

# IDIOMS OF THE WORLD

Material for the European Day of Languages



## LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

**kakov pop takov i prihod** (Russian)

like priest like church

**Æblet falder ikke langt fra stammen** (Danish)

the apple doesn't fall far from the trunk

**filho de peixe sabe nadar** (Portuguese)

a fish's child knows how to swim

**aşchia nu sare departe de trunchi** (Romanian)

the chip is not jumping further than the trunk

**de tal palo tal astilla** (Spanish)

from such stick comes such splinter

**Aká matka, taka Katka.** (Slovak)

Like mother like Kate

**Der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm** (German)

the apple does not fall down far from the tree

## YOU CANNOT MAKE A SILK PURSE OUT OF A SOW'S EAR

**Rozhdennyj polzat letat ne mozhet** (Russian)

if you're born to crawl you can't fly

**on ne peut faire d'une buse un épervier** (French)

you can't turn a buzzard / a dolt into a sparrowhawk

**al draagt een aap een gouden ring, het is en blijft een lelijk ding** (Dutch)

even if the monkey wears a golden ring it remains an ugly thing

**fare le nozze coi fichi secchi** (Italian)

to do a wedding with dried figs

**Opica zostane opicou, hoci by si na ňu zlatú reťaz povesil.** (Slovak)

Monkey remains monkey even if you hang a golden kettle around its neck

## DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

**l'abito non fa il monaco** (Italian)

clothes do not make the monk

**quem vê caras não vê corações** (Portuguese)

he who sees faces doesn't see hearts

**odijelo ne čini čovjeka** (Croatian)

a suit doesn't make a man

**het zijn niet allen koks die lange messen dragen** (Dutch)

it's not only cooks that carry long knives

**nu haina il face pe om** (Romanian)

clothes do not make the man

**Nesúď knihu podľa obalu** (Slovak)

Don't judge a book by its cover

## A SANDWICH SHORT OF A PICNIC

**Šplouchá mu na maják** (Czech)

it's splashing on his lighthouse

**hij heeft een klap van de molen gehad** (Dutch)

he got a blow from the windmill

**avoir une araignée au plafond** (French)

to have a spider on the ceiling

**ne pas avoir inventé le fil à couper le beurre** (French)

not to have invented the wire to cut butter

**non avere tutti i venerdì** (Italian)

to be lacking some Fridays

**tem macaúnhos no sótão** (Portuguese)

he has little monkeys in the attic

**lud ko struja** (Serbian)

crazy as electricity

**más loco que un plumero** (Spanish)

crazier than a feather duster

**ikke at være den skarpeste kniv i skuffen** (Danish)

not to be the sharpest knife in the drawer

**Zostať na ocot** (Slovak)

to be left for vinegar

## THE POT CALLING THE KETTLE BLACK

**c'est l'hôpital qui se moque de la Charité** (French)

it's the hospital that mocks Charity

**rugala se sova sjenici** (Croatian)

the owl mocked the tit

**il bue che dice cornuto all'asino** (Italian)

the ox saying 'horned' to the donkey

**ein Esel schimpft den anderen Langohr** (German)

a donkey gets cross with a rabbit

## ONCE BITTEN, TWICE SHY

**el gato escaldado del agua fría huye** (Spanish)

the cat that has been scalded runs away from hot water

**brændt barn skyr ilden** (Danish)

a burned child is shy of fire

**puganaya vorona kusta (telezhnogo skripa/sobstvennoj teni) boitsya** (Russian)

a spooked crow is afraid of a bush (a carriage squeak/it's own shadow)

