50 COMMON AMERICAN ENGLISH IDIOMS

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ENGLISH PODCASTS 971

Hello friends welcome back to english with kayla this english lesson will teach you 50 very natural and incredibly useful english phrases and idioms my name is kayla i'm an american english teacher and i love teaching you about how native english speakers really use english phrases words and of course idioms i promise that all of the idioms in today's lesson are ones that i use myself in all sorts of conversations and friendly conversations professional conversations and just my every day conversations let's get right into today's lesson and start with some phrases and idioms that have to do with actions or verbs under the radar have you ever wanted to do something in secret or without being noticed you

are doing it under the radar of course this phrase comes from actually looking at the technology of radar radar is used i believe in airplanes and submarines to see what other airplanes are in the sky or what other ships are in the water so if you do something without being noticed you are doing it under the radar one of the most common idioms used to ask for help is you can ask someone to give you a hand hey could you give me a hand with this if you ask for someone to give you a hand you are asking them to help you sometimes we also say this phrase as lend me a hand meaning can you help me still if you were moving in your home and you had to pick up something very heavy you might say hey could you lend me a hand

this is quite heavy if you are not sure that you can do something but you're going to try your best you can say i'm going to give it the old college try this is a really interesting english phrase and it just means that you're going to try your best it's a fun phrase to use when you're just gonna give it a go you haven't done it before and you don't think you're gonna do a great job you give it the old college try i'm not very good at singing but when i sing karaoke i give it the old college try maybe you've sang karaoke at a bar or restaurant before it's quite fun but it can be very very intimidating if you are beginning something from the very start you have not worked on it before you are starting from scratch if you had a paper due for

homework like an essay and you hadn't started at all you might say to your friend i need to get going i have to start from scratch tonight that means you're starting from nothing but this phrase is used very frequently to say that you are starting from the beginning you can also make something from scratch that means you have gone out to the store and bought individual ingredients or maybe you have a garden that you've grown some of the ingredients in and you are going to home make food that is making it from scratch i personally love to make chocolate chip cookies from scratch i think it tastes so much better than just buying cookie dough you can tell someone to take a chill pill this means not literally taking any sort

of medication you are telling them to relax to calm down this phrase can be a little bit rude if you're using it when someone is very angry or very worked up so be careful with it but if you're just telling your friend hey you need to relax you can say could you please take a chill pill or just take a chill pill hopefully they can step back and relax and take a deep breath when you tell them to take a chill pill a similar phrase that is a little bit difficult to explain so i'll do my best here is when you tell someone don't add insult to injury so this means that you don't want the person to say something to make an already bad situation worse don't add insult to injury you can tell someone don't add insult to injury or you can say that

something has just added insult to injury if you're having a really bad day at work maybe you were late into the office and you got locked out of your computer you forgot your password and then it's lunchtime and you forgot your lunch you could say this day is so bad and forgetting my lunch just added insult to injury so this phrase just means it made a bad situation worse i caught you red-handed this phrase means that you have caught someone in the act of doing something bad it is as if they had red paint on their hands and made hand prints all over leading you to knowing that they committed the crime or they committed a wrong doing a really common thing for kids to do is to climb up and reach into the cookie jar even when their

parents have said hey no more sweets no more cookies for today maybe if you went into your kitchen and you saw your son or your daughter taking a cookie out of the cookie jar you could say i have caught you red-handed i saw you do it hold your horses now this is another action that you can tell someone to do this means to wait to relax stop being so eager if you haven't noticed in american english especially we have a ton of idioms and phrases that somehow relate to horses i don't know why so maybe if your friend was waiting to use a book that you're reading and you are still trying to finish that book and they say hey can i borrow that book you need to say hold your horses i'm not done with this book yet this just means be patient wait a

little bit longer have you ever been in the situation where you are meeting new people for the first time and maybe you have a new class or a new workplace and you have to have those initial or first conversations to break the ice this phrase break the ice just means that you need to become comfortable and start to get to know people oftentimes when we ask people questions that are meant to get to know one another we call those icebreakers it can be so awkward to break the ice when you are meeting new people especially if you are introverted when i need to go to sleep i often say hey i'm gonna hit the hay i'll see you in the morning i've gotta go hit the hay this just means that you're going to bed it's a common phrase that we

