

Popular Spanish Idioms

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Word	Literal Meaning	Meaning	Example	Translation
estar en las nubes	to be in the clouds	to be distracted or daydreaming	Hoy estoy en las nubes y no puedo concentrarme.	Today I'm distracted and can't concentrate.
costar un ojo de la cara	to cost an eye from the face	to be very expensive	Ese móvil cuesta un ojo de la cara.	That phone costs a fortune.
no tener pelos en la lengua	to not have hairs on the tongue	to speak very directly	Mi abuela no tiene pelos en la lengua.	My grandmother speaks her mind.
tirar la toalla	to throw in the towel	to give up	No tires la toalla tan pronto.	Don't give up so soon.
dar en el clavo	to hit the nail	to be exactly right	Con esa idea, diste en el clavo.	With that idea, you hit the nail on the head.
meter la pata	to put the foot in	to make a mistake	Perdón, metí la pata en la reunión.	Sorry, I made a mistake in the meeting.
estar hasta las narices	to be up to the nostrils	to be fed up	Estoy hasta las narices de este ruido.	I'm fed up with this noise.
hacer la vista gorda	to make the fat view	to ignore something on purpose	El profesor hizo la vista gorda esta vez.	The teacher looked the other way this time.
ser pan comido	to be eaten bread	to be very easy	Ese examen fue pan comido.	That exam was a piece of cake.
ponerse las pilas	to put on the batteries	to start working harder	Tienes que ponerte las pilas hoy.	You need to get moving today.
llover a cántaros	to rain in pitchers	to rain very hard	Anoche llovió a cántaros.	It poured rain last night.
tener mala leche	to have bad milk	to be in a bad mood or have a nasty attitude	Hoy el jefe tiene mala leche.	The boss is in a bad mood today.
estar en el séptimo cielo	to be in the seventh heaven	to be very happy	Cuando aprobé el examen, estaba en el séptimo cielo.	When he passed the exam, he was over the moon.
costar un riñón	to cost a kidney	to be very expensive	Ese móvil cuesta un riñón.	That phone costs a fortune.
no tener un pelo de tonto	to not have a hair of a fool	to be very smart or not easily fooled	No le engañes; no tiene un pelo de tonto.	Don't try to fool him; he's not stupid.
tirar la casa por la ventana	to throw the house out the window	to spend a lot of money to celebrate	Para su boda, tiraron la casa por la ventana.	For their wedding, they went all out.
dar la talla	to give the size	to be good enough	En el trabajo nuevo, dio la talla desde el primer día.	In the new job, he did well from the first day.
meter la gamba	to put in the shrimp	to make a mistake	Perdón, metí la gamba en la reunión.	Sorry, I messed up in the meeting.
estar hecho polvo	to be made of dust	to be very tired or very sad	Después del viaje, estaba hecho polvo.	After the trip, he was completely exhausted.
ser coser y cantar	to be sewing and singing	to be very easy	Para ella, ese ejercicio es coser y cantar.	For her, that exercise is very easy.
ponerse como un tomate	to become like a tomato	to blush a lot	Se puso como un tomate cuando la llamaron.	She turned bright red when they called her.
llover sobre mojado	to rain on wet ground	to make a bad situation worse	Perder el trabajo fue llover sobre mojado.	Losing his job was just one more bad thing on top of everything else.
tener mala uva	to have bad grape	to be in a bad mood or be nasty	Hoy tiene mala uva, mejor no le hables.	He is in a bad mood today, so it's better not to talk to him.

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estar en las nubes	to be in the clouds	to be distracted or daydreaming	Hoy estoy en las nubes y no escuché la clase.	I'm distracted today and didn't listen in class.
costar un ojo de la cara	to cost an eye from the face	to be very expensive	Ese móvil cuesta un ojo de la cara.	That phone costs a fortune.
no tener pelos en la lengua	to not have hairs on the tongue	to speak very directly	Mi tía no tiene pelos en la lengua.	My aunt always speaks her mind.
tirar la toalla	to throw in the towel	to give up	No tires la toalla tan pronto.	Don't give up so soon.
dar en el clavo	to hit the nail	to be exactly right	Con esa idea, diste en el clavo.	With that idea, you hit the nail on the head.
