

# Origin of English idioms and slang words

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# Introduction

Idiom - a group of words whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the constituent words, or linguistic usage that is grammatical and natural to native speakers of a language. Idioms can be professional (only specialists know what they mean), they can be used only by students, children, etc.

Slang - something that is not appropriate to the standard form of a language or to formal contexts, and is characteristically more metaphorical and transitory than standard language, is a special part of a language.

- Words to the wise
- Animals
- Slang words
- Words with many variants of origin



# Words to the wise.

## *Once in a blue moon*

This expression appeared in the 16-century, from the rhythm that the moon was made of green cheese. But some people now say that on crystal-clear nights, or in areas full of volcanic ash, the moon does appear blue.

### **Example:**

*You know how these peasants eat: macaroni on Sundays and meat once in a blue moon.*

*(W. S. Maugham, 'Complete Short Stories', 'The Lotus Eater')*



**Буквальный перевод**

«однажды, когда луна посинеет»

**Русский эквивалент:**

**Реальный перевод**

«никогда»,  
«очень редко»

«Когда рак на горе свистнет»

# Words to the wise.

## *Long in the tooth*

- It's just the old person. This expression first appeared in the book of J.C.Snaith 'Love Jane'(1919), and originally it referred only to horses. The older the horse is, the longer its teeth look.



### **Example:**

*He was too long in the tooth to fool round with dynamite, like talking about a big slug that did not exist. (K. S. Prichard, 'The Roaring Nineties', ch. 56)*

Буквальный перевод	Реальный перевод
«Слишком длиннозубый, чтобы»	«Опытный или пожилой человек»

# Words to the wise.

## *Pardon My French*

It started circulating on both sides of the Atlantic around 1916 and so almost certainly stems from the World War I escapades of American and British soldiers. People say that when they apologize for something.

### Example:

*What she needs is a kick, pardon my French —*

*Ей просто нужно задать перцу, вот и все, извините, если я не так выразился.*

**HARRAP'S**

**PARDON MY  
FRENCH!**

POCKET FRENCH SLANG DICTIONARY  
FRENCH-ENGLISH/ENGLISH-FRENCH



Буквальный  
перевод

«Пардон за мой  
французский»

Реальный перевод

«Извиняюсь»,  
«Извините за  
выражение»

# Words to the wise.

## *To give someone the cold shoulder*

When guests would overstay their welcome as house guests, the Hosts would (instead of feeding them good, warm meals) give their too-long staying guests the worst part of the animal, not warmed, but the COLD SHOULDER.



Mr. JACK BUCHANAN (Hon. Bill Malcolm). "WHAT'S THE IDEA? ARE YOU BY ANY CHANCE TRYING TO GIVE ME THE COLD SHOULDER?"

Miss PHYLIS MONROE (Violet Braid). "No. I JUST KEEP ON DOING THIS FOR THE LOOK OF THE THING."

Буквальный  
перевод

Реальный  
перевод

Подать холодное  
плечо (кому-то)

Холодно, сухо,  
неласково с кем-  
то обойтись

### Example:

- *She cold shouldered the guy who was rude to her— Она холодно обошлась с тем парнем, который ей нагрубил.*



# Animals.

## White elephant

Siamese, one of the tribes in Africa, considered them sacred, and any captured white elephant (they were not so rare) became the property of emperor. One of the emperors invented the terrible way of punishment for his courtiers – he offered them this elephant. The animal ate, ran around the house, destroyed the fences and roofs... And his master was not allowed to ride it by law! Many courtiers simply couldn't afford the upkeep of the elephant and became just financially ruined.



### Example:

*The pavilion has become a £14 million steel and glass white elephant.*

Буквальный перевод	Реальный перевод
Белый слон	Ненужная, никчемная вещь, которую по каким-то причинам нельзя выбросить;

# Animals.

## *Dog days*

That means the hottest and driest days in the summer. Or someone's bad days when one feels very much uneasy and uncomfortable. It comes from the Roman times when a constellation of a Dog existed. Days where you could see this constellation were called Dog days (they began in the middle of the summer).

