
put your foot in it  
receive a slap on the wrist  
sit on the fence  
sleep on it  
so far  
so to speak

#### Literal English and Examples:

not know about sth / how to do sth | I have no idea what time I'll be home.  
not associate yourself with sby / sth | I'm having nothing to do with those geeks!  
share sth with sby, e.g. a favourite film | My partner and I have a lot in common.  
go home | Well, it's nearly midnight. I think I'd better head home.  
become very angry | When your dad sees the broken window he's going to hit the roof!  
how are you? | "Hi, Terry, how's it going?" "Fine, mate, fine. And you?"  
approximately / yes, but not exactly / more or less | "Do you like Beth?" "Yes, in a..."  
[see in a manner of speaking, above] | "Are you happy you left Tom?" "Yes, in a way."  
for a long time | Hey – I haven't heard from you in ages! What have you been doing?  
so that you are prepared for sth | You'd better pack an umbrella, in case it rains.  
in a detailed way | I'll consider your project, if you can describe it for me in more detail.  
[precedes a result] | The loss of a top boss led to, in effect, the decline of that firm.  
actually, really | I don't like ice cream. In fact, I really hate it!  
generally | In general, it is easier to speak a language than to write it.  
to be able to / so that | Charlie will contact you in order to arrange the accommodation.  
another way to say this is... | We have to let you go. In other words – you're fired!  
[expresses a benefit about sth negative] | I like this apartment, in so far as it's cosy.  
[expresses an advantage of sth] | In some ways, I really enjoy my job.  
[used before outlining an argument] | You are right in terms of your attitude towards...  
in anger | I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said what I did. It was in the heat of the moment.  
until sth expected happens | The kettle's on, so in the meantime, let's open the cake.  
just before a deadline runs out | I got to the exam hall in the nick of time!  
[see in the nick of time, above] | Peter arrived at the station in time to catch the train.  
when everything is added up | The bill came to thirty-six pounds and ten pence in total.  
there wouldn't be any harm in doing sth | It wouldn't hurt to lose a few kilos.  
let's finish joking and become more serious | Anyway, joking apart, let's focus on...  
regularly check sby / sth to see if they are OK | Please keep... on my car for me.  
stay positive | Hey, don't worry – keep your chin up! Everything's going to be fine.  
a bit / rather | The biscuits that she made tasted kind of salty.  
know a place very well | I've been to Crete countless times. I know it like...  
know sby / sth very well | My mum knows me inside out. I can't pretend with her.  
tell a secret when you shouldn't | Lea's pregnant, but it's a secret, so please don't let...  
help sby in a substantial way | Their donation to the charity has made a big difference.  
seem to be right or correct | Your answer for question four doesn't make sense.  
check until you are certain | I'll make sure that David knows when the concert starts.  
a very easy way to earn money | Selling ice cream on a hot day is money for old rope.  
about / approximately | "Will you be on time tonight?" "Yes, I think so. More or less."  
no / absolutely not | "Can we expect your support in the election?" "Not a chance!"  
[an expression of denial] | "I thought you said it would be raining." "Not at all. I didn't..."  
be unable to stop yourself doing sth | Rose couldn't help being late for class today.  
be completely unable to understand sth | I can't make... of this map.  
yes / definitely / certainly | "Are you coming to my retirement party?" "Yes, of course."  
[used to introduce an opposing point of view] | Trams are quicker than buses, but on...  
not early or late | I got to the meeting on time – about ten minutes before it started.  
again – with emphasis | Once again Tina brought the wrong costume to the rehearsal.  
sometimes / from time to time | I like to buy a newspaper once in a while.  
unexpectedly | I received a letter from my uncle in New Zealand out of the blue.  
no! / absolutely not! / no way! | "Dad – can I have a tattoo?" "No! Over my dead body!"  
normal / as expected | The new salon had closed down, which was par for the course.  
that is impossible! | "I'm going to revise for my test all day." "Yeah – and pigs might fly!"  
joke with sby / play a joke on sby | Don't take it seriously – I was only pulling your leg!  
be quiet! / stop talking! / shut up! | Hey – be quiet, you idiot! Put a sock in it!  
try to act like you are not bothered about sth | Tom tried to put on a... after his divorce.  
say sth that you shouldn't have said | She is really tactless and is always putting...  
be reprimanded lightly for an offence | The CEO only received a... for his remarks.  
not agree with any of the different arguments | Tell me what you think! Don't sit on...  
wait until you've slept before considering a decision | I'll tell you tomorrow. Let me...  
up to this point / before now | I've read four novels by E. M. Forster so far.  
[expresses uncertainty about your remarks] | Time waits for no man, so to speak.

# Talk a Lot

## Intermediate Book 1

### 200 Top Idioms in Spoken English Today (Page 4 of 4)

#### Non-Literal English:

sort of  
step out of line  
straightaway  
take advantage of sth / sby  
take care of sth / sby  
take exception to sth / sby  
take it / things easy  
take place  
take sth too far  
the pros and cons of sth  
turn a blind eye towards sth  
turn over a new leaf  
twenty-four seven  
two can play at that game!  
up to date  
up to now  
up to the minute  
welcome sby with open arms  
with regard to  
without a doubt  
at x o'clock sharp

#### Literal English and Examples:

quite / somewhat / not completely | "Are you happy with your new flat?" "Sort of."  
misbehave / be badly behaved | Roger is a model pupil. He never steps out of line.  
immediately / instantly / now | You need to see a doctor straightaway! Hurry!  
take without giving anything in return | To borrow money and not pay it back is taking...  
complete a task / look after sby | "I forgot to buy a present." "Don't worry, I'll take..."  
begin to be against sth / sby | Brenda took exception to her teacher's critical notes.  
relax | I love Sundays, because I can put my feet up and take things easy.  
happen | The robbery took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> June at about 6pm.  
do sth too much or for too long, until it irritates | Her naughty boy always takes things...  
the advantages and disadvantages of sth | There are a few pros and cons regarding...  
deliberately ignore sth | Alison cheated in the test, but her teacher turned a blind eye.  
completely change, e.g. your character | While he was in prison, Joe decided to turn...  
all the time / 24 hours a day, 7 days a week | I've been playing this game twenty-four...  
I can behave in exactly the same way as you! | She was so nasty, but OK, two can...!  
current / modern | The furniture in their house is so up to date.  
up to this point in time | Up to now I thought you liked me, but now I know the truth.  
latest / most recent | Stay tuned for up to the minute travel reports.  
welcome sby wholeheartedly | When we got to the hotel we were welcomed with...  
regarding / in connection with | Dear Madam, I am writing with regard to your letter...  
yes / undoubtedly / certainly / absolutely | Your son is, without a doubt, the brightest...  
at this time exactly | I'll meet you outside the bank at eight o'clock sharp.