

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

Definition of an idiom:

a word or words that are peculiar to a particular language

Definition of an idiomatic expression:

an expression whose meanings cannot be inferred from the meanings of the words that comprise it.

Useful Idiomatic Expressions and Definitions

- as usual - as always, customarily
- at last – finally
- little by little - gradually, by degrees, slowly
- to take part in – participate
- at least - a minimum of
- at times - sometimes, occasionally
- over and over – repeatedly
- to be in charge of - to manage, be responsible for
- once in awhile - occasionally, now and then
- quite a few – many, a number of
- all at once – suddenly
- off and on - irregularly, occasionally
- up to date - timely, modern, brought up to the present time
- out of date - no longer available, current or in use
- once and for all - in a final manner, definitively
- above all - mainly, especially
- in vain - useless, without result
- to take over - to assume direction or control of
- to bring about - to cause to happen
- on the whole - in general

If you are ever unsure of the meaning of an idiomatic expression that you would like to use in your writing, attempt to find the definition before including it in your paper.

Dictionaries often contain the definitions of idiomatic expressions under the definition of the noun or verb of the expression, so if there are any additional idiomatic expressions for which you would like to find the definition, look up the main verb or noun in the expression in a dictionary.

If you cannot find the definition in a dictionary, you can consult a reference librarian who may be able to direct you to additional resources. However, if you cannot determine the meaning of an idiomatic expression, it is best to use an alternate expression in your writing so as to avoid incorrectly using the expression.

Sources:

The Dictionary of American Slang by Robert L. Chapman

Webster's New World American Idioms Handbook by Gail Brenner