

**Fresh as a Daisy: Nature Idioms**  
**(A Multicultural Book)**  
**Language Lizard Supplemental Teaching Material**  
[www.LanguageLizard.com](http://www.LanguageLizard.com)

**WHAT IS AN IDIOM?**

An idiom is a phrase which says one thing but means something different. An idiom can be a quick way of saying something complicated. Languages throughout the world have their own idioms. There are thousands of idioms in English. Knowing some of them will help you to understand what people mean. Below is background information about the idioms portrayed in the book, *Fresh as a Daisy: Nature Idioms*. Additional animal idioms, their meanings, and their history, are also listed below. Finally, more resources about Food Idioms are noted at the end of this document.

**NATURE IDIOMS**

**Over the moon** - To be very excited and happy.

This idiom dates to the early 1700s when a writer named Charles Molloy used it in a book titled *The English Chevalier*. A character said "I shall jump over the moon for joy!"

[https://www.gingersoftware.com/content/phrases/over-the-moon/  
#.XlgkrCFKiM8](https://www.gingersoftware.com/content/phrases/over-the-moon/#.XlgkrCFKiM8)

**Put down roots** - To settle down somewhere and stay.

The origin of this idiom is unknown. It alludes to the fact that a plant must remain in one place to grow deep roots.

<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/put+down+roots>

**A ray of sunshine** - Something that brings happiness and hope.

The origin of this idiom is unknown.

<https://www.theidioms.com/ray-of-sunshine/>

**A breath of fresh air** - A refreshing change.

This idiom, in use since before the 1800s, developed from two other expressions: “breath of heaven” and “breath of spring”.

<https://writingexplained.org/idiom-dictionary/breath-of-fresh-air>

**Under the weather** - Feeling unwell.

This idiom, first used in print in the 1800s, developed from people feeling seasick on a sailing ship. The “weather bow” was the side of the ship, at the front (or bow), where rough sea or wind was the worst.

<https://knowyourphrase.com/under-the-weather>

**Make a mountain out of a molehill** - To overreact to something small.

This idiom’s first known usage was in 1548 in a book that was translated by Nicholas Udall and which said that ancient Greek sophists (philosophers and teachers) could make an elephant out of a fly, and a mountain out of a molehill.

<https://knowyourphrase.com/making-a-mountain-out-of-a-molehill>

**A needle in a haystack** - Something very difficult to find.

In 1532, Thomas More wrote, in England, that something was like looking for “a needle in a meadow”. The modern phrase developed from this. However, the same idiom is also used in Germany, Italian, and Portuguese. This widespread usage suggests the idiom might have existed before 1532.

<https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/120218/what-is-the-origin-of-the-phrase-needle-in-a-hay-stack>

**Nip it in the bud** - Stop something when it is just beginning.

If a bud is cut off a plant, it will not have a chance to bloom. This idiom probably developed from 1595 when something similar was used in a romantic comedy play by Henry Chettle in England.

<https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/256600.html>

**Down to earth** - Being practical and realistic.

In the early 1900s, this idiom was often used to refer to products with a cheap price. The meaning gradually changed to refer to people's behavior. Saying that a person has their "feet on the ground" or is "grounded" has a similar meaning: the person is stable, not wild or extravagant.

<https://knowyourphrase.com/down-to-earth>

**Tip of the iceberg** - A small part of a bigger problem.

This idiom became popular in America in the 1960s. It is based on the fact that only about 10% of an iceberg shows above the water, while the other 90% is hidden beneath the waves.

<https://grammarist.com/idiom/tip-of-the-iceberg/>

**Through the grapevine** - To learn of something through gossip.

In USA in the 1850s, telegraph wires were fastened to trees. The wires looked like grape vines climbing around, but they carried messages. The phrase "grapevine telegraph" was used prior to the Civil War, but during the war, people began to say they heard information "through the grapevine".

<https://writingexplained.org/idiom-dictionary/heard-it-through-the-grapevine>

**Stop and smell the roses** - To take your time, relax, and enjoy yourself.

The origin of this idiom isn't known. However, it was made popular in 1981 when a rock singer, Ringo Starr, made an album called Stop and Smell the Roses.

<http://idioms.languagesystems.edu/2012/05/stop-and-smell-roses.html>

**Chasing Rainbows** - Trying to achieve something that is unlikely to happen.

A rainbow is created by light and water droplets in the air. It might look as though it is coming down to the ground, but the bottom of it cannot be found or touched. In the 1800s, a "rainbow chaser" was someone on an impossible quest.

<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/chasing+rainbows>

**Fresh as a daisy** - To be full of energy and enthusiasm.

In English, the word daisy developed from the words "day's eye" because the flowers are open by day but close their petals at night. This makes it seem that the flowers sleep at night, but are fresh and bright during the day, like eyes.

<https://wordhistories.net/2017/02/25/fresh-as-a-daisy/>

**A drop in the ocean** - A tiny, insignificant amount.

This idiom was used by the American President, George Washington in 1776, in a speech to Congress. In England and Scotland, an idiom with the same meaning is "a drop in a bucket" which was used in a newspaper in 1802.

<https://www.theidioms.com/a-drop-in-the-ocean/>

**Beating around the bush** - To avoid talking about what is important.

This is a bird hunting phrase from the 1400s in England. Before birds could be caught in nets, people had to walk around the bushes, beating them to scare the birds out. So “beating about the bush” could delay the main event.

<https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/beat-around-the-bush.html>

**Between a rock and a hard place** - Having to choose between two bad things.

This idiom appeared in print in the USA 1921, during a banking crisis. There are other phrases which mean the same thing. For example “between the devil and the deep blue sea”.

<https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place.html>

**Full of hot air** - Talking a lot without saying anything of value.

This idiom has been used since the mid-1800s in the USA, though its exact origin isn't known.

<https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/107376/origin-of-idiom-full-of-hot-air>

**Go out on a limb** - Saying or doing something unpopular.

In use since the late 1800s in the USA, this idiom refers to the discomfort or danger of climbing too far out on the branch of a tree.

<https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/out-on-a-limb.html>

**Up a creek** - In trouble.

This idiom was military slang in the 1900s. It was used to refer to soldiers being lost when on patrol. It can also be said as “Up a creek without a paddle”.

<https://www idioms online/up-the-creek/>

**Additional websites to learn more about nature idioms**

<https://www.englishclub.com/ref/Idioms/Nature/>

[https://www.spellzone.com/blog/Twenty\\_Idioms\\_about\\_Nature.htm](https://www.spellzone.com/blog/Twenty_Idioms_about_Nature.htm)

<https://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/cat/27.html>

<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/nature>

<https://7esl.com/nature-idioms/>