

Clichés! Trite maybe to the most discerning reader but eminently usable for EFL learners like us!

A

a chip off the old block
a clean slate
a dark and stormy night
a far cry
a fine kettle of fish
a good/kind soul
a loose cannon
a pain in the neck/butt
a penny saved is a penny earned
a tough row to hoe
a word to the wise
ace in the hole
ace up his sleeve
add insult to injury
afraid of his own shadow
against all odds
air your dirty laundry
all fun and games
all in a day's work
all talk, no action
all thumbs
all your eggs in one basket
all's fair in love and war
all's well that ends well

almighty dollar

American as apple pie

an axe to grind

another day, another dollar

armed to the teeth

as luck would have it

as old as time

as the crow flies

at my wits end

avoid like the plague

B

babe in the woods

back against the wall

back in the saddle

back to square one

back to the drawing board

bad to the bone

badge of honor

bald faced liar

banging your head against a brick wall

ballpark figure

baptism by fire

bark is worse than her bite

barking up the wrong tree

bat out of hell



be all and end all

beat a dead horse

beat around the bush

bee in her bonnet

been there, done that

beggars can't be choosers

behind the eight ball

bend over backwards

benefit of the doubt

bent out of shape

best thing since sliced bread

bet your bottom dollar

better half

better late than never

better mousetrap

better safe than sorry

between a rock and a hard place

beyond the pale

bide your time

big as life

big fish in a small pond

big cheese

big man on campus

bigger they are the harder they fall

bird in the hand

birds and the bees

bird's eye view

birds of a feather flock together

bite the bullet

bite the dust

bit the hand that feeds you

bitten off more than he can chew

black as coal

black as pitch

black as the ace of spades

blast from the past

bleeding heart

blessing in disguise

blind ambition

blind as a bat

blind leading the blind

blood is thicker than water

blood sweat and tears

blow off steam

blow your own horn

blushing bride

boils down to

bone to pick

bored to tears

bored stiff

bottomless pit

boys will be boys

bright and early

brings home the bacon

broad across the beam

broken record

bull by the horns

bull in a china shop

burn the midnight oil

burning the candle at both ends

burning question

burst your bubble

bury the hatchet

busy as a bee

by hook or by crook

C

call a spade a spade

called onto the carpet

calm before the storm

can of worms

can't cut the mustard

can't hold a candle to

case of mistaken identity

cat got your tongue

caught in the crossfire

caught red-handed

caught with his/her pants down

checkered past

chip on his/her shoulder

chomping at the bit

cleanliness is next to godliness

clear as a bell

clear as mud

close to the vest

cock and bull story

cold shoulder

come hell or high water

cost a king's ransom

cost/paid an arm and a leg

count your blessings

crack of dawn

crash course

creature comforts

cross that bridge when you come to it

cry her eyes out

cry like a baby

cry me a river

crystal clear

curiosity killed the cat

cut and dried

cut through the red tape

cut to the chase

cute as a bug's ear

cute as a button

cute as a puppy

cuts to the quick

D

dark before the dawn

day in, day out

dead as a doornail

devil is in the details

dime a dozen

divide and conquer

dog and pony show

dog days

dog eat dog

dog tired

don't burn your bridges

don't count your chickens before they're
hatched

don't look a gift horse in the mouth

don't rock the boat

don't step on anyone's toes

don't take any wooden nickels

down and out

down at the heels

down in the dumps

down on his/her luck

down the hatch

down to earth

draw the line

dressed to kill

dressed to the nines

drives me up the wall

dull as dishwater

dyed in the wool

E

eagle eye

easy as pie

eat your heart out

eat your words

enough to piss off the Pope

ear to the ground

early bird catches the worm

earn his/her keep

easier said than done

easy as 1-2-3

easy as pie

eleventh hour

even the playing field

every dog has its day

every fiber of my being

everything but the kitchen sink

eye for an eye

eyes in the back of her head

F

facts of life

fair weather friend

fan the flames

fair weather friend

fall by the wayside

feast or famine

feather in his cap

feather your nest

few and far between

fifteen minutes of fame

filthy vermin

fine kettle of fish

