

HAND IDIOMS AND EXPRESSIONS

idiom	meaning	example
all hands on deck	everyone is needed to help	The order has to be finished by Monday so it's all hands on deck to complete it.
ask for someone's hand in marriage	ask permission to marry someone/get married	I saw a receipt from the jewellery store. I think Jamie is going to ask for my hand in marriage.
catch red handed	someone sees you doing something bad	The diamond thieves got 10 years in prison after they were caught red handed.
dab hand	very good at something	My dad can probably fix it. He's a dab hand with electronics.
eat out of the palm of one's hand	dominate/have control over someone	The new teacher is great, she had the whole class eating out of the palm of her hand.
first-hand	from the original source, directly	I got to see first-hand what plastic is doing to our oceans.
get one's hands dirty	do hard/manual work or something illegal	Karl will help you dig the hole, he loves getting his hands dirty.
get out of hand	a situation gets out of control	The party got out of hand very quickly. The Police arrived and shut it down.
give/lend someone a hand	help someone	I'm moving house at the weekend. Do you fancy lending me a hand?
golden handshake	a large sum of money given to someone retiring/being made redundant	My dad got a very generous golden handshake. He is going to buy a house in Spain.

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hand that rocks the cradle (rules the world)	mothers have power as they influence their children's personalities and behaviour	We offer free counselling sessions to all new mums, the hand that rocks the cradle...
handbags at dawn/ten paces	a dramatic/theatrical confrontation which doesn't involve violence	There were handbags at ten paces on the bus earlier, I thought there was going to be a fight.
hand-me-down	clothing given to someone else after it has been used	Now my dad has a job, I don't have to wear hand-me-downs anymore.
hands are full	very busy	Mr Mitchell's hands are full for the next few weeks. His next available appointment is in June.
hands are tied	you can't do something because you don't have the power/authority	The headmaster wants him expelled. There is nothing I can do; my hands are tied.
hands down	very easily	We won hands down, the other team were rubbish.
have blood on one's hands	be responsible for someone's death	The president sent the troops to war without proper weapons. He's got blood on his hands.
have something to hand	nearby, easily accessible	I've got my details to hand. When the bank call, I'll tell them.
have the upper hand	gain an advantage	My brother always has the upper hand when we fight. He is much bigger than me.
have time on one's hands	have spare/extra time with nothing to do	I have no time on my hands since my son was born.
like the back of one's hand	know something very well	We've lived in this city our whole lives. We know it like the back of our hands.

idiom	meaning	example
live from hand to mouth	very poor, have just enough money to survive	We are living from hand to mouth at the moment and we have another baby on the way.
old hand	an experienced/skilled person	I'm an old hand at fixing cars. I've been doing it for 40 years.
on hand	available to be used if needed	We have a team of 50 lawyers on hand 24/7 to help with all your legal needs.
right-hand man	the most valuable assistant/helper	I'm away for two weeks, contact my right-hand man Colin if you have any problems.
second hand	not new, from a previous owner	I bought a second-hand car, it's a pile of junk.
show of hands	raise your hand to vote/answer a question	What is the capital of Peru? I'll have a show of hands please.
turn back the hands of time	rewind time, remember and earlier time	I'll be turning back the hands of time by wearing leg warmers and a shell suit to the party.
wait on someone hand and foot	do everything someone wants	I stayed in a luxury hotel. They waited on me hand and foot.
wash one's hands of someone/something	have nothing more to do with someone/something	I've washed my hands of that gang, they are out of control.