ponerse las pilas	to put on the batteries	to get moving and work harder	Tenemos que ponernos las pilas hoy.	We need to get moving and work harder today.
ser pan comido	to be eaten bread	to be very easy	Este examen fue pan comido.	This exam was very easy.
meter la pata	to put the paw/leg in	to make a mistake	Perdón, metí la pata en la reunión.	Sorry, I messed up in the meeting.
estar hasta las narices	to be up to the nostrils	to be fed up	Estoy hasta las narices de este ruido.	I'm really fed up with this noise.
echar una mano	to throw a hand	to help	¿Me echas una mano con la caja?	Can you give me a hand with the box?
irse por las ramas	to go by the branches	to talk about unimportant details	No te vayas por las ramas y dime la verdad.	Don't beat around the bush and tell me the truth.
tener mala leche	to have bad milk	to have a bad temper or mean attitude	Hoy tiene mala leche y no quiere hablar.	He's in a bad mood today and doesn't want to talk.
a otro perro con ese hueso	to another dog with that bone	I don't believe you.	¿Que no tienes tiempo? A otro perro con ese hueso.	You're not fooling anyone with that excuse.
estar hecho polvo	to be made of dust	to be very tired or in bad shape	Después del viaje, estoy hecho polvo.	After the trip, I'm completely exhausted.
tener la cabeza en las nubes	to have one's head in the clouds	to be distracted or daydreaming	Hoy tengo la cabeza en las nubes y no me concentro.	My mind is all over the place today, and I can't focus.
irse de las manos	to go out of the hands	to get out of control	La discusión se fue de las manos muy rápido.	The argument got out of control very quickly.
poner los puntos sobre las íes	to put the dots on the i's	to be very clear and direct	El profesor puso los puntos sobre las íes desde el principio.	The teacher made everything very clear from the beginning.
no dar pie con bola	to not hit the ball with the foot	to do nothing right	Hoy no doy pie con bola en el trabajo.	Today I'm really messing up at work.
estar en el ajo	to be in the garlic	to be involved in something, often secret	Creo que Ana está en el ajo.	I think Ana is in on it.
hacer la vista gorda	to make the fat view	to ignore something on purpose	El jefe hizo la vista gorda esta vez.	The boss looked the other way this time.
quedarse de piedra	to stay like stone	to be shocked	Me quedé de piedra cuando vi la noticia.	I was shocked when I saw the news.
dar la lata	to give the can	to annoy someone	No me des la lata, por favor.	Please stop bothering me.
tener un as bajo la manga	to have an ace up one's sleeve	to have a secret advantage	Creo que tiene un as bajo la manga.	I think he has a trick up his sleeve.
salir rana	to come out as a frog	to turn out badly	El coche salió rana y se rompió enseguida.	The car turned out to be a lemon and broke down right away.
tomar el pelo	to take the hair	to tease or pull someone's leg	No te enfades, solo te estoy tomando el pelo.	Don't get mad, I'm just teasing you.
estar como una cabra	to be like a goat	to be crazy or eccentric	Mi vecino habla solo; está como una cabra.	My neighbor talks to himself; he's crazy.

Word	Literal Meaning	Meaning	Example	Translation
importar un pepino	to matter a cucumber	to not care at all, to not matter	Me importa un pepino lo que piensen de mí.	I don't care at all what people think of me.
romper el hielo	to break the ice	to break the ice, initiate conversation	Hicimos un juego para romper el hielo.	We played a game to break the ice.
poner verde	to put green	to criticize or badmouth someone	En la reunión, pusieron verde al jefe.	At the meeting, they spoke badly about the boss.
dar calabazas	to give pumpkins	to reject or stand someone up (romantically or academically)	Le pedí una cita, pero me dio calabazas.	I asked her out, but she turned me down.
ser la leche	to be the milk	to be amazing or terrible (depends on context)	¡Este pastel es la leche!	This cake is amazing!
dormir a pierna suelta	to sleep with a loose leg	to sleep soundly/deeply	Después del viaje, dormí a pierna suelta.	After the trip, I slept very soundly.
pasarlo bomba	to pass it bomb	to have a great time	En la fiesta lo pasamos bomba.	We had a blast at the party.
