

1. as awkward as a cow on roller skates

- very awkward

The little girl was as awkward as a cow on roller skates when she first began riding her bicycle.

2. as busy as a beaver

- very busy

I have been as busy as a beaver all morning.

3. as conceited as a barber's cat

- very conceited, vain

My friend became as conceited as a barber's cat after she won the award at school.

4. as drunk as a skunk

- very drunk

The man was as drunk as a skunk when he walked into the restaurant.

5. as fat as a pig

- very fat

The woman in the supermarket was as fat as a pig.

6. as gentle as a lamb

- very gentle

The girl is as gentle as a lamb when she is with her little sister.

7. as gruff as a bear

-gruff, unsociable

I hate to ask Erica questions; she's always as gruff as a bear.

8. as sly as a fox

- smart and clever

The manager of our department is as sly as a fox.

9. as stubborn as a mule

- very stubborn

My friend is as stubborn as a mule and you can never make her change her mind.

10. cast pearls before swine

- to waste something on someone who will not be thankful or care about it

Giving the jewellery to the woman will be casting pearls before swine. She will not appreciate it at all.

11. a cat in gloves catches no mice

- if you are too careful and polite you may not get what you want

A cat in gloves catches no mice and I advised my friend that he should be more aggressive at work or he will not be successful.

12. a cat on a hot tin roof

- full of lively activity

The boy was jumping around like a cat on a hot tin roof and we could not make him be quiet.

13. cry wolf

- to give a false alarm, to warn of a danger that is not there

The man is crying wolf. There is no danger from the electrical system.

14. donkey's years

- a very long time

I was happy to see my friend because I had not seen her in donkey's years.

15. eager beaver

- a person who is always eager to work or do something extra
The woman is an eager beaver and will do very well in this company.

16. have a whale of a time

- to have an exciting and interesting time
We had a whale of a time at the party last night.

17. have bats in one's belfry

- to be a little bit crazy
I think that our neighbor has bats in her belfry.

18. keep the wolves at bay

- to fight against some kind of trouble
Many people are angry about the new tax. The government has to work hard to keep the wolves at bay.

19. kill the fatted calf

- to prepare an elaborate banquet for someone
We will kill the fatted calf and have a big feast for my parents.

20. lead a dog`s life

- to lead a miserable life
The man is leading a dog`s life since he married the woman who everyone told him not to marry.

21. a leopard can't change its spots

- you cannot change someone's basic human nature or bad qualities
The manager wrote a letter of apology to the customer but a leopard can't change its spots. The manager has not changed and the letter does not mean anything.

22. let sleeping dogs lie

- do not make trouble if you do not have to
You should let sleeping dogs lie and not ask our boss about the dispute.

23. let the cat out of the bag

- to tell something that is supposed to be a secret
The teacher let the cat out of the bag when she began talking about the plans to close the school.

24. like a bat out of hell

- with great speed and force
I ran like a bat out of hell to catch the bus.

25. make a mountain out of a molehill

- to make something that is unimportant seem important
You are making a mountain out of a molehill when you talk about the mistake.

26. monkey business

- unethical or illegal activity, mischief
The boy should stop the monkey business and do the job correctly.

27. put one's head in the lion's mouth

- to put oneself in a dangerous or difficult situation

I put my head in the lion's mouth when I went to the meeting with my boss.

28. squirrel away (something)

- to hide or store something

My niece likes to squirrel away as much money as possible from her part-time job.

29. straight from the horse's mouth

- directly from the person who said something, directly from a dependable source

I heard it straight from the horse's mouth that our supervisor will be leaving the company next week.

30. until the cows come home

- until very late, for a long time

We can talk until the cows come home this evening.

31. weasel out of (something)

- to back out of a commitment in a sneaky or cowardly manner (like a weasel which can move through small openings)

My friend was able to weasel out of going to the store for his mother.

32. wolf down (something)

- to gulp down something, to eat something quickly

I wolfed down my dinner and left the house for the movie.

33. a wolf in sheep's clothing

- a person who pretends to be good but really is bad

"Be careful of that man. He is a wolf in sheep's clothing."

34. you can lead a horse to water (but you can't make it drink)

- you can give someone the opportunity to do something but you cannot force him or her to do it if they do not want to

You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink and no matter how hard we try to help my cousin get a job he will not make any effort to find one.

