

HORSE RACING IDIOMS AND EXPRESSIONS

idiom	meaning	example
a close call	a narrow escape from danger/disaster	It was a close call, but we got to the gate a minute before it closed.
a dark horse	an unknown competitor or a person who keeps their talents secret	The dark horse, Duke Runalot beat the favourites to win the race.
a head start	start earlier than the others or have an advantage	I've got a head start over the other competitors as I've worked for the company before.
a photo finish	a competition that is very close towards the end	We need to wait for the footage to be viewed, it was a photo finish
a safe bet	certain to happen/win/succeed, confidence can be placed in the outcome	Getting an engineering degree is a safe bet, it's a good profession.
a two-horse race	a competition where there are only two teams/candidates with a chance of winning	The election is turning into a two-horse race.
back the wrong horse	make the wrong decision/support the losing side	I lost £2000 this morning on the stock market. I backed the wrong horse.
come from behind	win/succeed after being in a losing position	The youngster is coming from behind. Can he take the champion's crown?
down to the wire	until the last possible moment	The election will go down to the wire. I couldn't say either way.
flog a dead horse	continue to focus on something that isn't going to be a success	Stop flogging a dead horse. Ciara doesn't want to be with you, stop pestering her.
give someone a run for their money	almost as good as the opposition	My 3-year-old twins are giving me a run for my money.
go the distance	persist until the end without quitting	He's a great tennis player. I think he'll go the distance.

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hands down	very easily	We won hands down; the other team were rubbish.
hold your horses	wait and be patient before doing something	Hold your horses. I need to read the contract in detail before I sign anything.
jockey for position	try to get into a better position against your competitors	All candidates are jockeying for position. They're trying to get the most media coverage.
neck and neck	equal	The voting is neck and neck, anyone could take the crown.
play the field	have multiple partners, bet on all horses not just the favourite	I'm going to play the field on this last race, I've got nothing to lose.
riding high	successful/popular/confident	Katy Perry is still riding high in the charts.
take the reins	take control/manage something	I took the reins at the meeting and bagged a new contract. My boss will be pleased.
the homestretch	the final stage of a long activity	After tomorrow's exam, we're on the homestretch.
the sport of kings	horse racing	We're going to the races to watch the sport of kings.
too close to call	you can't predict the outcome; it will be by a small margin	The election is too close to call, either of the 3 could win.
win by a nose	win by a very narrow margin	I demand a recount! he won by a nose, it's not fair.



horse racing