

### **List of Idioms with Personal Names**

**(And) Bob's your uncle** – used after explaining a simple set of instructions, meaning that it's very easy to do

**(Between) Buckley's and Nunn** – almost nil

**A Freudian slip** – if someone makes a Freudian slip, they accidentally use the wrong word, but in doing so reveal what they are really thinking rather than what they think the other person wants to hear

**A peeping Tom** – a voyeur, a person who takes pleasure from secretly watching others

**Achilles heel** – a person's weak spot is their Achilles' heel; a person's (organization, country, etc.) weakness or vulnerability

**Adam's ale** – an old-fashioned term for plain water

**Adam's apple** – the Adam's apple is a bulge in the throat, mostly seen in men

**Adonis** – a young man of unusual physical beauty; an extremely sexually attractive young man, one who is well built and handsome

**All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy** – a familiar proverb that means that if a person does not take some time off work, they can become boring. It was the phrase that Jack Nicholson kept typing in *The Shining*, a film based in the novel of the same name by Stephen King.

**Any Tom, Dick or Harry** – any ordinary person; if something could be done by any Tom, Dick or Harry, it could be done by absolutely anyone; if every Tom, Dick and Harry knows about something, then it is common knowledge

**A Roland for an Oliver** – equal measure; measure for measure; adequate response; a tit for tat, a blow for a blow

**Bacchus hath drowned more men than Neptune** – more men have died because of alcohol than have drowned in the sea (Bacchus was the God of wine and Neptune was the God of water)

**Barbie Doll** (slang) – an attractive but silly person (usually about a woman, but may refer to a man);

**Barkus is willing** – someone is willing to get married

**Before you could say Jack Robinson** – very quickly; the term Jack Robinson represents “a short amount of time”

**Benjamin of the family** – the youngest child; the youngest son, especially when he is much younger than his brothers

**Buggles' turn** – someone gets promotion through length of service rather than ability, especially in the British civil service

**(Clean the) Augean stable** usually means clear away corruption or perform a large and unpleasant task that has long called for attention. Augeas, the mythical king of Elis, kept great stables that held 3,000 oxen and had not been cleaned for thirty years until Hercules was assigned the job. Hercules accomplished this task by causing two rivers to run through the stables. The word Augean is sometimes used by itself to mean extremely difficult and usually distasteful (also used “Augean tasks”, “Augean labor”, or “Augean clutter”).

**Damocles' sword** refers to an impending disaster; a danger or disaster that could occur at any moment

**Davey Jones' locker** – the bottom of the sea or resting place of drowned sailors

**Do a Lord Lucan** – someone disappears without a trace or runs off (Lord Lucan disappeared after a murder)

**Doubting Thomas** – a skeptic; a person who refuses to believe without clear proof

**Elvis has left the building** – the show or event has come to an end

**Even Stevens** – owing nothing; tied (in a game); if everything is equal between people, they are even Stevens

**For Pete's sake** – this is used as an exclamation to show exasperation or irritation

**For the love of Pete** – usually used in exasperation

**Going Jesse** – if something is a going Jesse, it's a viable, successful project or enterprise

**Great Scott** – an exclamation of surprise

**Hamlet without the prince** refers to a performance or event taking place without the most important performer or central figure, such as the lead speaker

**Happy as Larry** – when you're as happy as Larry, you're very happy indeed

**Heath Robinson** – if a machine or system is described as Heath Robinson, it is very complicated, but not practical or effective, named after a cartoonist who drew very complicated machines that performed simple tasks

**Herculean task** – an extremely difficult task; an almost impossible undertaking

**Hobson's choice** – the choice in which only one thing is offered; take it or leave it; the absence of choice

**Home, James** – this is a clichéd way of telling the driver of a vehicle to start driving. It is supposed to be an order to a chauffeur (a privately employed driver). The full phrase is 'Home, James, and don't spare the horses'.

**In like Flynn** – to be in like Flynn means to be very successful, but with a connotation of taking great advantage of opportunity, being “in” with the right people, and having your success assured; it refers to Errol Flynn's popularity with women in the 40's. His ability to attract women was well known throughout the world. ('In like flint' is also used.)

**Is Saul also among the prophets?** - It's a biblical idiom used when somebody known for something bad appears all of a sudden to be doing something very good.

