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Episode #033

Business English Idioms

EXAMPLES #1

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Hi! I am very happy today because I have a huge announcement! A **new course** is now available to help you with your pronunciation. And **it's for all levels!**

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I repeat: PronunciationCourse.com

I'm Georgiana, founder of SpeakEnglishPodcast.com. My mission is to help YOU to speak English fluently and confidently.

In today's episode:

- I'll talk about the most common business expressions.
- Later, you'll practice grammar with a point of view story.

Awesome! Let's get started!

■ **Look up to someone**

When you look up to someone, you view them with respect and admiration.

Example:

"Tom truly looks up to his father, and he wants to become a policeman, just like his dad."

■ **Show the ropes**

This expression refers to a sailor learning the **different ropes** for the sails of a ship. When you **show the ropes** to someone, you explain to them how to do a particular task correctly:

Example:

"It'll take me a couple of weeks to show you the ropes, but, after that, you'll be entirely prepared for the task."

■ **Day one**

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We usually use the expression **day one** to talk about something that happens from the very beginning of an activity or a process.

Examples:

"I'm sorry, but your project was meant to fail from day one!"

"This procedure has never worked from day one."

■ **Smooth sailing or Plain sailing**

The idiomatic expression **smooth sailing** means easy, trouble-free progress with an activity or a plan.

Smooth sailing is a maritime phrase that has the literal meaning of "sailing that is easy and uncomplicated".

The term "smooth" here describes calm waters, with no large or rough waves.

Example:

"We had a hard time setting up the new system, but i t'll be smooth sailing from here on."

■ **Burn the midnight oil**

The expression refers to the ancient practice of using an oil lamp, and it means staying **up late** working on a project or task.

Example:

"Jason has been burning the midnight oil trying to finish this report, so he must be exhausted."

■ **Having too many irons in the fire**

To have "too many irons in the fire" is to be involved in too many activities.

The term comes from blacksmiths putting bars of iron in the fire to get them hot enough to work with it. If they have too many irons to keep track of, it could lead to catastrophe.

Example:

"Ann quit her dancing lessons; she felt she already had too many irons in the fire."

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■ **The big picture**

This expression usually suggests that **one shouldn't focus only on small details**. One should get a complete understanding or view of something.

Example:

"At work, I try to concentrate on the big picture and not be distracted by details."

■ **To keep one's eye on the ball**

We say that someone's **keeping their eye on the ball** when they understand the situation and react quickly.

This phrase started in sports, specifically in ball games where players were asked to keep their "eyes on the ball".

Examples:

"I couldn't sleep well last night; I'm not on the ball today."

"She has done a great job. She was really on the ball."

■ **Spread oneself too thin**

To spread oneself too thin means to try to do too many things at the same time, so that you can't give enough time or attention to any of them.

Before giving you an example, I'll try to explain the origin of the expression.

I love butter, and I add plenty of it on your toast every morning. But today I've **spread a very thin layer**. It's because I've been trying to perform too many things at the same time. I'm in a hurry, and I'm doing different things at the same time, drinking coffee, speaking over the phone... That's why I'm spreading a very thin layer of butter on your toast. I'm distracted, and I'm not doing anything well.

Example:

"Last month, James tried to study English for one

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hour every day, go to the gym every two days, and work extra hours. He quickly realized that he was spreading himself too thin."

I hope you're enjoying yourself. Today's lesson is quite interesting. Don't you think so?

Point of View Story

(Practice your Grammar)

Now you'll practice with the **point of view story**. 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**.

I'll start telling the story from Steven's point of view, in the present tense:

I'm Steven, and I'm a successful businessman. Many professionals **look up to me**, and I'm always looking forward to **showing them the ropes**.

But my career isn't always **smooth sailing**. I believe in hard work, and I **burn the midnight oil**.

I also know how to spot the right opportunities. That's why I never like **having too many irons in the fire**. I'm perfectly aware that too many activities or undertakings at once could distract me from identifying the golden opportunities.

I think that the most vital ability of any successful entrepreneur is to **see the big**

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picture. As a businessman, I know how to take advantage of an opportunity. But also, I'm capable of **keeping my eye on the ball.** I'm consistent, but I don't **spread myself too thin.**

Now, I'll tell you the same story from the third person and in the past tense:

Steven was a very successful businessman, and many professionals **looked up to him.** He was always looking forward to **showing them the ropes.** However, he knew **from day one** that his career wouldn't be **smooth sailing.**

He believed in hard work, and he **burned the midnight oil** whenever he considered it was necessary.

Steven also knew how to spot the right opportunities. That's why he never liked **having too many irons in the fire.** He was perfectly aware that too many activities or undertakings at once could distract him from identifying the golden opportunities.

He thought that the most vital ability of any successful entrepreneur was the ability to **see the big picture.** As a businessman, he knew how to take advantage of an opportunity. But also, Steven was capable of **keeping his eye on the ball.**

He was consistent, but he didn't **spread himself too thin.**

Apparently, Steven really **knew his ropes** very well, and he inspired many other entrepreneurs.

Great! I like these kinds of stories because they're easy to remember and help a lot with learning English. Humor also makes learning more enjoyable.

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