

100 USEFUL BUSINESS ENGLISH EXPRESSIONS

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1-A tough break

When something unfortunate happens, it can be called a "tough break."

Example: "It was *a tough break* for us when Caroline quit. She was one of our top performers"

2-Ahead of the curve

To be "ahead of the curve" means to be more advanced than the competition.

Example: "We're investing a lot of money in research and development so we can stay *ahead of the curve*."

3-Ahead of the pack

To be "ahead of the pack" means to be better or more successful than the competition.

Example: "If we want to stay *ahead of the pack*, we're going to have to work hard and continue to innovate."

4-At stake

"At stake" means at risk.

Example: "I'm a little nervous about giving this presentation. There's a lot *at stake*."

5-Back to square one

To go "back to square one" means to start something over again.

Example: "Our programmers identified what they thought the problem was with the software. After working for several hours, it turns out that the problem is something different. We're *back to square one*, unfortunately."

6-Back to the drawing board

To go "back to the drawing board" means to start something over and go back to the planning stage.

Example: "The prototype wasn't successful. We have to go back to the drawing board."

7-Backroom deal

A "backroom deal" is an agreement or decision that is made without the public knowing about it.

Example: "I think they got the government contract because of a backroom deal."

8-Ballpark number/figure

A "ballpark number" is a very inexact estimate.

Example: "I'm not sure what a Super Bowl commercial costs, but to give you a ballpark figure I'd say about three million dollars."

9-Behind the scenes

What happens in secret or not in front of the general public is said to happen "behind the scenes."

Example: "They make it look so effortless, but they do a lot of hard work and planning *behind the scenes*."

10-Big picture

Everything that is involved with a particular situation is called "the big picture."

Example: "Even though we all have very specific tasks to do, our manager makes sure we don't lose sight of the *big picture*."

11-Blue collar

A "*blue collar worker*" is someone who works with his hands (manufacturing, construction, maintenance, etc.).

The opposite is a "*white collar worker*". A white collar worker is someone who works in an office (customer service, management, sales, etc.).

"Blue collar" (and "white collar") can also be used to describe a job, position, or a place.

Example: It's a blue collar town with a lot of farmers and factory workers.

12-By the book

To do things "by the book" means to do things according to company policy or the law.

It means to follow the rules 100%.

Example: "We are regularly audited by several regulatory agencies. It's important that we *do everything by the book*."

13-Call it a day

To "call it a day" means to decide to stop working for the day.

Example: "Well, John, it's 7:00 and I'm getting hungry. How about we call it a day?"

14-Catch someone off guard

To "catch someone off guard" means to surprise someone by doing something that he or she was not expecting.

Example: "Mike was *caught off guard* when they asked him to direct the meeting."

15-Cave (or cave in)

To "cave" or "cave in" means to give in or agree to something that someone previously did not want to accept.

Example: "The employees complained about the change in policy, but the supervisor refused to *cave in*."

16-Change of pace

"A change of pace" is something different from a normal routine or schedule.

Example: "It's nice to go on business trips because it's *a change of pace*."

17-Come up short

To "come up short" means to try to achieve something but fail. We often say that someone has "come up short" when someone fails to achieve a goal, but not completely.

Example: "The charity fund raiser was supposed to raise three million dollars, but we *came up short*."

18-Corner a market

To "corner a market" means to dominate a particular market.

Example: "Apple *has cornered the market* on mp3 players. They have a large percentage of market share."

19-Cut-throat

"Cut-throat" is used to describe something that is very intense, aggressive, and merciless.

Example: "In business school, the competition was cut-throat."

20-Cut corners

To "cut corners" means to take shortcuts and find an easier or cheaper way to do something.

Example: "We don't cut corners on our luxury products."

21-Cut one's losses

To "cut one's losses" means to stop doing something that is unproductive and won't ever generate results.

Example: "Our advertising campaign was expensive and not showing results, so we *cut our losses*."

22-Diamond in the rough

A "diamond in the rough" is something or someone who has a lot of potential but first requires a lot of work.

Example: "He was *a diamond in the rough*. He was intelligent and had great ideas, but his

management and English skills weren't very good."

23-Easy come, Easy go

"Easy come, easy go," is an expression used to communicate that something gained easily is also lost easily. We often use this expression after something has been lost.

Example: "A lot of people who inherit money waste it on stupid things. I guess it's *easy come, easy go*."

24-From the ground up

If you start a business, project, or something else from zero, you start it "from the ground up."

Example: "Bill Gates built Microsoft *from the ground up*."

25-Game plan

A "game plan" is a strategy or plan.

Example: "They're not sure what their *game plan* is for the upcoming election."

26-Get back in / into the swing of things

To "get back in/into the swing of things" means to get used to doing something again after having a break from that activity.

Example: "Our company shuts down operations for three weeks during the holiday season. When I go back to work in January, it's difficult *to get back in the swing of things*."

27-Get down to business

To "get down to business" means to stop making small talk and start talking about serious topics related to business.

Example: "Now that everyone's here, let's *get down to business* and talk about the proposal."

28-Get something off the ground

To "get something off the ground" means to start a project or business.

Example: "We're glad the planning process is over. We're looking forward to *getting the project off the ground*."

29-Get the ball rolling

To "get the ball rolling" means to start something (a project, for example).

Example: "We need to get the ball rolling on this project. The deadline is in June, and it's already April."