caer en la cuenta	to fall into the account	to realize, to catch on	De repente caí en la cuenta de que era tarde.	Suddenly, I realized it was late.
estar al loro	to be at the parrot	to be alert, pay attention	Hay que estar al loro en esta clase.	You have to stay alert in this class.
echar raíces	to throw roots	to settle down, put down roots	Después de viajar mucho, decidió echar raíces en Madrid.	After traveling a lot, he decided to settle down in Madrid.
andar con pies de plomo	to walk with lead feet	to be very cautious or careful	En esa empresa nueva, es mejor andar con pies de plomo.	At that new company, it's better to be very careful.
buscarle tres pies al gato	to look for three feet on the cat	to overcomplicate things or find problems where there are none	No le busques tres pies al gato; la solución es sencilla.	Don't overcomplicate it; the solution is simple.
de tal palo tal astilla	from such a stick, such a splinter	like father, like son; a chip off the old block	Su hijo también es médico, de tal palo tal astilla.	His son is a doctor too, just like father, like son.
en boca cerrada no entran moscas	a closed mouth catches no flies	silence is golden; sometimes it's better not to speak	No digas nada, recuerda que en boca cerrada no entran moscas.	Don't say anything; remember that silence is golden.
a caballo regalado no se le mira el diente	don't look at a gift horse's tooth	don't criticize or examine a gift too closely	No te quejes del color; a caballo regalado no se le mira el diente.	Don't complain about the color; you shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth.
al mal tiempo, buena cara	to bad weather, good face	put on a brave face in adversity	Aunque perdimos el partido, al mal tiempo, buena cara.	Even though we lost the game, we should stay positive.
cada dos por tres	every two by three	very often, all the time	Mi hermana cambia de trabajo cada dos por tres.	My sister changes jobs all the time.
consultar con la almohada	to consult with the pillow	to sleep on it before deciding	No te decidas ahora, consulta con la almohada.	Don't decide now; sleep on it.
dar gato por liebre	to give cat for hare	to cheat or swindle by substituting something inferior	Me dieron gato por liebre; este bolso no es de cuero.	They sold me a fake; this bag is not leather.
el mundo es un pañuelo	the world is a handkerchief	it's a small world	¡Qué coincidencia! El mundo es un pañuelo.	What a coincidence! It's a small world.
hablar por los codos	to talk through the elbows	to talk a lot, nonstop	Esa mujer habla por los codos; no para.	That woman talks nonstop; she never stops.

Word	Literal Meaning	Meaning	Example	Translation
ir al grano	to go to the grain	to get to the point	Ya basta de rodeos, vayamos al grano.	Enough with the roundabout talk, let's get to the point.
Estar con un humor de perros	to be with a mood of dogs	to be in a bad mood	Hoy estoy con un humor de perros, así que prefiero no hablar mucho.	I'm in a really bad mood today, so I'd rather not talk much.
La gallina de los huevos de oro	the goose that laid the golden eggs	Something that is a very good source of money or business. In English, a similar idiom is for something to be "the golden goose."	Su pequeña tienda se convirtió en la gallina de los huevos de oro de la familia.	Their small shop became the family's cash cow.
Matar dos pájaros de un tiro	to kill two birds with one shot	to do two things at a time This is a reference to an old hunting technique. You might have heard the English idiom, "to kill two birds with one stone."	Voy al banco y luego al supermercado para matar dos pájaros de un tiro.	I'm going to the bank and then the supermarket to kill two birds with one stone.
5. Meter la pata.	To put an animal's leg/foot in it.	To mess up, make a mistake, or say the wrong thing.	Perdón, metí la pata al decir su nombre delante de todos.	Sorry, I messed up by saying his name in front of everyone.
Dormirse en los laureles	to rest on one's laurels	This one also has an equivalent in English. As you may know, crowns made of laurel wreaths were given to distinguished citizens in ancient Greece and Rome. If the honored person did not continue to strive, then he "rested on his laurels."	Ganó el premio, pero no debe dormirse en los laureles.	He won the prize, but he shouldn't get too comfortable and stop trying.
Estar con la soga al cuello	to be with the rope to the neck	to be in trouble, to be very stressed	Con tantas deudas, estoy con la soga al cuello.	With so many debts, I'm really under a lot of pressure.
