

Daily *warm-ups*



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# COMMON ENGLISH IDIOMS

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June Dostal

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**The *Daily Warm-Ups series*** is a wonderful way to turn extra classroom minutes into valuable learning time. The 180 quick activities—one for each day of the school year—review, practice, and teach common English idioms. These daily activities may be used at the very beginning of class to get students into learning mode, near the end of class to make good educational use of that transitional time, in the middle of class to shift gears between lessons—or whenever else you have minutes that now go unused. In addition to providing students with fascinating information, they are a natural path to other classroom activities involving critical thinking.

*Daily Warm-Ups* are easy-to-use reproducibles—simply photocopy the day's activity and distribute it. Or make a transparency of the activity and project it on the board. You may want to use the activities for extra-credit points or as a check on critical-thinking skills and problem-solving skills.

However you choose to use them, *Daily Warm-Ups* are a convenient and useful supplement to your regular lesson plans. Make every minute of your class time count!

## Animal Idioms

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### to badger someone

Two girls were walking home from school. One asked the other, "Have you tried out the new board game you got for your birthday?"

"No, not yet," replied the girl.

"Why not? Your birthday was two months ago!" the other girl exclaimed.

"Well, I lent it to my brother. He was really eager to try it out, so I gave it to him. He played with it for a while, but now he's tired of it," said the girl.

"If he's tired of it, why doesn't he just give it back to you?" asked the other girl.

"That's the way my brother is. He never returns anything he borrows. I have to ask him again and again before I get anything back. If you want to try it out, I will have to badger him for it."

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What do you think the girl meant by saying she will have to badger her brother for the game? Have you ever had to badger someone? Explain.



Daily Warm-Ups: Common English Idioms



## Animal Idioms

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### to bark up the wrong tree

Mr. Gibbons approached Susan's desk with a frown on his face. "Look at this report," he growled. "It has missing pages and coffee stains, and the math is wrong. How can I send this to the board of directors? Who's responsible for this?" he asked.

"I'm not sure, but I can try to find out for you," replied Susan in a calm voice.

"Don't bother," said Mr. Gibbons angrily. "I know. It's that part-time administrative assistant. This is what happens when you give people jobs they're not ready to do." He stomped into his office and slammed the door.

Susan told a co-worker about the report. When her co-worker asked who really did the report, Susan explained that Mr. Gibbons's assistant, Tom, had done the report. Mr. Gibbons was barking up the wrong tree.

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What do you think Susan meant when she said Mr. Gibbons was barking up the wrong tree?

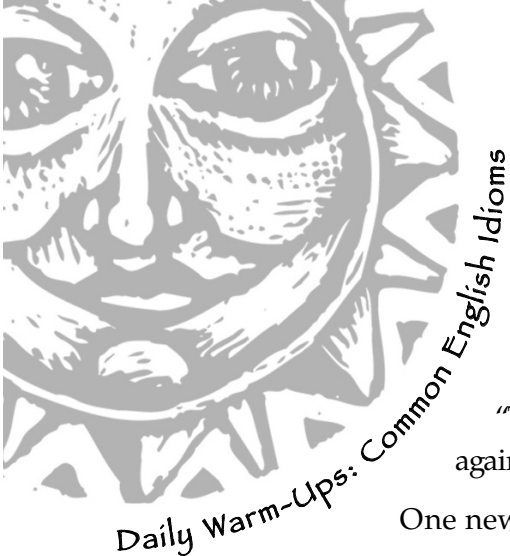
What can you do to avoid making this type of mistake?



Daily Warm-Ups: Common English Idioms



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## Animal Idioms

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### one's bark is worse than one's bite

Ms. Healy, the school media center librarian, stormed out of her office. She saw the startled expressions on the faces of students who, moments before, had been chatting, giggling, and talking on cell phones.

"This is a library! People are trying to read! If I have to speak to you again, you will all get detention!" Ms. Healy marched back to her desk.

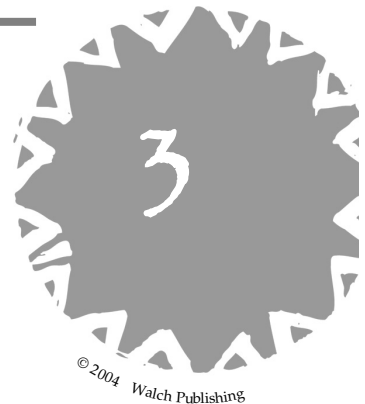
One new student looked nervous as the noise level began to rise again.

