



## The Learning Centre

### Speaking Skills

#### Idioms

An **idiom** is a phrase that means something other than its literal meaning. Idioms are frequently used in spoken English language, although it is informal to use idioms in academic writing. Nonetheless, you may want to understand what certain idioms mean when they are used in spoken language. In order to understand idioms, it is important to be able to distinguish between the phrase's *literal meaning* and its *intended meaning*.

Here is an example:

John said, "I finished the math test in twenty minutes; it was a **piece of cake!**"

In this example, the literal meaning is that John's math test took on the form of a piece of cake. However, this is not what John truly means. Instead, the intended meaning of "piece of cake" is "easy." In other words, John is saying that the math test was easy.

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Try this!

Write a paragraph using 5-8 of the following idioms:

<b>white on rice</b>	<b>a dime a dozen</b>	<b>actions speak louder than words</b>	
<b>kick the bucket</b>	<b>mumbo jumbo</b>	<b>out on a limb</b>	<b>pig out</b>
<b>rule of thumb</b>	<b>under the weather</b>	<b>wine and dine</b>	<b>when pigs fly</b>
<b>excuse my French</b>	<b>get over it</b>	<b>go out on a limb</b>	<b>gut feeling</b>

Remember that there is a difference between *literal meaning* and *intended meaning*. Use the words with the *intended meaning* in mind.