No nombres la soga en la casa del ahorcado	Do not name the rope in the house of the hanged man.	Don't mention a sensitive or controversial subject.	No nombres la soga en la casa del ahorcado; mejor cambiemos de tema.	Don't mention that here; let's change the subject.
Dios aprieta, pero no ahorca	God squeezes, but does not hang.	Life can be difficult, but not deadly.	El trabajo es duro, pero Dios aprieta, pero no ahorca.	The work is hard, but God gives us only what we can handle.
Salir un ojo de la cara	To get an eye of the face	to be very expensive or costly	Ese teléfono me salió un ojo de la cara.	That phone cost me a fortune.
Borrón y cuenta nueva	a big erase and a new account	to start from the beginning	Después de la discusión, decidimos hacer borrón y cuenta nueva.	After the argument, we decided to start fresh and leave it behind us.
Decir algo con la boca pequeña	to say something with a tiny mouth	to say something unintentionally	Lo dijo con la boca pequeña, así que no sonó muy convencido.	He said it half-heartedly, so he didn't sound very convinced.
Morgenstund hat Gold im Mund.	To cost the eyes of the head. English equivalent: To cost an arm and a leg.	To cost an arm and a leg.	Morgenstund hat Gold im Mund. Me gusta levantarme temprano para estudiar.	The early bird catches the worm. I like getting up early to study.
□□□□□□ (Te no hira wo kaesu)	Caught with your beard in a mailbox. English equivalent: To be caught with your pants down.	To be caught with your pants down.	Se quedó en silencio y luego dijo que estaba □□□□□□ (Te no hira wo kaesu).	He stayed silent and then said he had changed his mind completely.

Word	Literal Meaning	Meaning	Example	Translation
رامحلا مَلْعِي رارفتلا (At-Tikraar yu'Allem al- Himaar.)	Like water on a duck's back. English equivalent: In one ear, out the other.	In one ear, out the other.	Le expliqué la tarea, pero para él fue مَلْعِي رارفتلا رامحلا (At-Tikraar yu'Allem al- Himaar.).	I explained the task to him, but he needed to hear it over and over again before he understood.
Mieć muchy w nosie.	Cat praises the cat's tail for being long. English equivalent: Every cook praises his own broth.	Every cook praises his own broth.	Dice que su receta es la mejor, pero Mieć muchy w nosie.	He says his recipe is the best, but he's full of himself.
Ogni morte di papa.	Rotten blood. English equivalent: Makes blood boil.	Makes blood boil.	Su comentario me hizo pensar en Ogni morte di papa.	His comment made me think of something that happens very rarely.
Å snakke rett fra leveren.	To cast a brick to attract jade. English equivalent: Tossing an idea.	Tossing an idea.	Solo estaba Å snakke rett fra leveren. en la conversación.	I was just speaking frankly in the conversation.
estar en su salsa		/es'tar en su 'sal.sa/	En la cocina, Ana está en su salsa.	In the kitchen, Ana is in her element.
no importar un pepino		/no im.por'tar um pe'pi.no/	A mi hermano no le importa un pepino lo que digan los demás.	My brother does not care at all what other people say.
dar la vuelta a la tortilla		/dar la 'bwel.ta a la tor'ti.ɟa/	Con ese gol, el equipo logró dar la vuelta a la tortilla.	With that goal, the team managed to turn things around.
estar como un flan		/es'tar 'ko.mo um flan/	Antes del examen, estaba como un flan.	Before the exam, I was really nervous.
ser un rata		/ser um 'ra.ta/	No le pidas dinero a Carlos; es un rata.	Don't ask Carlos for money; he's stingy.
tener memoria de pez		/te.'ner me.'mo.rɟa ðe peθ/	Tengo memoria de pez y olvido los nombres enseguida.	I have a terrible memory and forget names right away.
llevarse como el perro y el gato		/je.'βar.se 'ko.mo el 'pe.ro i el 'ga.to/	Mis dos vecinos se llevan como el perro y el gato.	My two neighbors get along like cats and dogs.
estar más feliz que una perdiz		/es'tar mas fe.'liθ ke 'u.na per'ðiθ/	Mi abuela está más feliz que una perdiz con su nuevo móvil.	My grandmother is over the moon with her new mobile phone.
