

60 top idioms for IELTS Speaking exam

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60 top idioms for IELTS Speaking exam with examples

In this article, you will find 60 top idioms for IELTS Speaking exam. To get a high score in the IELTS Speaking test, remember to use at least one idiom every time you speak in English.

Here are **60+ top idioms for IELTS Speaking exam to help you get band 9.0** with meaning and examples. Then have it live or record it for your teacher or a native speaker to listen/watch and evaluate your accuracy and spontaneity.

First, what are idioms for IELTS Speaking?

Idioms are a group of words that, when arranged in a certain position, will have their own meaning, different from the literal meaning of each word in that group. In general, idioms use the figurative meaning of the word instead of the literal meaning.

60+ top idioms for IELTS Speaking to help you get band 7.0+

Some useful idioms for IELTS Speaking with meaning and examples

Idiom	Meaning	Example
1. A blessing in disguise	Every cloud has a silver lining	Getting a low score the first time I took IELTS was a blessing in disguise . It forced me to study extremely hard so I got a much better score the next time. Failing in his exams was a blessing in disguise , for he realized that he was not enjoying his course and decided to try out something else.
2. A chip on one's shoulder	Anger because you think you've been treated unfairly or feel you're not as good as others	He had a chip on his shoulder ever since he didn't get the promotion he was expecting.
3. A drop in the ocean	Like salt from the sea	My letter of protest was just a drop in the ocean .
4. A piece of cake	Easy as pie	To me, the exam was a piece of cake . They said the test would be difficult, but it was a – I'll pass with no problem at all.
5. Actions speak louder than words	Easier said than done	He keeps saying he loves me, but actions speak louder than words .
6. To be back to the drawing board	Starting over (after failing something)	My experiment was a failure, so I'm back to the drawing board .
7. It drives s/o up the wall	Make someone angry	She drives me up the wall . It's so annoying!
8. It makes one's blood boil	Make someone angry	Being rejected made his blood boil .
9. It's a small world	The Earth is round	You know my old science teacher! Well, it's a small world , isn't it?
10. Practice makes perfect	Hundred or used manually	I've been working on my tennis serve, and since practice makes perfect , I think I'm getting better.

11. The ball's in one's court	It's someone's turn to give an opinion, or solve something	What do you think we should do about the project? The ball is in your court.
12. To be a dog with two tails	Joy, happiness	Anne will be like a dog with two tails if she gets into the team.
13. To be fixed in one's ways	Conservative, adamant about something but refuses, can't change	Grandma will never retire—she's been a teacher for 50 years and is totally fixed in her ways.
14. To be on cloud nine	Joy, happiness	He was on cloud nine for days after she agreed to marry him.
15. To be on the dot	Just in time	James arrived on the dot at nine o'clock.
16. To be on top of the world	Joy, happiness	He was on top of the world for days after she agreed to marry him. "Is art popular in your country?" -> Yes, I would say that art is highly popular in my nation. Art has the power to unite us and express feelings that we cannot with words alone. When I look at my absolute favorite piece of art, "starry night" by Vincent Van Gogh I feel inspired and on top of the world . It shows me true beauty and that I believe is why art is so popular.
17. To be over the moon	Joy, happiness	He was over the moon for days after she agreed to marry him. "What did you do on your last birthday?" -> On my last birthday I went to Paris with my girlfriend. It was an incredible city and the food was to die for! The trip was actually a surprise and when my girlfriend told me I was over the moon.
18. To be over the top	Joy, happiness	He was over the top for days after she agreed to marry him.
19. To be the spitting image	Just like someone	She is the spitting image of her mother.
20. To be water under the bridge	The past is in the past, it doesn't matter anymore	Don't talk about it anymore, it is water under the bridge now.

21. To bend over backwards	Do your best to help someone, regardless of the adverse consequences for yourself	She bent over backwards to help him. They bent over backward to help me learn this. I will always appreciate the effort they made.
22. To bite one's tongue	Take back your words before you speak them	I wanted to tell him exactly what I thought of him, but I had to bite my tongue .
23. To break a leg	Good luck (for anyone preparing to do something important like performing, etc.)	Danny's family told him to “ break a leg ” right before he went up on stage.
24. To cost an arm and a leg	Something/something that is very difficult to obtain because it is too difficult, too expensive...	I want to buy a house by the beach, but it may cost me an arm and a leg . The show is excellent, but the tickets cost an arm and a leg .
25. To feel under the weather	Not feeling well	I'm feeling a bit under the weather – I think I'm getting a cold.
26. To get on my nerves	Make someone unbearable, angry	That song gets on my nerves —can you change the radio station?
27. To get up on the wrong side of the bed this morning	Talk about someone having a bad day	I think he got up on the wrong side of the bed this morning . He is in a terrible mood.
28. To have a whale of a time	Talk about having lots of great, fun times in your life	We enjoyed the party, danced, drank, and generally had a whale of a time . Well, I'm from London which is a world-renowned city for its history and culture. They say he who is bored of London is bored of life! There is so much to do here that you are guaranteed to have a whale of time if you visit.
29. Big hit the ceiling	Extremely angry	Dad'll hit the ceiling when he finds out I've left school.
30. To hit the nail on the head	Speak to the heart of the matter, speak precisely	I think David hit the nail on the head when he said that kids won't want to buy this product.
31. To hold one's horses	Remind someone to think twice before making a decision	Just hold your horses , Alex! Let's think about this for a moment.

