

Idioms and other expressions using animals

Complete the idioms and other expressions in bold with an animal, insect, etc, from the box. Many of the animals must be used more than once. The meaning of each idiom / expression is explained in *italics* at the end of each sentence.

bee bird cat chicken dog donkey duck fish fly goat
goose hen horse monkey pig rat shark whale

1. I always thought Laurence was rather shallow and superficial, but yesterday I saw him reading a book of Renaissance poetry. He's a bit of a **dark _____**, isn't he? (*someone with a secret, especially a secret ability, skill or achievement that surprises you when you discover it*)
2. I'm not going out with you looking like that. You **look like something that the _____ dragged in!** Brush your hair and put on some clean clothes! (*to have a very dirty or untidy appearance*)
3. I live on the 14th floor of a tower block, so I have a wonderful _____'s-eye view of the town. (*a good view of something from a high position*)
4. How did I know that you were going out with Lucy? Aha! **A little _____ told me!** (*an expression used for saying that you are not going to say who told you something*)
5. It really **gets my _____**, the way she keeps interrupting all the time. (*to annoy someone*)
6. William didn't get the promotion he wanted last year, and he's had a _____ **in his bonnet** about it ever since. (*to be very involved in something that you think is important, in a way that other people find annoying*)
7. You really **let the _____ out of the bag** when you asked Louise what time her party started. She didn't know anything about it. It was supposed to be a surprise. (*to tell someone something that was supposed to be a secret*)
8. Where have you been? You're soaking wet! You **look like a drowned _____!** (*looking very wet and cold*)
9. Tony! What a surprise! It's wonderful to see you again. I haven't seen you **for _____'s years!** (*an extremely long time*)
10. The hotel used to be the best in town, but since the new manager took over it's really **gone to the _____s.** (*not as good as it was in the past*)
11. I don't trust Eric when he says he's working late at the office. To be honest, I **smell a _____.** (*to be suspicious, or to think that someone is trying to trick you*)
12. That's the third burger you've eaten. I wish you'd stop **making such a _____ of yourself.** (*to eat a lot of food*)
13. "Do you think I'll pass my driving test tomorrow, Julie?" "Sorry, Mark, I don't think you **have a _____ in hell's chance.**" (*to have no chance at all of doing something*)
14. I only started my new job last week, and I still feel **like a _____ out of water.** (*to be in a situation that you know nothing about or are not used to*)
15. "How did you know that Mr Roberts is going to resign?" "I **got it straight from the _____'s mouth.**" (*information that comes from someone who is directly involved – in this case, from Mr Roberts*)
16. Have you met our new manager? He really **thinks he's the _____'s knees!** (*to think you are very clever and important*)

17. What do you think of our new English teacher? Personally I think she's a bit of a **cold** _____.
(someone who is not very friendly)
18. Antonia is very timid: she **wouldn't say boo to a** _____. (an expression used to describe someone who is very quiet and shy)
19. Why do I always have to **do the** _____ **work**? (boring work that needs a lot of effort but has to be done as part of a job)
20. I'd love to be a _____ **on the wall** when Debbie tells Mr Roberts what she thinks of him! (to be able to see what people are doing without them noticing you)
21. Two weeks before her wedding, Jane went to a nightclub for her _____ **night**. (a celebration for a woman who is about to get married, in which only her women friends take part)
22. I'm so hungry, I **could eat a** _____! (an expression used for saying that you are very hungry)
23. The bank wouldn't lend me the money, so I had to go to a **loan** _____. (someone who lends money to people and charges them a very high rate of interest)
24. My boss is such a _____ **bag**. I don't think I can go on working for her much longer. (somebody who is unpleasant with other people)
25. I feel really sorry for poor old Steven: he's so _____ **pecked**. (criticised and given orders all the time by a wife or female partner)
26. It was a very simple job, but I **made a** _____ **'s ear of it**. (do something very badly)
27. I wanted to go to Spain for my holiday, but just before I left for the airport I lost my passport. As you can imagine, that really **cooked my** _____. (to cause a lot of problems for someone, or spoil their plans)
28. I can't help you at the moment, I'm afraid. I've **got bigger** _____ **to fry**. (to have more important things to do or think about)
29. The party was wonderful. We had a _____ **of a time**. (to have a lot of fun)
30. You can tell John that he's a stupid boring idiot if you like, but I'm afraid it will just be **water off a** _____ **'s back**. (an expression used for saying that advice, warnings or insults do not affect someone)
31. I've got so many things to do today. I'm **running around like a headless** _____! (trying to do a lot of things quickly without being sensible or calm about it)
32. He thinks he's better than us. I wish he would **get off his high** _____. (stop behaving as if he knows more or is better than anyone else)
33. Corporate **fat** _____ **s** have once again been accused of putting profits before people. (people who receive too much money for the job they do)
34. I don't like him, I don't respect him, and I **don't give a** _____ **'s** what he thinks. (to not care about something at all)
35. While we're in town doing our shopping, let's go and see my mother. That way, we can **kill two** _____ **s with one stone**. (to achieve two aims with one action)
36. I've never seen Arnie looking so happy. He's **like a** _____ **with two tails**. (to be very happy because something good has happened)

Note that most of the expressions in this exercise are informal or very informal.