use in the united states to say i'm going to go to bed i'm going to hit the hay and i assume this comes from the idea that mattresses could potentially be made out of hay especially many many years ago when you don't know the answer to a question and just nothing comes into your brain you can say i am completely drawing a blank it's a very polite and very common way to just say i have no idea nothing comes into my brain when you ask me that question or if you're in a conversation and you want to say i spoke with a girl but i'm drawing a blank on her name this means that you can't remember her name but you can remember the full conversation with her you're just drawing a blank on a specific piece of information when you go fishing

you put of course bait on the hook to try to catch a fish well this idiom to take the bait means that you are trying to get a person to say something or to give you information by kind of asking a question or just saying something that might make them reveal to you what you want to know so maybe you are trying to figure out some gossip from a friend you are saying so how's your relationship with jeff going and they just say it's fine you say they did not take the bait on that one i was trying to find out about their argument or their fight that's just one example of taking the bait another example of this phrase taking the bait is when you say something to purposely make someone angry or kind of start talking a lot about a certain topic

when i teach you an english phrase i want you to know all of the different meanings of it and all of the different ways it's used i want to cover the bases this baseball idiom to cover the bases means that you want to you want to make sure that you haven't forgotten to do anything that will make whatever it is you're doing successful so in this example i want to make sure that you know all the ways that this can be used this phrase i'm trying to cover my bases as a baseball team will have people playing all the positions on the bases a phrase that's very similar to covering your bases is to stay on top of something oftentimes at work we get lots of emails we get lots of phone calls and sometimes we can forget

things or we can miss appointments if you keep a very good calendar you can stay on top of things you can make sure that you won't forget anything so if you want to make sure that you won't forget things or you just want to make sure that you're doing a very good job you can say i'm trying to stay on top of things a compliment that you could give someone to say that they did an excellent job is you can say you nailed it so hopefully on this english lesson i nailed it i did a really good job it's similar to the phrase saying you hit the nail on the head that means you did a really good job or you answered the question precisely you got the exact correct answer so you can say you nailed it or you hit the nail on the head so now we'll move on

to some idioms and phrases that will help you describe things and that are very useful for all types of situations of describing things if you describe something as an old wives tale you are saying that it's probably not true it's probably not backed up by scientific research it's just something that people have been saying for many many generations there are tons of old wives tales that will tell you whether your baby is a boy or a girl but at the end of the day you really just need to get an ultrasound or a picture of the baby inside of your stomach to know if it's a boy or a girl an example of an old wives tale would be that baby girls steal their mom's beauty so during pregnancy if you feel ugly you could say that you're having a

girl she's stealing your beauty of course that is not true it's just an old wives tale if you want to describe something as being easy and not challenging at all you can say well it's not rocket science this means that it doesn't take a very advanced skill set or you don't have to have a ton of knowledge to do it like designing a rocket would take a lot of knowledge this is not rocket science this is used to say it's actually quite easy so when you buy furniture from a store and you have to put it together usually you get directions it's not rocket science to put it together but it just takes a little bit of time if you describe somebody as having a heart of gold it means they are very compassionate and they are very loving and very kind so you can

say they have a total heart of gold they just adopted a boy into their family this just means they are very compassionate and it's like their heart is made of gold you might hear an english speaker describe something as selling like hotcakes hotcakes are another word for pancakes which are delicious of course so if you say that something is selling like hotcakes it means that people are buying it really fast and buying a lot of it if you say something is a far cry from something else it means that the two things are not closely related or they don't look alike or they don't sound alike so my singing is a far cry from adele it's not good at all you could also say he's a far cry from a model he's not very good looking these are

unkind examples but you get the point if you want to describe someone as not being trustworthy or not someone that you can trust you can say i do not trust them as far as i can throw them and most of the time you can't actually throw a person because they're so heavy meaning you don't trust that person very much because you couldn't throw them very far i personally do not trust cats as far as i could throw them i think they're a very sneaky animal so if you want to tell someone that you can't trust them you can say i don't trust you as far as i can throw you it's an idiom meaning you don't trust them when you learn a piece of information that just doesn't sound very good to you it just it's kind of alarming to you it doesn't sound like it was the