32. To jump the gun	Do something too soon, especially without thinking carefully about it	Andy really jumped the gun with his project proposal – he should have waited until the other proposal was either accepted or rejected.
33. To keep an eye on sth or s/o	Watch someone or something carefully	Don't worry, I'll keep an eye on your dogs! Dealers are keeping an eye on the currency markets.
34. To kick the bucket	Die, die	Every one of us will kick the bucket someday.
35. To let sleeping dogs lie	Avoid an argument	I thought about bringing up my concerns but decided instead to let sleeping dogs lie .
36. To play devil's advocate	Pretend to object or raise an argument against the purpose to discuss, or make the discussion more interesting	I agree with what you say, but I'll play devil's advocate so that we can cover all the possibilities that may arise.
37. To pull one's leg	Toying with someone	Is that really your car or are you pulling my leg ?
38. To put all eggs in one basket	Depends all on one person or one thing	The key word here is varied; don't put all your eggs in one basket .
39. To smell a rat	Feeling that something is not right	If I don't send a picture, he will smell a rat .
40. To take a rain check	Tell someone you're thinking about an invitation, but you've been meaning to decline	I'm sorry, but I'll take a rain check for dinner this Saturday.
41. To let the cat out of the bag	Tell someone something you shouldn't say	I was trying to keep the party a secret, but Mandy went and let the cat out of the bag .
42. Until/till the cows come home	For a very long time	I could sit here and argue with you until/till the cows come home , but it wouldn't solve.
43. You are what you eat	What you eat will show your health	I'm feeling more energetic now that I've started eating more salad. After all, you are what you eat !

44. To judge a book by its cover	Looks like a picture	I'm glad I didn't judge a book by its cover , or I never would have married him!
45. To bite the hand that feeds you	Revenge for revenge	She was very angry with her boss, but she decided to keep quiet and not bite the hand that feeds her .
46. Bread and butter	Livelihood; Main source of income	His bread and butter comes entirely from his filmmaking gigs.
47. Caught between a rock and a hard place	Being in a difficult, awkward situation	They are both my brothers! I can't go against either of them. I am caught between a rock and a hard place .
48. Chalk and cheese	Be very different and cannot be compared.	Even though they're twins, their personalities are chalk and cheese .
49. Make ends meet	Earn enough money to live on	To make ends meet , Phil picked up a second job delivering pizzas.
50. Put all your eggs in one's basket	Let your success depend on one person or something	She puts all her eggs in one basket with this merger deal. If it doesn't work out, I doubt her company can survive.
51. To be on cloud nine	very happy and joyful: happy, floating on the 9 clouds	"Do you like your job?" I must say that I adore my job and all the people that work there. It is a pleasure to go to work there each morning. I feel content with my life at the moment and I am on cloud nine .
52. It makes my blood boil	to make you very angry	"Do you get on with your family?"-> I get on reasonably well with most of my family. But my sister is an awful person. She is very selfish and arrogant. Just hearing her voice makes my blood boil .
53. It drives me up the wall	It annoys you a lot	"What is your favorite food?"-> I would have to say that my favorite food is mashed potatoes. However , it drives me up the wall when people don't mash them properly and the potatoes have disgusting lumps.→ Similar expressions: It drives me crazy / it drives me nuts

54. To get on your nerves	Someone annoys you a lot	"How could your neighborhood be improved?"-> It gets on my nerves that we have no recycle here. I am a big supporter of the environment and we should do more to save it.
55. Blow off steam	to vent energy, frustration or anger: let off steam	I have had a very stressful week and I'm hoping to blow up some steam this Saturday.
56. An old soul	Someone who seems to have more emotional insight and wisdom than other people the same age.	I have always turned to my older sister for advices; she is a real old soul .
57. An open book	Someone who is extremely open about themselves	I was very easy to get to know Hannah. She was an open book and made friends easily.
58. As busy as a bee	Very busy	I'm as busy as a bee this morning. I've run lots of errands and completed lots of tasks.
59. Down-to-earth	To be practical and have lots of common sense.	One of the things I like most about Katie is how down-to-earth she is. She is always so sensible and I like going to her for advice.
60. Open (A) Pandora's box	A situation that involves unexpected consequences and problems	It seems like we've opened Pandora's box with this topic today. We've been getting hundreds of messages from listeners from around the country who have been affected by it.
61. Top-notch	Top quality	The perfume he bought me for my birthday is top-notch . It's a designer brand and extremely expensive. I love it.
62. The tip of the iceberg	Only a hint or suggestion of a much larger or more complex issue or problem: tip of the iceberg → tip of the problem.	The money missing from petty cash was only the tip of the iceberg of financial mismanagement.

useful idioms for IELTS Speaking test

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Tips on how to use idioms for IELTS Speaking test?

Although the list of English idioms is endless, there are a few things you should keep in mind **when using idioms in the IELTS Speaking test** :

- It is not necessary to “stuff” idioms into whatever you say, because this will make your speech and expression unnatural and “lose points” in the eyes of the examiner.
- Use flexible vocabulary to discuss a variety of topics.
- Using phrasing, paraphrase your ideas effectively.

Above is a compilation of **60+ idioms to help you achieve band 7.0 in IELTS Speaking** . Please use appropriate in your answers when practicing at home and taking the real test. Good luck!