



*Beat around the bush*

# Fundamentals

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**the ground rules** – the basic principles or rules of behaviour in a given situation.

*If you want your team to work effectively, every team member must agree on and obey the same **ground rules**.*

**a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush** – (proverb) one should prefer accepting a small but certain advantage immediately to hoping for a greater advantage later.

*We decided not to attract more clients. What we've gained so far, we couldn't risk losing – **a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush**.*

**half a loaf is better than none** – (proverb) one should express gratitude for what they get, even if it is very little, as it is simply better than nothing at all. *Finding a low-paid job after a few years of being unemployed is no bad scenario – **half a loaf is better than none**.*

**what you lose on the swings, you gain on the roundabouts** BrE – (proverb) *used to describe a situation in which there are as many advantages as there are difficulties; disadvantages and failures in one field are compensated by advantages and progress in other fields.*

**ALSO: it's swings and roundabouts**

*I've had some bad days as an entrepreneur. I had to close one company but then opened another.*

**It's swings and roundabouts** – *you win some, you lose some.*

**easy come, easy go** – (proverb) *often used to express lack of concern for losing something, e.g. money; what one earns or gains too easily is equally easily lost.*

**ALSO: lightly come, lightly go; quickly come, quickly go**

naczelne, podstawowe zasady

lepszy wróbel w garści niż gołąb na dachu (lepsze jest coś niedoskonałego, ale pewnego i dostępnego, niż niedostępny ideał)

lepszy rydz niż nic (w sytuacji, kiedy nasze oczekiwania są jedynie częściowo spełnione, należy się cieszyć nawet drobną, nie w pełni satysfakcjonującą korzyścią)

~ i tak wyjdiesz na swoje (niezależnie od podjętej decyzji zyski i straty będą takie same)

łatwo przyszło, łatwo poszło; lekko przyszło, lekko poszło (rzeczy łatwo zdobyte traci się bez żalu)

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*One shopping spree after another! Lucy spends her money like crazy – it's **easy come, easy go** with her.*

**forewarned is forearmed** – (proverb) when you are able to foresee a future danger, you can prepare for it, and so deal with it more effectively.

*In today's business **forewarned is forearmed** – you should make your decisions only based on a detailed, up-to-date knowledge.*

**take the rough with the smooth** – to accept the difficult or disagreeable part of something with dignity, as if they were easy and pleasant parts.

**ALSO: take the bitter with the sweet**

*In this business you have to learn to **take the rough with the smooth** – it's an extremely competitive environment.*

**ups and downs** – periods of success and joy alternating with periods of sadness, disappointment, and failure. *It's possible for small-business owners to successfully deal with downturns if they are prepared for **ups and downs**.*

**waste not, want not** – (proverb) *usually used when the speaker needs something that another person has discarded*; if one makes a proper and careful use of the things or resources they have, they will always have enough.

*They limit the use of stationary in our office, so I try to use paper and ink reasonably – **waste not, want not**.*

**that's the way the cookie crumbles** – *used when something unfortunate has just happened*; that is the way it goes, and one has no choice but to accept it.

**ALSO: that's the way the ball bounces** AmE

*I can't believe they chose him instead of me for this position. Ah well, **that's the way the cookie crumbles**.*

**the exception proves the rule** – (proverb) although this example is not in accordance with the rule, it shows that the rule can still be applied in most cases. *Usually female teams are difficult to work with, but I have a group of girls at my firm who are great team players – **the exception proves the rule**.*

**the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence** – (proverb) life and conditions always seem to be better somewhere else.

przezorny zawsze ubezpieczony

znosić godnie niepowodzenia

wzloty i upadki

nie marnuj, a nie będziesz w potrzebie

tak to już bywa

wyjątek potwierdza regułę

wszędzie dobrze, gdzie nas nie ma; cudze chwalicie, swego nie znacie

**ALSO: the grass is always greener on the other side of the hill**

*Working for two different kinds of businesses we always envied each other something. I wished I had my own company, he longed for the security of my job. Well, **the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.***

**let sleeping dogs lie** – used to warn someone against saying or doing something which could instigate trouble, or cause disorder; do not tempt bad fortune; also: do not mention things which caused problems in the past.

