

IDIOMS OF THE WORLD

Material for the European Day of Languages



LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

kakov pop takov i prikhod (Russian)

like priest like church

Æblet falder ikke langt fra stamen (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 con i fichi secchi (Italian)

to do a wedding with dried figs

Opica zostane opicou, hoci by si na ňu zlatú reťaz povasil. (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 alleen 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 macaquinhos 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 caliente huye (Spanish)

the cat that has been scalded runs away from hot water

brændt barn skyer 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 (wheel's) 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 whisper in 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' b Tulu s 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)

he is 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 beat about the bush (literally 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 varma 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 cantar non fa mai giorno (Italian)

too many cocks singing it is never going to dawn

u pyati nyanek dyetya byez glaza, u cemyorykh - byez golovy (Russian)

when there are five nurses the child loses an eye. With seven nurses the child finally is found to lack 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

plokhomu tantsory (i) yaytsa meshayut (Russian)
a poor dancer is impeded (even) by his own balls

DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS BEFORE THEY'RE HATCHED

man skal ikke sælge skindet, før bjørnen er skudt (Danish)
one should not sell the fur before the bear has been shot

Älä nuolaise ennen kuin pöydällä 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 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

nevraV 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

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

una y carne ser como (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