right thing to do you can say it doesn't sit well with me also you can describe food as it doesn't sit well with you meaning it upsets your stomach if you do something infrequently like less than once a month or less than every about three months you can say i only do it once in a blue moon this is just an idiom to describe something that you don't do frequently or often if you don't drink often you could say i only have a glass of wine once in a blue moon a way to describe the feeling of having to go to work on monday after a fun weekend that you really enjoyed and you're not looking forward to work or you're at work and you're not enjoying it you can say i have the mondays or i have a case of the mondays that means you have a

case of feeling like you don't want to be at work right now after such a relaxing weekend it was really hard to go to the office because i had a case of the mondays another really good phrase to describe a feeling like the mondays that isn't as common but i really like this phrase is the sunday scaries if you dread going to work or going to school or doing whatever you have to do on monday you can say i have the sunday scaries that's just that feeling of dread on a sunday night i hope that you do not have the sunday scaries when you are feeling like you have been victorious you feel so happy things are going really well for you you can say i feel like i am on top of the world that just means you feel very superior and very lucky at the

moment i personally really like to exercise and after running it puts me in a really good mood and i feel on top of the world if you are angry about something and you're just totally done with the situation you don't want to deal with it anymore because it angers you so much you can say i am at my wit's end this just means that you will not deal with the situation anymore because it makes you angry i am at my wit's end with my neighbors they are so loud i can't even sleep at night we talked about feeling like you're on top of the world the opposite of this feeling would be i just can't win i can't win the phrase i can't win is used when you are feeling like you are just getting the worst outcome out of every situation this morning all my

clothes were dirty i got caught in traffic it rained on me when i was walking into work i just can't win if you want to ask someone why they look so sad you can say why the long face a long face would describe someone who's sad i'm not really sure exactly why we say long face maybe because your face looks long when you frown but if you want to ask someone why they look sad you can ask them why the long face if someone leaves you in a bad situation with no good resources you can say they left me high and dry so maybe if you were going to a friend's house and they told you that they would feed you lunch but they actually didn't have any food you can say wow you really left me high and dry i'm very hungry this phrase is just used

whenever someone leaves you without something that was promised or something that was expected if you are extremely hungry a really common phrase to use is that you are so hungry that you could eat a horse of course you could not literally eat a full horse horses weigh hundreds of pounds but american english speakers are always using horse related idioms to describe things so if you're extremely hungry you can just say i'm so hungry i could eat a horse similar to saying you're at your wit's end you can also say this is the last straw or you can also say this is the straw that broke the camel's back this means this is the last thing or situation that i'm going to deal with i'm really angry at this point and i won't deal with it

anymore so sometimes when people break up in relationships they say something like this was the last straw the last straw or the straw that broke the camel's back was when the other person cheated on me what a terrible example but you guys get the picture the last straw or the straw that broke the camel's back is the situation that made you quit or give up so these next phrases are used to describe things that teach you a lesson in life usually a positive lesson a really common phrase in america is to say it builds character if something bad has happened to someone or they have to deal with just a lot of hardship you can say it builds character personally when i had my first job and customers were very rude to me i worked at a

restaurant and the customers would be rude to me sometimes my mom would say it builds character it's good to have a job like this which i totally agree with her it does build character it just means that it makes you a stronger person and it gives you more respect for things if it builds character another phrase that describes a lesson that you have to learn is you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs this phrase means that it's impossible to achieve something important without making mistakes or having some bad things happen a situation i think of is when businesses are trying to become more eco-friendly so maybe they aren't using as much plastic or packaging and people say oh my product broke because it wasn't shipped with as much

packaging well you can't make an omelette without breaking some eggs some people are not going to like the change that you're making but there are going to be some negative things that happen and of course omelette is an egg dish that usually has vegetables or meats in it for breakfast so the idioms just saying that you can't make something good without a few bad things happening when you want to tell someone that they shouldn't make a big deal out of something that isn't actually harmful or isn't actually a problem it's very minor you can say don't make mountains out of molehills mole hills would be very small things that moles like the animals live in and obviously a mountain is quite large so you shouldn't make a small problem

