

Have Fun with Animal Idioms

An activity of "Helping farm workers to beat the heat"

The article, "Helping farm workers to beat the heat" (page 16, *What's Up* August 2024), uses the idiom "canary in a coal mine". Take a look at Vocab Builder for an explanation. Using animal-related idioms is an easy way to spice up your writing — often, you can guess the meaning of the idiom with your knowledge of these animals. For example, to move "at a snail's pace" means, of course, moving slowly — which is exactly how a snail moves!



TASK 1. Here are some other idioms that use words related to animals. Guess their meanings and write them in the spaces below.

Idiom	Meaning
<i>ants in your pants</i>	
<i>cat got your tongue</i>	
<i>elephant in the room</i>	
<i>butterflies in your stomach</i>	
<i>hold your horses</i>	
<i>cry wolf</i>	
<i>fish out of water</i>	
<i>take the bull by the horns</i>	

TASK 2. Check your answers online at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>. How many did you get correct? For every meaning you gave above that is different from the Cambridge dictionary's one, write down the online dictionary's meaning in red below your answer.

TASK 3. Test your understanding! Complete these sentences with the most suitable idioms from the list above. You may have to change the pronouns in some cases.

- a. I felt like a _____ when I went to Iceland.
Everyone around me had blond hair and blue eyes!
- b. If you _____ too often, people will stop believing you one day even if you actually need help.
- c. Sam could feel his palms getting sweaty. He had _____ as it was his first time performing on stage.
- d. Jennifer has _____ and cannot stop running around because she is so excited about Christmas!
- e. We cannot ignore the _____ any longer. We have to discuss what to do about the missing book.

TASK 4. Create four of your own sentences using any of the idioms you have learnt. Write them in the space below.



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____



Writing tip: Keep an eye out for idioms when you read books or articles! Write them down in a notebook so that you can remember them and use them in your compositions.