*We should not pursue the faulty products issue. Maybe they won't notice anything. We'd better **let sleeping dogs lie.***

*We used to be enemies a long time ago. We should **let sleeping dogs lie.** If we now have a chance to work together on something meaningful, let's jump at it.*

**one good turn deserves another** – (proverb) if you help me in some way, I feel obliged to help you when you need it.

*I'll never forget how you helped me out during last year's conference. You put me up together with my three managers – **one good turn deserves another!***

**it never rains but it pours** – (proverb) an unlucky event is generally accompanied by other unfortunate events.

*After this terrible PR pratfall, we feared the worst. We were preparing ourselves for a real backlash from our customers – **it never rains but it pours.***

**a bad workman blames his tools** – (proverb) a person who produces bad work tends to blame the tool or instrument they are using rather than admit their own responsibility or fault.

**ALSO: a bad workman always quarrels with his tools** BrE

*He is always complaining about the software we use – it's so obsolete and awkward to him. He's just **a bad workman blaming his tools** – he should learn how to use it once and for all.*

**it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good** – (proverb) in every misfortune someone might find a benefit to themselves.

nie wywołuj wilka z lasu  
(nie ściągaaj na siebie kłopotów);  
także: nie rozdrapuj starych ran

przysługa za przysługę

nieszczęścia chodzą parami  
(jedno niepowodzenie pociąga za sobą następne)

złej baletnicy przeszkadza i rąbek u spódnicy (osoba nieposiadająca odpowiednich umiejętności doszukuje się przyczyn swoich błędów lub niepowodzeń w nieistotnych okolicznościach, np. źle działającym narzędziu pracy)

nie ma tego złego, co by na dobre nie wyszło

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*The company was taken over, but most staff could still keep their post – **it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good.***

**where there is a will, there is a way** – (proverb)  
if one really wants to achieve something, however difficult it appears, one will find a way to achieve it.  
*I'm sure we'll find generous sponsors for our publicity stunt – **where there is a will, there is a way.***

dla chcącego nic trudnego

**keep one's head above water** – to survive by avoiding financial problems and other difficulties; also: to manage to do one's work on time.  
*Despite last year's serious cash flow problems, we were lucky enough to **keep our head above water.** It's been an extremely busy period at work and a difficult time in my life. I'm so relieved I managed to **keep my head above water.***

~ utrzymywać się na powierzchni; przetrwać (zwłaszcza finansowo); także: nadążać z pracą

**if at first you don't succeed, try and try again** – one should not give up trying until the goal is reached.  
**If at first you don't succeed, try and try again** – *the successful ones stand out because of their amazing persistence.*

jeśli nie udało się za pierwszym razem, próbuj dalej

## Exercises

### I. Idioms in use – Easy

*Fill in the gaps with missing words by choosing from the box below to form idioms from the **Fundamentals** section.*

<i>bush</i>	<i>exception</i>	<i>hollow</i>	<i>curses</i>	<i>use</i>	<i>dogs</i>	<i>head</i>
<i>wolves</i>	<i>forewarned</i>	<i>turn</i>	<i>sick</i>	<i>foreshadowed</i>	<i>ill</i>	
<i>excerpt</i>	<i>run</i>	<i>ground</i>	<i>hand</i>	<i>silver</i>	<i>waste</i>	<i>blames</i>

1. Don't worry! There has to be a chance we can benefit somehow from the situation – it's a(n) ..... wind that blows nobody any good.
2. We'd rather let sleeping ..... lie. We can anger our workers right now when we need them most.
3. Maybe we didn't win the tender, but our specialists will still play an important role of advisors to the winners. A bird in the hand is worth two in the .....