Буквальный перевод

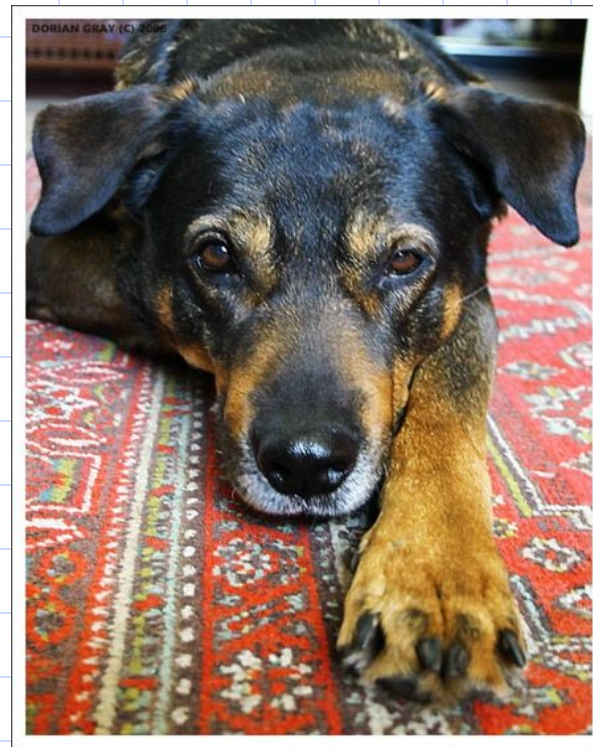
Собачьи дни

Реальный перевод

Самые жаркие летние дни;  
«не твой день»

Example:

These dog days  
in our town  
are annoying for me.  
I have a headache  
because of the heat.





# Slang words.

## Hobnob.

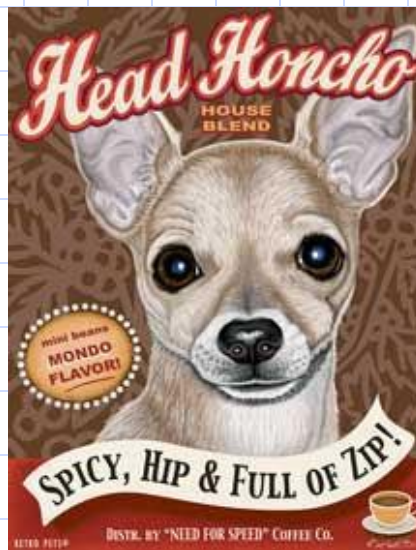
Hobnob does back to Habben (to have) and Ne habben (to have not). It 's a contraction of these two words. They are both Middle English. And the second version – it described the custom of alternating purchasing rounds of drinks (having or not having the next one).

### Example:

*Jane's mother likes to hobnob with the leading women of the city.*



## Honcho



### Example:

*She's editor-in-chief of our magazine, our honcho, almost a legend.*

This is a leader or boss. This expression was brought to the USA from fliers stationed in Japan during World War Two. In Japanese that means 'a leader of the squad', and American began to use it too.

### Meanings

To chat socially (быть на короткой ноге с)

Boss  
(начальник)

# Slang words.

## *Eavesdroppers*



From the 16 through the 19 centuries houses were surrounded by eavesdrops, spaces where water dripped from the eaves. It was invented to provide the security of the foundation (to make rain fall far enough from the house). The first eavesdroppers stood there to hear private conversations.

### Examples:

Look out! You needn't any eavesdroppers to hear our conversation, do you?



Буквальный  
перевод

Eave- карниз  
Drop- бросать,  
кидать

Реальный перевод

Те, кто  
подслушивает

# Many variants of origin.

## *To keep a stiff upper lip*



### Translation

Держаться,  
стойко  
выносить что-  
либо, не  
терять лица

### Meanings

- Moustache fashion
- How to behave yourself in court
- A piece of advice for singers

### Examples

Don't be a baby!  
Keep a stiff upper lip!

