

## Practicing Idioms: Literal and Nonliteral Meanings of Signs, Words, and Idioms

**Idiom:** A culture-based phrase in which the literal, or most basic, definition makes no sense.



Directions: Determine the meaning of the highlighted idiom. Circle the best answer.

**A.** After cleaning the house, shopping for dinner, and preparing dinner, Carla was sick of **bending over backwards** to gain her mother-in-law's love.

- a. Carla did little to gain her mother-in-law's love.
- b. Carla's back pain made her feel sick.
- c. Carla did a lot to gain her mother-in-law's love.
- d. Carla's back hurt after finishing her chores.

2. What is the **nonliteral** meaning of the idiom?

3. Use the idiom in a new sentence.



**B.** Patty, my baby sister, ruins all the fun. She cries **at the drop of a hat**.

- a. Patty throws her hat on the ground because she doesn't like to have fun.
- b. Patty cries easily and often.
- c. Patty drops her hat many times while we are having fun.
- d. Patty cries every time someone drops a hat.

2. What is the **nonliteral** meaning of the idiom?

3. Use the idiom in a new sentence.

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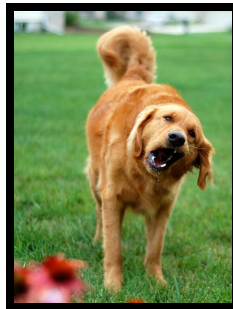


**C.** Deciding on who is the better artist, Michael Jackson or Elvis, is like comparing **apples and oranges**.

- a. Michael Jackson loves apples. Elvis loves oranges.
- b. The two artists are so different from one another that they cannot be compared.
- c. The two artists are so similar to one another that they can be compared.
- d. Michael Jackson and Elvis love eating fruit.

2. What is the **nonliteral** meaning of the idiom?

3. Use the idiom in a new sentence.



**D.** Sue shouted at her kid brother, Rob, for riding her bike without asking. Rob smiled her because he knew that her **bark was worse than her bite**.

- a. Rob thinks Sue is mean.
- b. Sue barks when she is upset.
- c. Rob knows that Sue is loud but not dangerous.
- d. Sue should learn to share.

2. What is the **nonliteral** meaning of the idiom?

3. Use the idiom in a new sentence.

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**Directions:** Determine the meaning of the highlighted idiom.

**E.** You forgot to feed my fish while I was on vacation! All my fish have **kicked the bucket!**

1. What is the **nonliteral** meaning of the idiom?
2. Draw the **literal** meaning of the idiom.

**F.** The repairman **cut corners** by gluing the bookshelf together instead of nailing it together.

1. What is the **nonliteral** meaning of the idiom?
2. Draw the **literal** meaning of the idiom.

**G.** Summer worked on her feet for 12 hours straight. All she could think about was **hitting the sheets** when she got home.

1. What is the **nonliteral** meaning of the idiom?
2. Draw the **nonliteral** meaning of the idiom.

**H.** Tony's dog ate Tony's winning lottery ticket. I told him there's no use in **crying over spilled milk.**

1. What is the **nonliteral** meaning of the idiom?
2. Draw the **nonliteral** meaning of the idiom.

## Practicing Idioms: Literal and Nonliteral Meanings of Signs, Words, and Idioms

**Directions:** Your friend needs your help. Read each scenario and write a recommendation using the correct idiom.

Asleep at the wheel Keep your eye on Sit on the fence Add fuel to the fire	See eye to eye Piece of cake Miss the boat Work around the clock
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**I. Scenario 1:** My neighbors, Molly and Mike, are fighting over Mike's dog. Mike refuses to accept that his dog digs up all of Molly's plants and chases her cat away. I want to call him and tell him how I feel.

Idiom: \_\_\_\_\_

**J. Scenario 2:** Joe says he's on a diet, but the cookies in the cookie jar keep disappearing. What should I do?

Idiom: \_\_\_\_\_

**K. Scenario 3:** The exam is only a few weeks away. I'm worried because there's so much stuff I have to review.

Idiom: \_\_\_\_\_