into something big by making a big deal or worrying a lot about it a very common phrase that we tell one another in america is to keep your chin up maybe you have a phrase like this in your language as well but it just means to remain positive in a negative situation let's move on to some sayings now that we use so much in english that i want you to know about so i'm going to include them in this video as well these are phrases that will be super useful in conversations if you want to tell someone that you didn't understand what they said or you didn't hear what they said you can say i didn't catch that i didn't catch that means i didn't understand it i have two phrases that both mean that you should try to achieve something really good

even if it involves a little risk you can say go big or go home or you can say my favorite phrase you've gotta risk it to get the biscuit and the second phrase here is not common at all but i do say it because i think it's kind of a funny phrase you've got to risk it to get the biscuit so maybe if you're gambling and you want to bet a lot of money on something you can say well you've got to go big or go home this just means you've got to try to win a lot or just don't try at all or if you're me you'll say you've got to risk it to get the biscuit this just means you should risk a lot for a big reward and of course this is not always true so don't always take this advice if something is getting very close for instance again if it's a sporting game and

maybe there's only a few minutes left you can say it's really down to the wire that means there's just a small amount of time left a wire is very thin so you're describing time as wire in this situation there's not a lot of it it's getting down to the wire that means there's not a lot of time left in a game or if you have a project or assignment for work due soon you can say it's really getting down to the wire i have to finish soon another good phrase to use if you don't know the answer while you're speaking but you could go look it up is you can say i don't know it off the top of my head this means i don't know it in my memory but i can go look at the information i know where to find it i don't know every state capital off the top of my head but i can just

look it up a really good english saying is to say that you see the light if you see the light of the situation it means you understand the truth or the true meaning of the situation for instance if you get to know a person and then you find out that they're actually not a very good person you can say i really see the light she is a liar and not very kind you can also use this phrase in a very positive way too you could say something like i really see the light now i understand why it's so important to eat healthy or some other sort of positive truth or positive message a really interesting popular english saying is to say that you're missing the forest for the trees this means that you are not looking at the entire situation or the entire

problem while you're trying to solve it because you're looking at small parts of it so a forest is made up of a lot of trees so if you say i can't see the forest because there's a tree in the way you are looking at the forest but you're concentrating too hard on the tree here is a really kind of gross english saying it's don't spit in the wind or don't spit into the wind these mean the same thing now if you spit literally into the wind it would blow back into your face so that's just really gross if you do something with little chance of succeeding or really no point to doing it it's like spinning in the wind it just comes back to you there's no point to doing it a phrase that i say all of the time is it's easier said than done if someone gives you advice and it

feels like they think it's going to be easy you can say it's easier said than done for instance if you have a baby like myself and someone says oh just go rock the baby to sleep and put them down and then you can sleep at night i can say that is easier said than done my baby will wake up and i won't sleep all night that's just a personal example of something that's easier said than done i'm sure there's tons of examples for this one as well so i think that doing things to positively affect the environment like recycling or wasting less is really good if someone told me that you should recycle it's really good for the earth i would say you are preaching to the choir this just means you're telling someone something that they also believe

that they strongly believe it's like you are preaching a religion to someone who already believes in that religion preaching to the choir if you want to say that something is very easy you can say it's like fish in a barrel or like shooting fish in a barrel it's so easy it's like shooting fish in a barrel obviously a barrel is a small container so if you were trying to shoot the fish in there it'd be quite easy if you want to describe two things that go together really nicely or that make a good pair you can say they go hand in hand one might say that americans and rock and roll go hand in hand meaning a lot of american people enjoy rock and roll music finally when it's time to do something that you just have been putting off dreading not

wanting to do you can say it's time to bite the bullet it's time to do something painful but it has to be done so in the united states in april we have to pay our taxes you can say i really just have to bite the bullet and pay my taxes you guys we made it through 50 idioms through 50 great phrases that i hope that you can add to your english vocabulary.