fish out of water

fishing for a compliment

fit as a fiddle

fit the bill

fit to be tied

flat as a pancake

flip your lid

flog a dead horse

fly by night

fly the coop

follow your heart

for all intents and purposes

for the birds

for what it's worth

force of nature

force to be reckoned with

forgive and forget

fox in the henhouse

free and easy

free as a bird

fresh as a daisy

full steam ahead

fun in the sun

G

garbage in, garbage out

get a kick out of

get a leg up

get down and dirty

get his/her back up

get the lead out

get to the bottom of

get your feet wet

gets my goat

gilding the lily

give and take

go against the grain

go for broke

go him one better

go the extra mile

go with the flow

goes without saying

good as gold

good deed for the day

good things come to those who wait

good time was had by all

greek to me

green thumb

green-eyed monster

growing like a weed

grist for the mill

H

hair of the dog

hand to mouth

happy as a clam

hasn't a clue

have a nice day



have high hopes

haven't got a row to hoe

have the last laugh

head honcho

hear a pin drop

heard it through the grapevine

heart's content

hem and haw

high and dry

high and mighty

high as a kite

hit paydirt

hold your horses

hold your tongue

hold your head up high

hold your own

honest as the day is long

horse of a different color

hot under the collar

I

I beg to differ

icing on the cake

if the shoe fits

if the shoe were on the other foot

in a jam

in a jiffy

in a nutshell

in a pig's eye

in a pinch

in a word

in his/her element

in hot water

in over his/her head

in the gutter

in the nick of time

in the thick of it

in this day and age

in your dreams

it ain't over till the fat lady sings

it goes without saying

it's a small world

it's only a matter of time

it takes all kinds

it takes one to know one

ivory tower

J

Jack of all trades

jockey for position

jog your memory

Johnny-come-lately

joined at the hip

judge a book by its cover

jump down your throat

jump in with both feet

jump on the bandwagon

jump the gun

jump to conclusions

just a hop, skip, and a jump

just the ticket

justice is blind

K

keep a stiff upper lip

keep an eye on

keep it simple, stupid

keep the home fires burning

keep up with the Joneses

keep your chin up

keep your fingers crossed

kick the bucket

kick up your heels

kick your feet up

kid in a candy store

kill two birds with one stone

kick his lights out

kick the bucket

kiss of death

knock his block off

knock it out of the park

knock on wood

knock your socks off

know him from Adam

know the ropes

know the score

knuckle down

knuckle sandwich

knuckle under

Cliche List L-Z:

L

labor of love

land on your feet

lap of luxury

last but not least

last-ditch effort

last hurrah

law of the jungle

law of the land

lay down the law

leaps and bounds

let sleeping dogs lie

letter perfect

let the cat out of the bag

let the good times roll

let your hair down

let's talk turkey

lick your wounds

lies like a rug

life's a bitch

life's a grind

light at the end of the tunnel

lighter than a feather

lighter than air

like clockwork



like father like son

like taking candy from a baby

like there's no tomorrow

lion's share

live and learn

live and let live

long and short of it

long lost love

look before you leap

look down your nose

look what the cat dragged in

looks like death warmed over

loose cannon

lose your head

lose your temper

loud as a horn

lounge lizard

loved and lost

low man on the totem pole

luck of the draw

luck of the Irish

M

make hay while the sun shines

make money hand over fist

make my day

make the best of a bad situation

make the best of it

make your blood boil

man of few words

man's best friend

mark my words

missed the boat on that one

moment in the sun

moment of glory

moment of truth

money to burn

more power to you

more than one way to skin a cat

movers and shakers

N

naked as a jaybird

naked truth

neat as a pin

needless to say

neither here nor there

never look back

never say never

nip and tuck

nip it in the bud

no guts, no glory

no love lost

no pain, no gain

no skin off my back

no stone unturned

no time like the present

no use crying over spilled milk

nose to the grindstone
not a hope in hell
not a minute's peace
not playing with a full deck
not the end of the world
not in my backyard
not written in stone
nothing to sneeze at
nothing ventured nothing gained
now we're cooking

