

Business English Expressions

1. 800 pound gorilla - the biggest, most powerful group or company

Example: "If we follow our plan to make this new software, we're going to have a lot of competition, including from the 800 pound gorilla, Microsoft."

2. (a rising tide that) lifts all boats - something that helps all people or all groups

Example: "We're only number three, but the current economic growth will lift all boats, so we're sure to make a profit this year."

3. an old hand - a person who has long experience, especially in one place

Example: "He can help us set up a new company. He's been working in this industry for many years and knows the language of business - he's really an old hand at this."

4. at the 11th hour - very late, at the very last minute

Example: "The negotiated until late at night and it seemed they would never agree. Finally, at the 11th hour, they came to an agreement."

5. on a shoestring - with limited money

Example: "They started their company on a shoestring and built it up to one of the largest companies in the world!"

6. bring to the table - whatever you can possibly offer

Example: "I will meet with Teacher Joe's new company to show him what we can bring to the table."

7. carve out a niche - find a special market that you can control

Example: "To succeed in this competitive world, you have to focus on part of it. Try to carve out a niche and be number one in that area."

8. deep pockets - have a lot of money

Example: "If there is a price war, we won't win because we don't have deep enough pockets."

9. down time - when equipment or facilities are not available, so you cannot work

Example: "There will probably be a lot of down time at the conference, so I'm bringing a lot of paperwork."

10. (draw) a line in the sand - make final conditions that cannot be changed

Example: "We have to draw a line in the sand so they will see that this is really our final offer."

11. free ride - get benefit at no cost

Example: "Of course we should make them pay for our travel expenses. Why should we give them a free ride?"

12. from day one - from the beginning

Example: "Teacher Joe has been providing the best English-learning web site from day one!"

13. get your foot in the door - have a small opportunity that can become a big

opportunity in the future, if you do good work

Example: "Right now, I just want to get my foot in the door, so they can see what I can do. Next year I hope to start moving up in the company."

14. I need it yesterday - an informal way to say it is needed immediately

Example: "Can I send that report to you later this afternoon?"

"No! I need that report yesterday!"

15. a two-way street - both people or both groups can contribute or benefit from the situation

Example: "We want to help you, but we need your help too. It should be a two-way street."

16. fly - it won't be successful

Example: "We don't have to worry about their idea competing with ours. It will never fly."

17. it's a jungle out there - it's a difficult market with many, tough competitors

Example: "Do you think a new company can survive without a unique product? It's a real jungle out there!"

18. jump through hoops - trying very hard (like a dog doing tricks!)

Example: "He's a tough boss. All of his subordinates have to jump through hoops to prove their loyalty to the company."

19. put your cards on the table - be completely honest

Example: "I think it's time to put all of our cards on the table. Here's what we need..."

20. learning curve - how much time needed to learn something new

Example: "This new software has a long learning curve, so we have to give our staff enough time to learn how to use it well."