ser muy mono		/ser muj 'mo.no/	Tu bebé es muy mono.	Your baby is very cute.
ser uña y carne		/ser 'u.ɲa i 'kar.ne/	María y yo somos uña y carne desde la universidad.	María and I have been inseparable since university.
no pegar ojo		/no pe.'ɣar 'o.xo/	Anoche no pude pegar ojo por el ruido.	Last night I couldn't sleep at all because of the noise.
tener vista de lince		/te.'ner 'bis.ta ðe 'lin.θe/	Mi abuela tiene vista de lince y vio el error enseguida.	My grandmother has very sharp eyesight and spotted the mistake right away.
hacer un frío que pela		/a.'θer um 'fri.o ke 'pe.la/	Hoy hace un frío que pela, así que llevo abrigo.	It's freezing cold today, so I'm wearing a coat.
hacer un calor que pela		/a.'θer uɲ ka.'lor ke 'pe.la/	En verano hace un calor que pela en esta ciudad.	In summer, it gets extremely hot in this city.
estar bajo el sol		/es'tar 'ba.xo el sol/	Pasamos la tarde estar bajo el sol en la playa.	We spent the afternoon in the sun at the beach.
Lo dijo de labios para fuera	said it from lips outward	did not mean what was said	Lo dijo de labios para fuera, porque luego no hizo nada.	He said it, but he didn't really mean it, because later he did nothing.

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Estar al tanto	to be at the level	to be up to date	Siempre estoy al tanto de las noticias por la mañana.	I always keep up with the news in the morning.
Estar en el quinto pino	to be at the fifth pine	to be far away / in the middle of nowhere	La nueva oficina está en el quinto pino, lejos del centro.	The new office is way out in the middle of nowhere, far from downtown.
No ver tres en un burro	not to see three on a donkey	to be very drunk	Después de la fiesta, no veía tres en un burro.	After the party, I could hardly see anything.
Estar hasta en la sopa	to be even in the soup	to be everywhere	Ese cantante está hasta en la sopa últimamente.	That singer is everywhere lately.
Ser del año de la pera	to be from the year of the pear	to be very old-fashioned	Ese teléfono es del año de la pera, pero todavía funciona.	That phone is really old, but it still works.
Estar en boca de todos	to be in everyone's mouth	to be the talk of the town	La noticia está en boca de todos en el barrio.	The news is on everyone's lips in the neighborhood.
Poner los cuernos	to put the horns	to cheat on someone	Le puso los cuernos a su pareja y ahora están separados.	He cheated on his partner, and now they are separated.
Hacerse el sueco	to play the Swede	to play dumb	Cuando le pregunté por el dinero, se hizo el sueco.	When I asked him about the money, he acted like he didn't know anything.
Estar en las últimas	to be in the last ones	to be on one's last legs	Mi abuelo está en las últimas y necesita descansar.	My grandfather is in very bad shape and needs to rest.
Ir viento en popa	to go wind in stern	to go smoothly	El proyecto va viento en popa y terminaremos pronto.	The project is going very well, and we will finish soon.
A buenas horas mangas verdes	at good hours green sleeves	too little too late	Llegaste a ayudarme a buenas horas mangas verdes.	You came to help me way too late.
Más vale tarde que nunca	better late than never	better late than never	No pudiste venir ayer, pero más vale tarde que nunca.	You couldn't come yesterday, but better late than never.
A palabras necias, oídos sordos	to foolish words, deaf ears	ignore foolish comments	A palabras necias, oídos sordos, así que no le contesté.	Foolish words should be ignored, so I didn't answer him.
Cada maestrillo tiene su librillo	every little teacher has his booklet	everyone has their own way	Cada maestrillo tiene su librillo, y ella estudia con sus propios apuntes.	Every teacher has their own way, and she studies with her own notes.
No hay mal que por bien no venga	no evil from which good doesn't come	every cloud has a silver lining	Perdí el autobús, pero encontré a un amigo en la parada; no hay mal que por bien no venga.	I missed the bus, but I met a friend at the stop; every cloud has a silver lining.
Quien mucho abarca poco aprieta	who grasps much squeezes little	don't spread yourself too thin	No aceptes tantos proyectos a la vez; quien mucho abarca poco aprieta.	Don't take on so many projects at once; if you try to do too much, you won't do any of it well.
