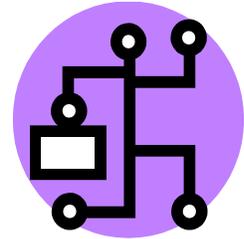


Quick Tip of the Week

Did you know . . .

My kids used to run around the house calling each other **idioms**, thinking they would get away with insulting each other. Well, despite their wit (and the obvious influence of having an English Teacher for a mother) I had to sit them down and teach them that idioms were nothing to joke about. The lecture lasted about 30 minutes, but I figured they had it coming. I'll try to condense this quick tip for you though, so it will be a lot less painful.



What is an idiom? Well, an idiom is a phrase that DOES NOT mean what it literally says, but does have meaning to native speakers. To say it simply, idioms are what some people would refer to as slang. For example, when you tell someone that the pesky rat in the barn finally **kicked the bucket**, you're not literally telling them that a rat kicked the milk bucket you keep in the barn, right? You're telling them that the rat died.

How about if I said I was **under the weather**? Most native English speakers know right away that I'm saying I feel sick. But imagine if English were your second language and you read those words. What would you think then? That maybe I was standing under a rain cloud?

Here's another example. My husband often tells me that I **act like a bull in a china shop**. What does that mean? Well, it means that I am a big klutz and I find myself running into stuff, knocking things over, breaking things, or falling down a bit more than I should. Is he really calling me a bull? No way! He'd be **out in the dog house**, if he did.

Now, most native English speakers would know what these phrases really meant. Imagine again that English is your second language and your friend told you to **chill out**. Is she telling you to get cold while standing outdoors? Of course not, she's telling you to relax, but I'm sure now you can see how non-English speaking students would have such a hard time with our language.

So what is my point in telling you all of this? Well, it's like I told my kids, there is **a time and a place** for speaking in idioms or even writing idioms or slang (like a text message, for example) but definitely not in your academic or professional writing. Using this kind of language will sound too familiar and unprofessional for your teachers to take you for a serious scholar, and that is no laughing matter, right?

And while we're talking about text messages, remember that all those short cuts you take while texting friends (BTW, IDK, OMG) have NO PLACE in any of your academic writing! So, if you don't want to be **the laughing stock** of your class, or have your Instructor think you are **a couple sandwiches short of a picnic**, stay away from idioms, slang, and texting shortcuts when you are writing anything for school. The best way to earn **brownie points** from your Instructors is to prove you are **a cut above** the rest of your classmates and not a **knock-off Nigel** by writing and talking in an intellectual way!

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