35. you can't teach an old dog new tricks

- it is difficult for older people to learn new things

You can't teach an old dog new tricks and I do not think that my father will ever change his eating habits.

36. ahead of the pack

- to be more successful than other people who are doing the same thing as you (a pack is a group of animals like dogs or wolves who live together)

The girl studied hard all summer and was ahead of the pack when she returned to school in the autumn.

37. a bull in a china shop

- a tactless person who upsets others or upsets plans, a very clumsy person

The boy is like a bull in a china shop so you should be careful if you invite him to your house.

38. buy a pig in a poke

- to buy something without seeing it or knowing anything about it

You can buy the used computer but it will be like buying a pig in a poke if you do not look at it first.

39. a cock-and-bull story

- a silly story that is not true

Our neighbor gave us a cock-and-bull story about how our window was broken.

40. have a cow

- to become very angry and upset about something

Our teacher had a cow when nobody prepared for the class.

41. ants in one's pants

-unable to sit still or remain calm out of nervousness or excitement

Lisa had ants in her pants the day before her interview.

42. chicken out

-to decide not to do something out of fear (usually just before)

I was going to take a ride on Geoff's motorcycle, but I chickened out when he gave me a helmet to wear.

43. kill two birds with one stone

-get two things done at once

If you pick the groceries up when you drop George off for his shift, you will kill two birds with one stone.

44. pig out on something

-eat a lot of something

I pigged out on pancakes so I don't have room for lunch.

45. rain cats and dogs

-rain heavily

I forgot my umbrella and I soaked to the skin as it was raining cats and dogs.

46. bitten by the bug

-if you develop a sudden interest or enthusiasm for something, you are bitten by the bug
My dad decided to take up golf and was immediately bitten by the bug.

47. for the birds

-if you think something is for the birds, you consider it to be uninteresting, useless or not to be taken seriously

As far as I'm concerned, his theory is for the birds.

48. to talk turkey

-to speak frankly and openly.

We need to solve this problem, and the only way we'll do it is to talk turkey.

49. the early bird catches the worm.

- if you do something in a timely manner you will succeed

I'll go to work early tomorrow. After all, the early bird catches the worm.

50. mutton dressed (up) as lamb

-used to describe a woman who is dressed in a style that is more suitable for a much younger woman

She's over fifty and should really stop wearing mini skirts if she doesn't want to look like mutton dressed as lamb.

51. to be like a dog with two tails

-to be very happy.

When we found out we had won the contract, our manager was like a dog with two tails.

52. break the back of the beast

-if someone breaks the back of the beast, they succeed in overcoming a major difficulty

After hours of effort, the technicians finally broke the back of the beast and turned the electricity back on again.

53. social butterfly

-a person who has a lot of friends and acquaintances and likes to flit from one social event to another is called a social butterfly

Jessica is constantly out and about; she's a real social butterfly.

54. like a headless chicken

-if a person rushes about like a headless chicken, they act in a disorderly way, without thinking or analyzing the situation carefully

As soon as the store opened, my mother started running around like a headless chicken, eager to find bargains.

55. crocodile tears

-to shed crocodile tears means to shed false tears or show insincere grief

Caroline pretended to be sad but we all knew her tears were crocodile tears.

56. dead as a dodo

-to say that something is (as) dead as a dodo means that it is unquestionably dead or obsolete, or has gone out of fashion

(A dodo is a bird that is now extinct.)

The floppy disk is an invention that is now (as) dead as a dodo.

57. frog in one's throat

-a person who has a frog in their throat has difficulty in speaking clearly because they have a cough or a sore throat

Teaching was difficult today. I had a frog in my throat all morning.

58. have goose pimples

-if you have goose pimples, you are cold or so afraid that your skin is temporarily raised into little lumps.

I was so scared that I had goose pimples all through the film!

59. walk into the lion's den

-if you walk into the lion's den, you find yourself in a difficult situation in which you have to face unfriendly or aggressive people

After the failure of the negotiations, he had to walk into the lion's den and face the Press.

60. as snug as a bug in a rug

-if you're as snug as a bug in a rug, you are feeling very comfortable indeed

Are you warm enough? Yes, I'm as snug as a bug in a rug.