ACHILLES' HEEL

Meaning: A weakness in a person or system which might cause them to fail.

Example 1: They have a team with great stars but a weak defense is their Achilles' heel.

Example 2: I'm a good student, but I know I won't score high enough on the scholarship test because math is my Achilles' heel.

(THE) ACID TEST

Meaning: Something that shows the true worth or value of someone or something.

Example 1: The new party is doing better and better in the polls, but the acid test will be the next election.

Example 2: They've always been good friends, but the acid test will come when they have to share a flat.

ADD INSULT TO INJURY

Meaning: To hurt the feelings of a person who is already upset.

Example 1: He said my clothes didn't suit me, and then to add insult to injury he said I needed to lose some weight!

Example 2: I was already late for work and, to add insult to injury, I spilled coffee all over myself.
AFRAID OF YOUR OWN SHADOW

*Meaning:* Easily frightened.

*Example 1:* After Tom was robbed on the street, he was afraid of his own shadow.

*Example 2:* Everyone was surprised that Jane led the meeting with confidence, as she normally seems afraid of her own shadow.

AGAINST ALL ODDS

*Meaning:* Even though something seems completely impossible.

*Example 1:* Against all odds, Canada defeated Brazil in the football final.

*Example 2:* Against the odds, he was able to survive being stranded in the wilderness for a week with no food.

ALIVE AND KICKING

*Meaning:* To be in good health and active.

*Example 1:* I thought for sure that old dog wouldn't survive the winter, but it's still alive and kicking!

*Example 2:* John's completely recovered after surgery, he's alive and kicking.
ALL GREEK TO ME

Meaning: I can't understand it at all.

Example 1: I've tried reading the manual but it's all Greek to me.

Example 2: He tried to explain the rules of the game to me, but it was all Greek to me.

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE

Meaning: A situation suddenly becomes crazy and violent.

Example 1: If my wife finds out about my girlfriend, all hell will break loose.

Example 2: One guy pushed another at the bar and then all hell broke loose - that's why we left!

(THE) APPLE OF YOUR EYE

Meaning: The person who you love most.

Example 1: Harry was his first child and the apple of his eye.

Example 2: He said that Kelly was the apple of his eye. He could not imagine living without her.
(AN) ARMCHAIR CRITIC

Meaning: Something that shows the true worth or value of someone or something.

Example 1: He is such an armchair critic - he's ready to give a lot of advice about driving, but he's never driven in his life.

Example 2: My uncle is such an armchair critic about the classes I'm taking - the fact that he never went to college doesn't stop him from weighing in!

ARMED TO THE TEETH

Meaning: Heavily armed, having many weapons.

Example 1: The criminals were armed to the teeth when they robbed the bank.

Example 2: There are too many guns around. The entire country is armed to the teeth.

AS A DUCK TAKES TO WATER

Meaning: Easily and naturally.

Example 1: The baby adapted to the bottle as a duck takes to water.

Example 2: I wasn't sure if he'd like playing the piano, but he's taken to it as a duck takes to water.
(AS) BLACK AS A STACK OF BLACK CATS

Meaning: Completely black.

Example 1: Her hair was black as a stack of black cats.

Example 2: After playing in the mud all morning, the little boy was as black as a stack of black cats.

(AS) BLIND AS A BAT

Meaning 1: Unable to see at all, completely blind.

Example 1: I'm as blind as a bat without my glasses.

Meaning 2: Unwilling to recognize problems or bad things.

Example 2: Connie is blind as a bat when it comes to her daughter's disgraceful behavior.

(AS) COOL AS A CUCUMBER

Meaning: Very calm and confident.

Example 1: She was as cool as a cucumber before her presentation because she was well-prepared.

Example 2: The politician was cool as a cucumber throughout the interview with the aggressive journalist.
(AS) DRUNK AS A SKUNK

*Meaning:* Very drunk.

*Example 1:* Do you remember last night at all? You were as drunk as a skunk!

*Example 2:* After his fifth cocktail, Michael was as drunk as a skunk.

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(AS) SICK AS A DOG

*Meaning:* Very sick.

*Example 1:* I had to go to the doctor on Monday because I was as sick as a dog all weekend.

*Example 2:* The last time I ate shellfish I was sick as a dog for 48 hours afterwards.

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AS THE CROW FLIES

*Meaning:* By the most direct way, along a straight line between two places.

*Example 1:* As the crow flies, it is about six kilometers between my house and downtown.

*Example 2:* From here to the village it's five miles as the crow flies, but it's a lot further by road.
(AS) WISE AS AN OWL

**Meaning:** Very wise.

**Example 1:** This is a difficult problem. You'd need to be as wise as an owl to be able to solve it.

**Example 2:** If you are in trouble, get Chris to advise you. He's wise as an owl.

ASK FOR THE MOON

**Meaning:** To ask for too much, to want something that is not possible.

**Example 1:** $1000 for her birthday? She is asking for the moon.

**Example 2:** I just asked them if we could go to lunch a little earlier, and they're acting like I'm asking for the moon!

AT A SNAIL’S PACE

**Meaning:** Very slowly.

**Example 1:** The roads were full of traffic and we were traveling at a snail’s pace for two hours.

**Example 2:** My research is moving at a snail’s pace - every experiment I've tried so far has failed.

AT YOUR WITS’ END

**Meaning:** You have no idea what to do next.

**Example 1:** Can you help me to solve this problem? I'm at my wits' end.

**Example 2:** He was a good detective, but this case had him at his wit's end.
BACK TO SQUARE ONE

Meaning: Back to the beginning.

Example 1: If this guy rejects our offer, we'll have to go back to square one.

Example 2: The opposing parties had been trying to come to a compromise, but when the negotiations broke down, they were back to square one.

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

Meaning: Back to the beginning, time to start from the start.

Example 1: When the town refused to fund our music program, we had to go back to the drawing board.

Example 2: She’s refused to consider our offer, so it’s back to the drawing board, I’m afraid.

BAG OF TRICKS

Meaning: All the clever methods by which someone achieves something.

Example 1: I wonder what the Democrats will pull out of their bag of tricks to win the election this time.

Example 2: Let's see what I have in my bag of tricks to entertain the baby.
BALL AND CHAIN

Meaning: Wife.

Example 1: I can't play poker tonight with you guys, the old ball and chain will keep me at home.

Example 2: My ball and chain is mad at me.

(THE) BALL IS IN YOUR COURT

Meaning: To be responsible for taking the next action.

Example 1: Well, they invited you, so the ball is in your court now. Do you want to go out with them or not?

Example 2: I've told him he can have his job back if he apologizes. The ball is in his court now.

BARKING DOGS SELDOM BITE

Meaning: People who make big threats rarely take action.

Example 1: Old Mrs. Smith keeps saying she'll call the police if we walk on her lawn, but don't worry. Barking dogs seldom bite.

Example 2: My boss threatens to fire me at least once a week, but barking dogs seldom bite.