**Jack of All Trades (Jack of all trades, master of none)** – someone that can do many different jobs; a person with a wide variety of skills

**Jack the Lad** – a confident and not very serious young man who behaves as he wants to without thinking about other people

**Jekyll and Hyde** – someone who has a Jekyll and Hyde personality has a pleasant and a very unpleasant side to the character

**Job's comforter** – someone who says they want to comfort, but actually discomforts people is a Job's comforter

**Joe Blow; Joe Doakes** (AmE slang) – a typical average citizen

**Joe Citizen** – a typical representative of the public

**John Bull** – a character who represents the typical English man; he is usually pictured as a stocky figure wearing a waistcoat with the British flag on

**John Doe** or **Jane Doe** are names used for a man or a woman whose real name is unknown

**John Hancock** – a person's signature; it refers to one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence of the USA

**John Q Public** – the typical, average person

**Johnny on the spot** – a person who is always available; ready, willing, and able to do what needs to be done. ('Johnny-on-the-spot' is also used.)

**Johnny-come-lately** – a newcomer, someone who has just joined a group

**Judas kiss (kiss of Judas)** – a traitorous action disguised as a show of affection. The phrase alludes to the Biblical account of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, who kissed Jesus to identify him to the authorities arresting him.

**Jumping Judas!** – an expression of surprise or shock

**Katy bar the door** means get ready for trouble; something bad is about to happen

**Keep up with the Joneses** – to try to be as good as the neighbours by getting what they have and matching their lifestyle

**Let George do it** – let someone else do it (i.e., don't ask me because it doesn't concern me)

**Mickey Mouse** – if something is Mickey Mouse, it is intellectually trivial or not of a very high standard

**Midas touch** – the ability to make money no matter what idea one tries; a gift for easily making money or being financially successful

**Mr. Nice Guy** – a decent, friendly man

**Mr. Right** (fem.: **Miss Right**) – the person whom someone would like to marry; a perfect match

**Murphy's law** – if anything can go wrong, it will. (Or: Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.)

**Nervous Nellie** – an excessively nervous, worried, apprehensive, or timid person

**No Names, No Pack Drill** – by not accusing anyone specifically, I may avoid trouble; punishment will be prevented if names and details are not mentioned

**Not Know Jack** – not know anything

**Not know someone from Adam** means to not know someone at all, having never met them, or to completely unable recognize them

**Old as Methuselah** means extremely old. Methuselah is the name of a character from the Old Testament of the Bible, he was the grandfather of Noah. Methuselah is said to have died at the age of 969, making him the longest-lived figure in the Bible. On the Fritz – not working properly.

**Painted Jezebel** – a painted Jezebel is a scheming woman

**Pandora's Box** – opening Pandora's box is the same as opening a can of worms. It refers to a process which, once began, results in many unforeseen problems which were previously covered up; to open Pandora's box is to let things get out of control.

**Patience of Job** – great patience; to have an immense and unyielding degree of patience and conviction, especially in the face of problems or difficulty. A reference to the biblical figure Job, whose absolute faith in God remained unshaken despite the numerous afflictions set upon himself, his family, and his estate by Satan.

**Raise Cain** – if someone raises Cain, they make a big fuss publicly, causing a disturbance

**Rich as Croesus** – someone who is as rich as Croesus is very wealthy indeed

**Rip van Winkle** – Rip van Winkle is a character in a story who slept for twenty years, so if someone is a Rip van Winkle, they are behind the times and out of touch with what's happening now

**Rob Peter to Pay Paul** – pay off a debt with another loan; solve a problem in such a way that it leads to a new problem

**Simple Simon** – a simpleton (a character from a nursery rhyme)

**Sisyphian task** is a pointless, fruitless, and unrewarding task that must be repeated over and over again; and endless task

**Smart Alec** – a conceited person who irritates others by always trying to be clever, sarcastic, etc.; a person who insists on showing off their knowledge in a way that is annoying

**Take the Mickey (out of someone)** – to make fun of someone; tease someone ('Take the Mick' is also used.)

**The Real McCoy** – a genuine item; the genuine thing or person

**To live / lead the life of Riley** – to live a really good life with few problems

**To slip someone a Mickey (Finn)** – to surreptitiously drug someone's alcoholic drink or to give someone a drink that had been drugged without their knowledge or consent with the intent of incapacitating them

**Tommy Atkins** – a British soldier

**Uncle Sam** – the government of the United States and, by extension, the American people. The name is an expansion of the abbreviation U.S.

**Vicar of Bray** – a person who changes their beliefs and principles to stay popular with people above them is a Vicar of Bray

**Walter Mitty** – a Walter Mitty character is an unexceptional person who is prone to daydreaming of personal triumphs