

## BUSINESS ENGLISH

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### ***Common business idioms that are used every day***

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As you are no doubt aware, there are **two languages** when we talk about English, the English you learnt at school with its **grammar** and **perfections** and then that which is actually used every day with **slang** and **idiomatic phrases** which can have some particularly strange differences. This difference becomes even further **intensified** when we consider the world of **Business** and its own version of the language that people use to communicate.

In this article, we will take a look at some of the more common and yet confusing Business **Idioms** that you might come across in your work. This will not be a complete list, if you have encountered a phrase that you were not sure about and it isn't written here then feel free to **contact us**.

#### **1. My hands are tied.**

"I'm afraid I can't give you that refund, the bureaucracy won't let me do it: my hands are tied" Essentially this means you are **unable** to act as something or someone is **preventing** you from doing it. This can be disappointing to hear as generally, it shows someone giving up and not trying to solve the situation but obviously it could also be a **genuine** truthful statement.

#### **2. In a nutshell**

"I've given you the complete list of reasons but in a nutshell, we can't do it because of the budget"

We use this phrase to **summarise** a speech or a situation in as **few** words as possible to save time and give a **quicker** appraisal of the context. We can also use "**in brief/short**" or "**to sum things up**" as viable alternatives with the same meaning.

#### **3. Up in the air**

"We were hoping to close the deal today, but there are too many things up in the air"

This phrase is used when there are many **complicated procedures** or **unfinished actions** that need to be **resolved** before you can move on. It can also be used for a pending situation that isn't yet certain. You can also hear the phrase "**many moving parts**" or "**many spinning plates**" to represent the same idea.

#### 4. **By the book**

"We've taken some risks in the past but from now on we need to do things by the book as they are examining us closely."

As it sounds, doing things "by the book" means to **strictly follow** the rules with no exception, this could be **laws** or even **rules** imposed by your company.

#### 5. **Bring something to the table**

"I understand you chose to hire Stephen, what does he bring to the table?"

Bringing something to the table means that someone **provides** or can **contribute** a particular **skill** or attribute that the situation or company can benefit from.

#### 6. **A long shot**

"Becoming Manager of this company is a long shot but I'm sure if I work hard it could be a possibility"

This phrase, like many that we find in English comes from the **sports** world, such as golf or football where the probability of getting a **good result** from a further **distance** away reduces significantly or is quite **unlikely** to happen.

#### 7. **Back to the drawing board**

"This project isn't going as I expected, we should get back to the drawing board and find a different solution"

This expression signifies that we need to **start** something again from the **beginning** (design) stage as it has been **unsuccessful** so far.

#### 8. **Cutting corners**

"The manufacturers' decision to cut corners ended badly when several of their products failed the safety examination"

We use this as the very opposite phrase to doing things by the book, it means to do things as **quickly** and as **cheaply** as possible to **save time** and money but it often means not following the rules exactly and **compromising** on quality and standards. This often ends up in a negative result.

So we have it, 8 relatively common idiomatic phrases that you can find in everyday **Business English**; some of them relatively simple to understand and some of them rather less so. I always like to remind people that are learning English or using it as a second language that these phrases don't **define** your own language, they will be used by others when **communicating**, so the first stage in learning is **comprehension**, not **production**. They are, however, **key** tools to help create **empathy** with the person you are communicating with and can be useful to express yourself more easily.