4. The ..... proves the rule. Unlike most marketing people, she's desperate to be brutally honest with clients. I don't know where this will guide her really.
5. We should think of some hedge against a declining stock market. .... is forearmed.
6. We used too much material for the latest batch of the product. A lot of it went for nothing, I'm afraid. Order some more, but remember: ..... not, want not. We cannot let this happen again.
7. Don't disturb me! I'm just so busy right now. I can't keep my ..... above water.
8. Only a bad workman ..... his tools. Why don't you just move to another room if you find this one too small and stuffy.
9. I think I'll offer James a hand in his part of the project. Since he helped me last time, one good ..... deserves another.
10. One of the ..... rules for a great team meeting is to design next steps jointly.

## II. Idioms in use – Difficult

*Guessing from the context, fill in the gaps with suitable idioms from the **Fundamentals** section. You may have to slightly modify or use part of an idiom only. In some sentences more than one answer can be considered correct.*

1. He agreed that his presentation was a fiasco but said it all happened because of the new kind of overhead projector which he has never used before. Obviously, that was just the .....
2. This environment is rather clubby. It might be difficult to get in there and have a career, but .....
3. I wanted to have a month holiday, but it's a busy period at the moment so they allowed me two weeks only. Ah well, .....
4. You gave me a hand when I was in a crunch, so to me it's natural that I should help you now. ...., don't you think?
5. As the morale of workers is so low right now, maybe it's not the right moment to introduce a new appraisal procedure. I think we should ..... for the time being.
6. Surely, there will appear some obstacles during our attempts to reach the goal. But, ... and I believe we'll be successful in the end.

## FUNDAMENTALS – Exercises

7. Bringing up children and managing a team of workers are quite similar – in both cases it is crucial to establish ..... early.
8. You'll be given an opportunity to work on some assignments abroad, which means you'll often be away from your family — but I'd advise you to .....  
.....
9. Every company has its ..... Patience, perseverance, and a lot of support are crucial to survive difficult times.
10. Once you find yourself in trouble, it's good to know how to react – .....  
.....

### III. Role plays – All

*You are going to do role plays connected with work-related situations. Using suitable idioms from the **Fundamentals** section, make a point at the end of each conversation. Spend two minutes thinking about the circumstances. Take roles of A and B by turns.*

1. **A:** You're having a conversation with your colleague about a rival company. You exchange some positive comments over the treatment of employees there. You express a view you could be much better off working for them.  
**B:** Your colleague wishes he/she could work for a rival company. You exchange some comments over the treatment of employees there. Persuade him/her that the rumours he/she has heard may not be true.
2. **A:** You and your former colleague are discussing your dismissal. Because you're tired, you're not going back to work for some time. You have always dreamt of taking a sabbatical.  
**B:** You and your former colleague are discussing his/her dismissal. They are not going back to work for some time. Cheer them up by suggesting taking up a new hobby or fulfilling some longstanding dreams and tell them this could be a chance to achieve a success in another area.
3. **A:** You were about to be promoted when another employee took the position. You feel completely gutted and you haven't got a faintest idea why this happened.  
**B:** Your colleague failed to be promoted as the company headhunted an extremely talented person from outside. Help your colleague face it by telling him/her there was just a better candidate.
4. **A:** You've just been offered a placement in a subsidiary of your company in Sweden. Initially, you were reluctant to go, but now you're having second thoughts about it.  
**B:** You're discussing your colleague's decision about going for a placement in Sweden. Point out that despite many inconveniences (such as a long distance to travel, different climate, lack of friends and family) this could turn out to be an inspiring experience.

5. **A:** You and your colleague are sharing some information about the current situation of your company. It has been made clear that it is going to be sold to a Swiss tycoon next month. You're still hoping to keep your position despite the takeover.

**B:** During a conversation with a colleague you're discussing the sale of your company. You've heard that a lot of sweeping changes have been planned, and, to cap it all off, only a few preeminent workers will be allowed to stay. You're beginning to fear the worst.

### **IV. Language clash – All**

*In small groups, revise Polish equivalents of the expressions in **I** and **II Idioms in use** without looking back to the dictionary section. Are they used as literal or figurative (nonliteral) translations of the English idioms? Are all of the idioms from I and II translatable?*