

## Section 9.4

# Beginning to understand idioms

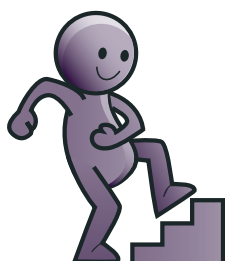


### Why is this important?

An idiom is a phrase where the words, when put together, have a meaning which is different from that of the words when used individually (e.g. ‘Pull your socks up’ has nothing to do with the action of pulling or socks). This makes idioms tricky to understand and learn, but there are lots of them in the English language.

### What to do

- Compile a list of idioms/phrases/sayings that are used on a regular basis, e.g.
  - ★ ‘On the other hand.’
  - ★ ‘Raining cats and dogs.’
  - ★ ‘A piece of cake.’
  - ★ ‘Don’t cry over spilt milk.’
  - ★ ‘Pulling your leg.’
  - ★ ‘Feeling under the weather.’
- Choose one idiom at a time and write down two or three alternatives to the meaning (e.g. for ‘Pull your socks up’):
  - ★ Make sure your socks are always tidy.
  - ★ Try harder.
  - ★ Put your socks away tidily.
- Ask the child to say what he/she thinks the idiom means. Talk through the options. Put the idiom in a scenario. For example, a girl is doing her numbers in school. The teacher knows she is good at number work and says ‘Come on Emily, pull your socks up and then you can go out to play’.
- Work through various idioms and try to use examples in everyday conversation which illustrate how idioms are used and what they mean. If you hear someone use an idiom, comment on it and explain the meaning.



### Step up

- Encourage the child to use idioms to describe what people might say in story books in a certain situation (e.g. a story where a child is really happy because she got a new bike – ‘the girl is over the moon’).

### Step down

- Start with one or two idioms and use these in various situations before teaching others.
- Show pictures or photographs (e.g. ‘It’s raining cats and dogs’) which would demonstrate a literal meaning, and laugh about it!

