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Episode #077

Animal Idioms in English

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Hi everyone! I am Georgiana, founder of speakenglishpodcast.com. My mission is to help you speak English fluently.

Happy Valentine's Day, everyone!

If you have already listened to my previous episode about **asking a girl out**, I hope my lesson has helped you to **get a date**. But if you still haven't had the luck to put my advice into practice, don't worry. At least now you know what to say to the girl of your dreams.

But now, let's change the topic.

Today, I'd like to teach you some **animal idioms**.

I'm sure some of them will sound familiar because they are quite popular.

And with a point of view story, you're gonna practice the expressions and compare the different grammar points. It's **the perfect way to learn grammar and new vocabulary without memorizing**. The story will be romantic but with an unexpected turn of events!

Alright! Let's talk about **idioms** now.

Supposing you're talking to a friend and he insists that you reveal him a secret.

Suddenly he says, "come on! **let the cat out of the bag!**"

And you're wondering, "what on Earth is he talking about? I don't have any cat in the bag!"

Well, you've just heard an **animal idiom**.

You are probably wondering **what an idiom is?**

Well, it's an **expression**; it's a creative way to share an idea or a feeling. So, you shouldn't take the meaning literally.

Idioms aren't always easy to learn and understand.

That's why I recommend that you **learn them in context**. I have prepared some examples and a story to help you better understand the idioms of today's episode.

The important question is:

Should you use idioms when you speak English?

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Of course, you can use idiomatic expressions whenever you want, but you gotta be careful. **Only use them when you are sure of the meaning and context.**

I personally believe that if English is not your mother tongue, there **is no reason for you to use idioms.**

On the other hand, since idioms are commonly used by native English speakers, **you need to understand them.** That's why I introduce new expressions in each episode.

Do you like to listen to songs or watch TV shows in English? Well, knowing the meaning of the most common English expressions will make your experience more enjoyable.

Let's start:

1) The elephant in the room

We use the expression of "**the elephant in the room**" when there's a **difficult subject that people don't want to talk about.** Everyone is aware of the issue, but they prefer to ignore it because it makes them feel uncomfortable.

Examples:

"Ann is 40 years old. And the fact that she is still living with her parents is always a **big elephant in the room.**"

"I don't want to ask the question, though it's **the big elephant in the room.**"

2) Hold your horses

This expression means to hold on, be patient. It's used to tell someone to **stop and consider their decision or opinion** about something carefully.

You could also use these similar expressions:

- **hold on**
- **just wait until**
- **hang on**
- **hold on a minute**

Examples:

"Hey! **Hold your horses!** Just stop and consider things before you do something you'll regret later."

"Just **hold your horses**, Tom! Let's sit down and think about it for a while."

3) Let the cat out of the bag

This idiom means to **reveal a secret** usually without intending to.

Examples:

"She **has let the cat out of the bag** about her mother's true intentions."

"I told Mary to keep the party a secret, but she went and **let the cat out of the bag.**"

4) Be like a fish out of water

We use this expression when someone doesn't feel comfortable or relaxed because they are in an unusual or unfamiliar situation.

Examples:

"A girl of her age would **be like a fish out of water** when traveling to another country."

"Well, I'd **be like a fish out of the water** if I had to speak in public."

5) Have ants in your pants

We use this idiom when someone **can't sit still because they're too excited or worried about something.**

Examples:

"My children **have ants in their pants** at Christmas. They are excited about their presents."

"She's waiting for her boyfriend to call, that's why she's **had ants in her pants all day.**"

6) Go to the Dogs

This expression means to become much worse in quality or character.

Examples:

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"After Claire quit, the business **went to the dogs.**"
"Because our corrupt politicians, our country will soon **go to the dogs.**"

7) PUPPY LOVE

Sometimes people use this expression in a derogatory way when they don't take a relationship seriously:

Example:

He says he loves her, but it's just **puppy love.**"

8) ALL BARK AND NO BITE

When someone is "**all bark and no bite,**" it means they are threatening to do something to you, but in the end, they're not going to do it.

Example:

"Bill always says he'll call the cops if I don't get off his property, but we all know he's **all bark and no bite.**"

9) Bark up the wrong tree

To have a wrong idea, or do something in a way that won't give you the result you were looking for.

Example:

"He's convinced he'll solve the problem, but I'm pretty sure he's **barking up the wrong tree.**"

10) You can't teach an old dog new tricks

It means that it's almost impossible to teach someone new skills or to change someone's habits or character.

Example:

"I give up! I can't convince Granny to use a smartphone. I guess it's true when they say that **you can't teach an old dog new tricks.**"

Let's listen to the animal idioms once again:

•The elephant in the room

•Hold your horses

•Let the cat out of the bag

•Be like a fish out of water

•Have ants in your pants

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- Go to the Dogs
- Puppy love**
- All bark and no bite
- Bark up the wrong tree**
- You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

Now, let's continue with a point of view story to practice a little more the new expressions.

POV-Story

(Improve your Grammar)

This kind of story **will help you to improve your English grammar.**

It's very simple. I tell you the same story more than once. Every time I change a grammatical aspect. So, you can see how grammar changes, and you can compare. You just have to listen.

Alright! Let's start!

Jane and Paul had been dating for a while, and they always told each other everything.

Last week they were talking about a delicate subject. It turned out that Jane was a little distracted and **let the cat out of the bag**: She told Paul a secret she'd been keeping for years. Suddenly, Paul felt uncomfortable and wanted to leave the room.

Jane had to tell him to **hold his horses**. At that moment, she was like a **fish out of water**. It was the first time she felt so uncomfortable with her boyfriend. Ignoring **the elephant in the room** was impossible.

Paul, on the other hand, started moving around the room like he **had ants in his pants**. He was afraid his love was **going to the dogs**.

Not knowing very well what to say, he began to yell at her. Luckily Jane knew him very well. She was sure that Paul was **all bark and no bite**.

Finally, he calmed down and hugged her.

Do you know what Jane's secret was? It turned out that both she and her twin sister went out with Paul.

The same story in the Future tense

Jane and Paul will have been dating for a while, and they would always tell each other everything.

One day they'll be talking about a delicate subject. Jane will be a little distracted and will **let the cat out of the bag**: She'll tell Paul a secret she has been keeping for years. Suddenly, Paul will feel uncomfortable and will want to leave the room.

Jane will have to tell him to **hold his horses**. At that moment, she will **be like a fish out of water**. It will be the first time she will feel so uncomfortable with her boyfriend. Ignoring the **elephant in the room** will be impossible.

Paul, on the other hand, will start moving around the room like he had **ants in his pants**. He'll be afraid his love will **go to the dogs**.

Not knowing very well what to say, he'll begin to yell at her. Luckily Jane will know him very well. She'll be sure that Paul **is all bark and no bite**.

Finally, he will calm down and hug her.

Do you know what Jane's secret will be? Both she and her twin sister will go out with Paul.

Wow! I'm sure you didn't expect the story to end like this. Poor Paul. He loves Jane very much. It must have been a big shock for him to find out that he went out with two girls who looked exactly the same. I'm curious. Have you ever dated someone who had a twin sibling?

All right! It's the end of this point of view story.

I use this successful method in my courses. Imagine a whole story told this way. Instead of having to memorize boring grammar rules, you can use this method to learn grammar. It's more enjoyable but also more effective.

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and **start speaking English fluently** once and for all!

Well, that's it for today!

Please help me spread the word about the podcast. Tell your friends about the show and leave some comments on iTunes when you have some minutes. That would make me very happy!

See you soon!
Bye! Bye!



Georgiana

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