

LIST OF IMPORTANT IDIOMS (B2/C1)

IDIOM	MEANING	EXAMPLE
A drop in the ocean	A very small part or insignificant amount of something big or whole	<i>A donation of \$100,000 is just a drop in the ocean compared to the millions that need to be spent.</i>
Actions speak louder than words	It's better to actually do something than just talk about it	<i>I am going to work for an NGO in Africa fighting climate change. Actions speak louder than words.</i>
Add fuel to the fire	Whenever something is done to make a bad situation even worse than it is	<i>Don't mention the product delay in the meeting. You are just adding fuel to the fire.</i>
A penny for your thoughts	When you want to know what somebody is thinking	<i>Why are you staring at the sky? A penny for your thoughts!</i>
Ball is in somebody's court	It is up to somebody to make the next decision or step	<i>I have laid out my plan. The ball is in your court now.</i>
Barking up the wrong tree	Look in the wrong place or accuse the wrong person	<i>I'm not responsible for this mess! You are barking up the wrong tree.</i>
Be a good catch	Be someone worth marrying/having	<i>Donald is such a good catch. I hope, he'll propose soon.</i>
Beat around the bush	Avoid the main topic or not speak directly about the issue	<i>Don't beat around the bush! We can have an open discussion here.</i>
Bend over backwards	Do whatever it takes to help. Willing to do anything	<i>Our company is bending over backwards to satisfy our customers.</i>
Bite off more than you can chew	Take on a task that is too big	<i>You bit off more than you can chew. You are never going to finish the presentation on time.</i>
Blow somebody away	Be extremely impressed by something	<i>The product demo just blew me away. I've never seen such a powerful software.</i>
By the skin of your teeth	You only just succeeded and nearly failed	<i>I hadn't studied much, but passed the test by the skin of my teeth.</i>
Couldn't care less	Have a total lack of interest in something	<i>I couldn't care less what my new co-workers think of me.</i>
Cry over spilt milk	Complain about a loss from the past	<i>There's no way to win back this customer. Don't cry over spilt milk.</i>
Cry wolf	Call for help when you don't need it	<i>My new co-worker is constantly crying wolf.</i>
Crunch time	The period of time just before a project has to be completed and everyone has to work hard	<i>I'm not getting much sleep these days, because it's crunch time at work.</i>
Curiosity killed the cat	Get into an unpleasant situation by being inquisitive	<i>He shouldn't have searched for the secret files. Curiosity killed the cat.</i>
Cut corners	Do something badly or cheaply	<i>They really cut corners when they built this office. The cubicles are way too small.</i>

Cut somebody some slack	Give somebody a break/ not to judge somebody severely	<i>You have to cut me some slack. I already worked on the report the whole weekend.</i>
Cut to the chase	Leave out all the unnecessary details and just get to the point	<i>In an elevator pitch you don't have much time. You have to cut to the chase!</i>
Dig in your heels / Stick to your guns	Refuse to compromise or change your mind	<i>My parents always wanted me to become a lawyer, but I dug in my heels / stuck to my guns and started my own travel business.</i>
Down to the wire	Something that ends at the last minute or last few seconds	<i>With the deadline coming up and the project not being on track, the team worked right down to the wire to complete it on time.</i>
Drive someone up the wall	To irritate or annoy very much	<i>The music my co-workers listen to at the office is driving me up the wall.</i>
Get out of hand	Lose control of things	<i>The meeting got out of hand and people started yelling at each other.</i>
Get your head around it	Understand something	<i>I just can't get my head around the fact that my boss is not giving me a raise.</i>
Give the benefit of the doubt	Believe someone's statement, without proof	<i>I can't check your results anyway, so I'll give you the benefit of the doubt.</i>
Go down in flames	End or fail suddenly and spectacularly	<i>Our company will go down in flames, if we don't take these new start-ups seriously.</i>
Hear on the grapevine	Hear a rumor or unconfirmed story	<i>I heard on the grapevine that our boss will be leaving us soon.</i>
Hit the books	Study very hard	<i>I have to hit the books. My final exam is coming up soon.</i>
It takes two to tango	Actions or communications need more than one person	<i>I don't think, she did this by herself. It takes two to tango.</i>
Judge a book by its cover	Judge someone or something based solely on appearance	<i>I really disliked the product's packaging. But you can't judge a book by its cover.</i>
Jump on the bandwagon	Join a popular trend or activity	<i>This new software is going to disrupt the market. We should jump on the bandwagon.</i>
Kill two birds with one stone	Solve two problems at once / with one action	<i>By cycling to work I kill two birds with one stone. It saves me money and I get to work out.</i>
Leave no stone unturned	Do everything possible to achieve a goal	<i>I'll leave no stone unturned until I find out who did this.</i>
Let the cat out of the bag	Accidentally reveal a secret	<i>The CEO let the cat out of the bag about the company's restructuring.</i>
Make a long story short	Come to the point	<i>There's not much time left. Let me make a long story short.</i>
Miss the boat	Miss the opportunity to do something	<i>I think I have missed the boat. They didn't accept my application anymore.</i>

Once in a blue moon	When something rarely ever happens	<i>You only achieve such an amazing return on your investment once in a blue moon.</i>
Piece of cake	When something is extremely easy to do	<i>Piece of cake, with our new software we'll win this customer for sure.</i>
Pull a rabbit out of a hat	Do something unexpected	<i>I thought there was no fix to the software bug, but our programmer pulled a rabbit out of his hat.</i>
Pull yourself together	Calm down and act normally	<i>I understand you've had a bad day, but pull yourself together and get on with your job, will you?</i>
Run on fumes	Continue to stay awake when feeling exhausted	<i>I really have to take a nap now. I haven't slept for twenty hours and I'm running on fumes.</i>
Sell somebody out	Snitch on someone or let their secret out	<i>I asked you to keep this information to yourself. I can't believe you sold me out!</i>
Shoot from the hip	Speak directly	<i>If you want to get on well with your new boss, try not to shoot from the hip next time.</i>
Sit on the fence	Stay neutral and not take sides	<i>I'm sitting on the fence with this one. My team prefers solution A, but my boss favours solution B.</i>
Skeleton crew	The minimum number of people needed to keep a service/office operating	<i>Can you please come to the office this weekend? We're operating with a skeleton crew at the moment.</i>
Step up your game	Start performing better	<i>If you really want to win this competition, you'll have to seriously step up your game.</i>
When pigs fly	Something will never happen	<i>As long as my boss stays in office, I will have to wait for a raise till pigs fly.</i>
Whole nine yards	Everything	<i>I'll do whatever it takes to make my venture a successful one – I'll go the whole nine yards.</i>
Your guess is as good as mine	Have no idea, do not know the answer to a question	<i>We just don't have enough information. Your guess is as good as mine.</i>