"Don't worry," a classmate reassured him. "Her bark is worse than her bite."

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What did the classmate mean by describing Ms. Healy's bark as being worse than her bite?

Do you know anyone whose bark is worse than his or her bite? What is the best way to deal with this kind of person?



## Animal Idioms

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### a bull in a china shop


Maria welcomed the visitors as they came to the door. Today was her father's birthday, and she was having a party for him. When it was time for her father to open his presents, she handed him the packages one by one. Her father made a favorable comment about each present and thanked the guests for their thoughtfulness. Everyone thought the presents were wonderful—except Uncle Mario.

“What a silly gift,” he said when one box was opened. “That looks very cheap,” he said after seeing the contents of another box. He made similar comments for all the gifts.

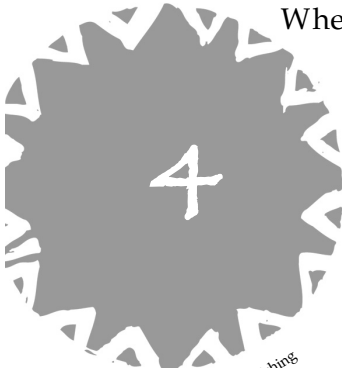
When the party was over, Maria told her father she was sorry she had invited Uncle Mario to his party. When her father asked why, she replied, “He’s like a bull in a china shop.”

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What did Maria mean by saying Uncle Mario’s like a bull in a china shop?  
What is the best way to deal with people like this?



Daily Warm-Ups: Common English Idioms



## Animal Idioms

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### to buy a pig in a poke

Ron was reading the classified ads in the newspaper and found one that advertised a diamond ring. "Oh, this is perfect!" he exclaimed. "This is just what I've been looking for to give to my girlfriend. And the price is right, too!"

"Could I see that ad?" asked his friend Brett.

Brett read the ad and then turned to Ron. "This is too good to be true—such a big diamond for such a small price! How do you know that this is a genuine stone? All you have is the word of the seller."

"Oh, I'm sure the person who is selling the ring wouldn't lie about the value. The ad says this person must sell because he needs cash," replied Ron.

"I don't know," said Brett. "I would not want to buy a pig in a poke."

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What do you think Bob meant by saying Ron was buying a pig in a poke? Have you ever bought a pig in a poke? What was it? Were you satisfied with your purchase? Explain.



Daily Warm-Ups: Common English Idioms



## Animal Idioms

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### a cash cow

The business marketing class at the high school wanted to run a business as a class project. After much debate, they decided to run a concession stand in the evening hours when the school building was used for continuing education classes.


The marketing students sold fruit, sandwiches, candy bars, soda, chewing gum, and cookies. The evening students who did not have time for dinner found the food a quick substitute for a missed meal. Many other evening students were tempted by the snacks during class breaks.

The concession stand did big business every night. At the end of the semester, the marketing students added up their profits and found they had done well. Their teacher complimented the class on a project that had become a cash cow.

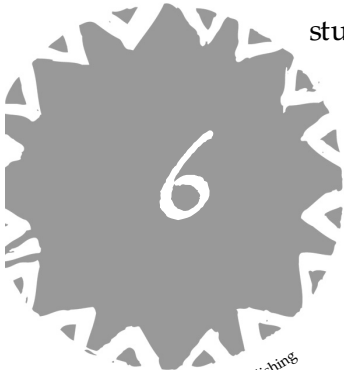
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What did the teacher mean by saying the concession stand was a cash cow?

Do you know of any businesses in your area that are cash cows? What are they?



Daily Warm-Ups: Common English Idioms



## Animal Idioms

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### cat's got one's tongue

Two girls were playing in the park when they noticed a little boy sitting by himself on a park bench bouncing a ball. The two girls ran over to him, and one of them said, "Hello. What's your name?"

But the boy did not say anything. He just continued bouncing his ball. "I said, what's your name?" repeated the little girl. The little boy said nothing.

"Maybe he doesn't speak English," said the other girl. She turned to the little boy and asked, "Do you speak English?" The little boy nodded but said nothing.

"Would you like us to play ball with you?" asked the first girl. There was still no answer from the boy.


"Where do you live?" asked the second girl. The boy just smiled at her but gave no answer.

"Maybe the cat's got his tongue," said the first girl.

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What do you think the girl meant when she said the cat's got his tongue?

How do you think people who have this problem can overcome it?



Daily Warm-Ups: Common English Idioms