Idioms and other expressions for describing character and personality

The words and expressions in the box can all be used informally to describe different kinds of people. Use them to complete sentences 1 – 35. Note that many of the words / expressions have a negative connotation and are not very polite, so you should be careful how you use them!

anorak	bigmouth	bunny boiler	busybody	chatterbox	chinless wonder
clock-watcher	couch potato	crank	creep	daydreamer	Don Juan
eager beaver	early bird	golden boy	happy camper	life and soul of the party	
moaning Minnie	pain in the neck	rolling stone	rough diamond	salt of the earth	
Scrooge	scrounger	skiver	slave driver	smart Alec	smart cookie
stuffed shirt	tearaway	troublemaker	wallflower	wet blanket	wimp
					wolf in sheep's clothing

1. Nobody likes Peter very much because he's so annoying. He's a right _____!
2. Andy is so boring. Did you know that his idea of a perfect day is going to the station to collect train registration numbers? What a / an _____!
3. I know that you don't like your job very much, but I wish you would stop complaining about it all the time. Don't be such a / an _____!
4. Imelda loves working here: she's a real _____.
5. Alan is an excellent and intelligent manager who runs the department well and deals effectively with any problems that come up. Everyone agrees that he's a / an _____.
6. You've been sitting in front of the television for almost four hours. Why don't you turn it off and go for a walk? You're turning into a / an _____.
7. We were having a wonderful evening until Anne joined us. Why does she have to be so negative about everything all the time? She's such a / an _____!
8. Don't be such a / an _____! If you concentrated instead of speaking all the time, you would get more work done.
9. If you want some help, ask Imelda. She's always happy and willing to help out: she's a real _____!
10. I hope Rick comes out with us tonight. He's such good fun, always the _____.
11. Poor Samantha is a bit of a / an _____. She would have much more fun and would get to know more people if she had more confidence.
12. Don is a bit of a / an _____. He never eats vegetables because he thinks they slow down your brain!
13. Don't be such a / an _____! You've only got a small cut on your hand; you haven't lost a whole arm!
14. All the newspapers are writing about Gordon Stapleton. He's the new _____ of English football.
15. When Laurence ended his relationship with Mandy, she refused to accept it and started sending him insulting letters. Then one day she went to his house and threw a brick through his window! I never realised she was such a _____!

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16. My line manager Mr Burton is a real _____. Yesterday he made us work for six hours without a break, and wouldn't let us leave until 7 o'clock.
 17. Maureen is the _____ in this company. She starts work at 7 o'clock, two hours before anyone else arrives.
 18. I'm afraid my son has become a bit of a / an _____. He stays out all night with his friends and he never listens to a word I say.
 19. All the girls in the office love Daniel, and he loves them right back! He's a regular _____.
 20. Mrs Ranscombe is such a / an _____. I wish she would stop interfering in my private life!
 21. My boss is a real _____: he pays us peanuts and hasn't given us a pay rise for two years.
 22. James is a bit of a / an _____. He never seems to pay attention during his lessons, and doesn't appear to take in anything I say.
 23. Martin isn't ill! He's not at work today because he's too lazy to come in, the _____!
 24. Michelle never pays for anything when we go out, and just relies on other people. She's such a / an _____.
 25. Mike has always been a / an _____. He can never stay in the same place for very long, and he rarely keeps the same job for more than six months.
 26. Our new secretary is a / an _____. She doesn't work very hard, and she can't wait for the working day to end.
 27. Everyone respects Arthur. He's the _____.
 28. I would avoid Christine, if I were you. She's a real _____, and loves to start arguments.
 29. When I ask you a question, I want you to give me a short, sensible answer. Don't be a / an _____!
 30. Come on, Bill. Relax and enjoy yourself! Don't be such a / an _____.
 31. Anthony is always following the boss around, carrying his briefcase and papers, opening doors for him and bringing him cups of coffee. What a _____!
 32. Don't ask Tina to keep a secret: she's a real _____.
 33. I know that Mr Connor isn't very well spoken and doesn't behave very politely, but he's a pleasant and kind man, a real _____.
 34. Mr Kelly seems nice and kind when you first start working for him, but in fact he's a ruthless businessman who will fire you the first time you make a mistake. He's a real _____.
 35. Tarquin is a bit of a _____. He has lots of money, but everyone thinks he's weak and stupid.
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