# Many variants of origin.

## *Minding your p's and q's*

Translation	Meanings	Examples
Следить за тем, что делаешь и как себя ведешь; Не совать нос не в свое дело;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your pints and quants</li><li>• Your Price and Quality</li><li>• Your pease and kyuse</li><li>• Buttons on your typewriter</li><li>• Etc.</li></ul>	You, mind your p's and q's, I don't think I need your comments here!



# Many variants of origin.

## *Saved by the bell*

Translation	Meanings	Examples
Спасен в последний момент, чудом	Tradition of some tribes (connected with the dead)  Box gong (or bell)  Saved from evil spirits by the church bell  Etc.	<i>The boss was going to bawl me out and I was actually saved by the bell when you came in</i>



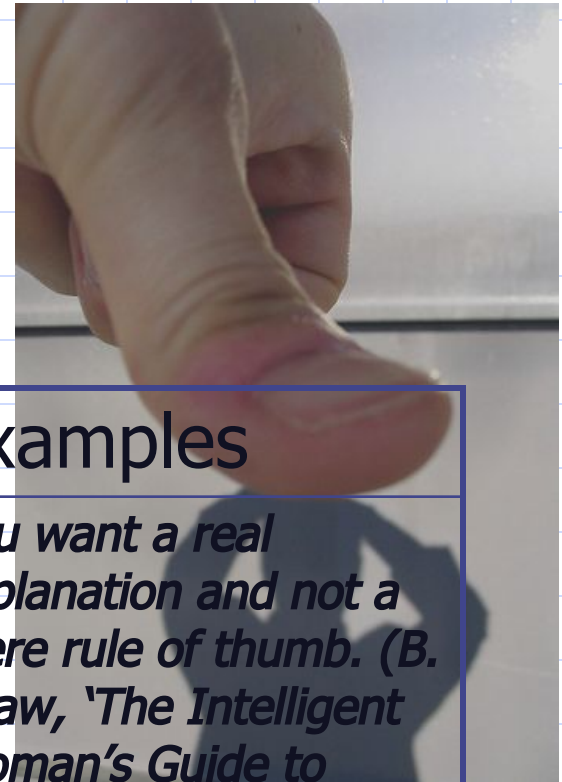
# Many variants of origin.

## *To burn the candle at both ends*

Translation	Meanings	Examples
1. Прожигать жизнь 2. Работать, не щадя себя	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting rid of guests</li><li>• Night working</li><li>• Getting up early and going to bed late</li><li>• Etc.</li></ul>	<p>The chemist brought the draught. 'Not sleeping, sir?' 'No.' The man's eyes seemed to say: 'Yes. Burning the candle at both ends - I know!' (J. Galsworthy, 'Caravan', 'The First and the Last') — Аптекарь принес лекарства. - Не спите, сэр? - Нет. Его глаза, казалось, говорили: «Ясно. Загуляли. Я это понимаю»</p>

# Many variants of origin.

## *Rule of thumb*



Translation	Meanings	Examples
1) повседневное правило (основанное на опыте, а не на научных знаниях) ; практический способ; житейские соображения;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wife beating</li><li>• Beer brewing</li><li>• Painter's thumb</li><li>• Same to an inch</li><li>• Baker's thumb</li></ul>	<i>You want a real explanation and not a mere rule of thumb. (B. Shaw, 'The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism', ch. 55) — ...вам нужно точное объяснение, а не сделанное на глазок.</i>

# Many variants of origin.

## *Tie the knot*

Translation	Meanings	Examples
Выйти замуж (пожениться), обвенчаться	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Ropes on the marriage bed</i></li><li>• <i>Old sailors' custom</i></li><li>• <i>Necklace of flowers around the neck of a bride</i></li><li>• <i>A knot connecting hands of the couple during the ceremony</i></li></ul>	<i>It's hard to find somebody to tie the knot at that hour — Кого ты в такой час найдешь, чтобы вас обвенчали?</i>





The end

Thanks for your attention!