O

off the top of my head
off the wagon
off the wall
older and wiser
older than dirt
older than Methuselah
old hat
on a roll
on cloud nine
on his/her high horse
on pins and needles
on the bandwagon
on the money
on the nose
on the rocks
on the spot
on the tip of my tongue

on the wagon
on thin ice
once bitten, twice shy
one bad apple doesn't spoil the bushel
one born every minute
one brick short
one foot in the grave
one in a million
one red cent
only game in town
open a can of worms
open the flood gates
opportunity doesn't knock twice
over the hump
out of pocket
out of sight, out of mind
out of the frying pan into the fire
out of the woods
out on a limb
over a barrel

P

pain and suffering
panic button
par for the course
part and parcel
party pooper
pass the buck
patience is a virtue



pay through the nose

penny pincher

perfect storm

pig in a poke

pile it on

pillar of the community

pin your hopes on

pitter patter of little feet

plain as day

plain as the nose on your face

play by the rules

play your cards right

playing the field

playing with fire

pleased as punch

plenty of fish in the sea

poor as a church mouse

pot calling the kettle black

pull a fast one

pull your punches

pulled the wool over his/her eyes

pulling your leg

pure as the driven snow

put one over on you

put the pedal to the metal

put the cart before the horse

put your best foot forward

put your foot down

Q

quick as a bunny

quick as a lick

quick as a wink

quick as lightning

quiet as a dormouse

R

rag to riches

raining buckets

raining cats and dogs

rank and file

reap what you sow

red as a beet

red herring

reinvent the wheel

rich and famous

rings a bell

ripped me off

rise and shine

road to hell is paved with good intentions

rob Peter to pay Paul

roll over in the grave

rub the wrong way

running in circles

S

salt of the earth

scared out of his/her wits

scared stiff



scared to death

sealed with a kiss

second to none

see eye to eye

seen the light

seize the day

set the record straight

set your teeth on edge

sharp as a tack

shoot the breeze

shoot for the moon

shot in the dark

shoulder to the wheel

sick as a dog

sigh of relief

signed, sealed, and delivered

sink or swim

six of one, half a dozen of another

skating on thin ice

slept like a log

slinging mud

slippery as an eel

slow as molasses in January

smooth as a baby's bottom

snug as a bug in a rug

sow wild oats

spare the rod, spoil the child

speak of the devil

spilled the beans

spinning your wheels

spitting image of

spoke with relish

spring to life

stands out like a sore thumb

squeaky wheel gets the grease

start from scratch

stick in the mud

still waters run deep

stitch in time

stop and smell the roses

straw that broke the camel's back

strong as an ox

stubborn as a mule

stuff that dreams are made of

stuffed shirt

sweating blood

sweating bullets

T

take a load off

take one for the team

take the bait

take the bull by the horns

take the plunge

takes one to know one

takes two to tango

the more the merrier

the real deal
the real McCoy
the red carpet treatment
the same old story
there is no accounting for taste
thick as a brick
thick as thieves
think outside of the box
third time's the charm
this day and age
this hurts me worse than it hurts you
this point in time
three sheets to the wind
three strikes against him/her
throw in the towel
tie one on
tighter than a drum
time and time again
time is of the essence
tip of the iceberg
to each his own
to the best of my knowledge
toe the line
tongue-in-cheek
too good to be true
too hot to handle
too numerous to mention
touch with a ten foot pole

tough as nails
trials and tribulations
tried and true
trip down memory lane
twist of fate
two cents worth
two peas in a pod

U

ugly as sin
under his/her thumb
under the counter
under the gun
under the same roof
until the cows come home
unvarnished truth
up his sleeve
up the creek
up to his ears in trouble
uphill battle
upper crust
upset the applecart

V

V for victory
vain attempt
vain effort
vanquish the enemy
vested interest

W

waiting for the other shoe to drop

wakeup call

warm welcome

watching the clock

watch your p's and q's

watch your tongue

water under the bridge

weather the storm

went belly up

wet behind the ears

weed them out

week of Sundays

what goes around comes around

what you see is what you get

when it rains, it pours

when push comes to shove

when the cat's away

when the going gets tough, the tough get going

white as a sheet

whole ball of wax

whole hog

whole nine yards

wild goose chase

will wonders never cease?

wisdom of the ages

wolf at the door

words fail me

work like a dog

world weary

worst nightmare

wrong side of the bed

Y

yanking your chain

yappy as a dog

years young

you are what you eat

you can run, but you can't hide

you only live once

young and foolish

young and vibrant

you're the boss

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