

Examrace

English Idioms: From by and by, by Fits and Starts to by and by

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By and By

- After a while, soon she'll be along by and by.
- The expression probably relies on the meaning of by as a succession of quantities (as in “two by two”). This adverbial phrase came to be used as a noun, denoting either procrastination or the future.
- William Camden so used it for the former (Remains, 1605) : “Two anons and a by and by is an hour and a half.” And W. S. Gilbert used it in the latter sense when Lady Jane sings plaintively that little will be left of her “in the coming by and by,” that is, as she grows old (Patience, 1881) . [Early 1500s]

By Fits and Starts/in Fits and Starts

- With irregular intervals of action and inaction, spasmodically the campaign is proceeding by fits and starts.
- This expression began in the late 1500s as by fits, the noun fit meaning a “paroxysm” or “seizure” ; starts was added about a century later

Bang Into

- Crash noisily into, collide with A clumsy fellow, Bill was always banging into furniture. [Early 1700s]
- Strike heavily so as to drive in; also, persuade I've been banging nails into the siding all day. I can't seem to bang it into his head that time is precious.
- The literal usage dates from the mid-1500s, the figurative from the second half of the 1800s.

Blowing Hot and Cold Together

- Change one's mind, vacillate Jean's been blowing hot and cold about taking a winter vacation.
- This expression comes from Aesop's fable (c. 570 B. C.) about a man eating with a satyr on a winter day. At first the man blew on his hands to warm them and then blew on his soup to cool it. The satyr thereupon renounced the man's friendship because he blew hot and cold out of the same mouth.
- The expression was repeated by many writers, most often signifying a person who could not be relied on.

- William Chillingworth put it: " These men can blow hot and cold out of the same mouth to serve several purposes " " (The Religion of Protestants, 1638) .

By Leaps and Bounds

- Rapidly, or in fast progress the corn is growing by leaps and bounds School Enrolment is increasing by leaps and bounds.
- This term is a redundancy, since leap and bound both mean "spring" and "jump," but the two words have been paired since Shakespeare's time and are still so used

Blue Blood

Someone with blue blood is royalty.

Between the Devil and the Deep Sea

If you are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, you are in a dilemma, a difficult choice.

Between Scylla and Charybdis

In a position where avoidance of one danger exposes one to another danger.

Burn Midnight Oil (To)

- Stay up late working or studying the semester is almost over and we're all burning the midnight oil before exams.
- This expression alludes to the oil in oil lamps. [Early 1600s]

Burn the Candle at Both Ends

- Exhaust one's energies or resources by leading a hectic life Joseph's been burning the candle at both ends for weeks, working two jobs during the week and a third on weekends.
- This metaphor originated in France and was translated into English in Randle Cotgrave's Dictionary (1611) , where it referred to dissipating one's wealth. It soon acquired its present broader meaning.

Blow One's Top, Blow One's Stack

- Fly into a rage; lose one's composure if she calls about this one more time, I'm going to blow my top. Warren is generally very easy-going, but today he blew his stack. The top here has been likened to the top of an erupting volcano; the stack alludes to a smokestack.
- Go crazy; become insane when she regains consciousness, she just may blow her top.

Below Par, under Par

- Not up to the average, normal, or desired standard I am feeling below par today, but I'm sure I'll recover by tomorrow.
- This term employs par in the sense of "an average amount or quality," a usage dating from the late 1700s.

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Bear the Brunt

- Put up with the worst of some bad circumstance
- It was the secretary who had to bear the brunt of the doctor's anger. I had to bear the brunt of her screaming and yelling
- This idiom uses brunt in the sense of "the main force of an enemy's attack," which was sustained by the front lines of the defenders. [Second half of 1700s]

Bolt from the Blue

If something happens unexpectedly and suddenly, it is a bolt from the blue.

Beer and Skittles

People say that life is not all beer and skittles, meaning that it is not about self-indulgence and pleasure.

Bring About

Cause she hopes to bring about a change in his attitude.

Beat Out

- Knock into shape by beating she managed to beat out all the dents in the fender. [c. 1600]
- Surpass or defeat someone, be chosen over someone. He got to the head of the line, beating out all the others.
- Beat out of Cheat someone of something He was always trying to beat the conductor out of the full train fare.

Bear With

- Put up with, make allowance for he'll just have to bear with them until they decide.
- Nicholas Udall used this term in *Ralph Roister Doister* (c. 1553) : "The heart of a man should more honour win by bearing with a woman."
- It may also be used as an imperative. Bear with me — I'm getting to the point.

Bring Grist to the Mill

- Something that you can use to your advantage is grist for the mill. ('Grist to the mill' is also used. 8- Upset the apple cart
- Spoil carefully laid plans Now don't upset the apple cart by revealing where we're going.
- This expression started out as upset the cart, used since Roman times to mean "spoil everything" . The precise idiom dates from the late 1700s.

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Burn One's Boats/Burn One's Boats

- Commit oneself to an irreversible course. Denouncing one's boss in a written resignation means one has burned one's bridges. Turning down one job before you have other amounts to burning your boats.
- Both versions of this idiom allude to ancient military tactics, when troops would cross a body of water and then burn the bridge or boats, they had used both to prevent retreat and to foil a pursuing enemy. [Late 1800s]

Besetting Sin

A sin which is habitually attending a person, a prevailing or predominant vice we regret to say that apathy is the besetting sin of our rural population.

Bag People

Blow One's Top

To be very angry, explode in anger, lose one's temper, go into a rage

Below Par

Less than average, less than normal

By and By

Pretty soon, it won't be long now; gradually, eventually

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