

BACK IDIOMS AND EXPRESSIONS

idiom	meaning	example
backbreaking	physically demanding	We've done a lot of backbreaking work in the garden. We deserve a beer.
back-to-back	next to each other with backs touching	I watched all of the season 3 episodes back-to-back. It was amazing.
behind someone's back	without someone's knowledge/consent	The whole class make fun of Jimmy behind his back. They are really nasty.
break one's back	work really hard/put in a lot of effort	I'm breaking my back trying to arrange our wedding.
get off someone's back	stop annoying/bothering someone	Sarah should get off Harry's back. He'll finish with her if she doesn't stop being annoying.
get someone's back up	make someone angry	Tilly is getting everyone's backs up. It wouldn't surprise me if she is removed from the panel.
give someone the shirt off one's back	a generous person	I can always count on my uncle. He'd give me the shirt off his back.
glad to see the back of	be pleased when someone leaves	I'm glad to see the back of winter, it's been very cold this year.
grow a backbone	stop being a wimp and stick up for yourself and your beliefs	Melody should grow a backbone. She isn't employed to make the coffees.

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have one's back against the wall	you are in a difficult situation and have no other options	I'm in so much debt, my back is against the wall. The bailiffs are coming tomorrow.
make a rod for one's own back	do something now that will cause problems in the future	He's making a rod for his own back by letting his kids play on the tablet all night.
on someone's back	constantly criticise/pester/annoy someone	The neighbours are on our backs about parking too close to their driveway.
pat on the back	praise for doing something good	Well done class, you all passed the test. Give yourselves a pat on the back.
piggyback	be carried on someone's back	Give Janey a piggyback. We've been walking for hours, her little legs must be tired.
put one's back into it	use a lot of effort/force	The jar is a bit tight, put your back into it.
scratch someone's back	do someone a favour so they will return the favour one day	I'll drive tonight and you can drink. You've scratched my back loads of times.
stab someone in the back	betray someone	I'll stab my colleagues in the back to get promoted.
the straw that broke the camel's back/the last straw	the final small thing that causes failure	Callum arrived late again. That was the last straw, he was fired immediately.
turn one's back on someone	refuse to help someone in need or stop giving attention to something	I turned my back on my law career and bought a farm in the countryside.

idiom	meaning	example
watch one's back	be careful	Aaron needs to watch his back, he's getting on the wrong side of a lot of people.
water off a duck's back	insults, criticism etc. have no effect on a person	All the criticism is like water off a duck's back to Henry. He just tries even harder.