**cão picado por cobra, tem medo de linguiça** (Portuguese)

a dog that has been bitten by a snake fears sausages

**cine s-a fript cu ciorba, suflă și-n iaurt** (Romanian)

the one who burnt his tongue with the soup is going to blow the yoghurt as well

**Koho raz had uštipne, aj hlísty sa bojí.** (Slovak)

Who has been bitten by a snake is afraid even of a worm

## TO CARRY COALS TO NEWCASTLE

**Eulen nach Athen tragen** (German)

taking owls to Athens

**vezdit v Tulu so svoim samovarom** (Russian)

he's going to Tula taking his own samovar

**vendere ghiaccio agli eschimesi** (Italian)

selling ice to the eskimos

**echar agua al mar** (Spanish)

to throw water into the sea

**es como llevar naranjas a Valencia** (Spanish)

is like taking oranges to Valencia

**vizet hord a Dunába** (Hungarian)

taking water to the Danube

**a vinde castraveți grădinarului** (Romanian)

selling cucumbers to the gardener

## TO BEAT ABOUT THE BUSH

**y aller par quatre chemins** (French)

to get there by four paths

**kiertää kuin kissa kuumaa puuroa** (Finnish)

to pace around hot porridge like a cat

**Å gå som katten rundt den varme grøten** (Norwegian)

to walk like a cat around hot porridge

**emborrachar la perdiz** (Spanish)

to get the partridge drunk

**a umbla cu fofârlica** (Romanian)

walking with the lark

**Chodiť okolo horúcej kaše.** (Slovak)

to beat about the bush

## TOO MANY COOKS SPOIL THE BROTH

**seul mui à vugulion a vez, e vez falloc'h gouarnet ar saout** (Breton, France)

the more cowherds there are, the worse the cows are looked after

**puno baba, kilavo dijete** (Croatian)

many midwives, child will be lazy

**veel varkens maken de spoeling dun** (Dutch)

many pigs make the slops sparse

**troppi galli a cantare non fa mai giorno** (Italian)

too many cocks singing it is never going to dawn

**u pyati nyaneek dyetya byez glaza, u cemerykh - byez golovy** (Russian)

A child, looked after by five nannies is without one eye, looked after by seven nannies – without a head.

## **DON'T CRY OVER SPILT MILK**

**paid â chodi pais ar ôl piso** (Welsh)  
don't lift a petticoat after peeing

**kusat sebe lokti** (Russian)  
to bite one's elbows

**eső után köpönyeg** (Hungarian)  
coat after rain

**nu plânge după laptele vărsat** (Romanian)  
do not cry over spilt milk

## **BAD WORKMAN BLAMES HIS TOOLS**

**el mal escribano le echa la culpa a la pluma** (Spanish)  
the poor writer blames the pen

**el cojo le echa la culpa al empedrado** (Spanish)  
the limping man blames the pavement

**złej baletnicy przeszkadza rąbek u spódnicy** (Polish)  
a poor dancer will be disturbed even by the hem of her skirt

## **DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS BEFORE THEY'RE HATCHED**

**man skal ikke selge skinnen, før bjørnen er skutt** (Danish)  
one should not sell the fur before the bear has been shot

**Älä nuolaise ennen kuin tipahtaa** (Finnish)  
don't start licking it up before it drops on to the table

**na neroden Petko kapa mu skroile** (Macedonian)  
they sewed a hat to Peter who is not born yet

**tsiplyat po oseni schitayut** (Russian)  
one should count chicks in autumn

**ne govori gop, poka ne pereskochish (pereprygnesh)** (Russian)  
don't say hop until you jumped over

**nu da vrabia din mână, pe cioara de pe gard** (Romanian)  
do not give away the sparrow from your hand for the crow sitting on the fence

**en nylje karhua, ennen kuin se on kaadettu** (Finnish)  
I don't skin a bear before it's been felled

**non dire gatto se non ce l'hai nel sacco** (Italian)  
never say 'cat' if you have not got it in your sack

**dereyi görmeden paçaları sıvama** (Turkish)  
do not roll up your trouser-legs before you see the stream

**nehovar hop kým nepreskočíš.** (Slovak)  
don't say hop until you jump

## IT'S RAINING CATS AND DOGS

**padají trakaře** (Czech)

it's raining wheelbarrows

**det regner skomagerdrenge** (Danish)

it's raining shoemakers' apprentices

**het regent pijpenstelen** (Dutch)

it's raining pipestems

**brékhei kareklopódara** (Greek)

it's raining chair legs

**il pleut comme vache qui pisse** (French)

it's raining like a pissing cow

**es regnet Schusterbuben** (German)

it is raining young cobblers

**estan lloviendo hasta maridos** (Spanish)

it's even raining husbands

**plouă cu găleata** (Romanian)

it's raining heavily

**prší ako z krhly** (Slovak)

it's raining like from a watering-can

## AS EASY AS FALLING OFF A LOG

**så let som at klø sig i nakken** (Danish)

as easy as scratching the back of your neck

**facile come bere un bicchier d'acqua, facile come andare in bicicletta** (Italian)

as easy as drinking a glass of water, as easy as cycling

**ežiku ponjatno** (Russian)

understandable to a hedgehog

**tereyagindan kil ceker gibi** (Turkish)

as if pulling a strand of hair from butter

**Lahké ako facka** (Slovak)

as easy as a slap

## AS THICK AS THIEVES

**aralarından su sızmaz** (Turkish)

not even water can pass between them

**s'entendre comme cul et chemise** (French)

to get along like one's buttocks and shirt

**uni comme les doigts de la main** (French)

tied like the fingers of a hand

**ser como uña y carne** (Spanish)

to be fingernail and flesh

**a fi prieteni la cataramă** (Romanian)

to be very good friends

**Hustý ako hmla** (Slovak)

as thick as a fog

## **SOMETHING IS ROTTEN IN THE STATE OF DENMARK**

**hay un gato encerrado** (Spanish)

there's a cat shut up

**les dés sont pipés** (French)

the dice are cheated

**il y a anguille sous roche** (French)

there is an eel under the rock

**iskat' igolku v stoge sena** (Russian)

there is a needle in the bag