Más sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo	the devil knows more from being old	with age comes wisdom	Mi abuelo siempre da buenos consejos; más sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo.	My grandfather always gives good advice; age brings wisdom.
A mal tiempo, buena cara	in bad weather, good face	stay positive in hard times	Aunque el día fue difícil, ella dijo: a mal tiempo, buena cara.	Even though the day was hard, she said, keep your chin up in hard times.

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Camarón que se duerme se lo lleva la corriente	shrimp that sleeps is carried by the current	you snooze you lose	Llegó tarde a comprar las entradas y se quedó sin ellas; camarón que se duerme se lo lleva la corriente.	He arrived late to buy the tickets and ended up without any; if you sleep, you miss out.
Del dicho al hecho hay mucho trecho	from said to done is a long way	easier said than done	Hablar de ahorrar es fácil, pero del dicho al hecho hay mucho trecho.	Talking about saving money is easy, but doing it is a lot harder.
Perro ladrador, poco mordedor	barking dog, little biter	his bark is worse than his bite	No te preocupes por su jefe; es perro ladrador, poco mordedor.	Don't worry about his boss; he talks big, but he is not really dangerous.
Cría cuervos y te sacarán los ojos	raise ravens and they'll peck your eyes	you reap what you sow	Si tratas mal a tus amigos, cría cuervos y te sacarán los ojos.	If you treat your friends badly, they will turn on you.
Ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente	eyes that don't see, heart that doesn't feel	out of sight out of mind	No quiero ver las fotos de la fiesta; ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente.	I don't want to see the party photos; out of sight, out of mind.
Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres	tell me who you walk with	you are known by the company you keep	No me gusta su grupo de amigos; dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres.	I don't like his group of friends; you can tell a lot about a person by the company they keep.
El hábito hace al monje	habit makes the monk	clothes make the man	Lleva un traje elegante; el hábito hace al monje.	He is wearing a nice suit; clothes make the man.
Barriga llena, corazón contento	full belly, happy heart	a full stomach makes you happy	Después de cenar, estaba feliz: barriga llena, corazón contento.	After dinner, I was happy: a full stomach makes a happy heart.
El tiempo lo cura todo	time cures everything	time heals all wounds	No te preocupes tanto; el tiempo lo cura todo.	Don't worry so much; time heals everything.
Quien calla otorga	who is silent consents	silence implies consent	No dijo nada cuando le preguntaron, y quien calla otorga.	He said nothing when they asked him, and silence means agreement.
Más vale prevenir que lamentar	better to prevent than regret	better safe than sorry	Lleva un paraguas; más vale prevenir que lamentar.	Take an umbrella; it is better to be safe than sorry.
No hay rosa sin espinas	no rose without thorns	nothing is perfect	Me gusta el trabajo, pero no hay rosa sin espinas.	I like the job, but nothing is perfect.
Quien la sigue la consigue	who follows it achieves it	persistence pays off	Sigue estudiando, porque quien la sigue la consigue.	Keep studying, because if you keep trying, you will succeed.
A grandes males, grandes remedios	to great ills, great remedies	desperate times call for desperate measures	Perdimos el tren, así que tomamos un taxi; a grandes males, grandes remedios.	We missed the train, so we took a taxi; when there is a big problem, you need a big solution.
Cada loco con su tema	each crazy person with their topic	to each their own	A él le encanta el jazz y a mí el rock; cada loco con su tema.	He loves jazz and I love rock; everyone has their own taste.
Zapatero a tus zapatos	shoemaker to your shoes	stick to your trade	No le pidas consejo de cocina; zapatero a tus zapatos.	Don't ask him for cooking advice; stick to what you know.
Genio y figura hasta la sepultura	character until the grave	leopards don't change their spots	Mi abuelo siempre llega tarde; genio y figura hasta la sepultura.	My grandfather is always late; he has always been the same, and he always will be.
No dejes para mañana lo que puedas hacer hoy	don't leave for tomorrow	don't put off until tomorrow	No dejes para mañana lo que puedas hacer hoy: termina la tarea ahora.	Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today: finish the homework now.

Word	Literal Meaning	Meaning	Example	Translation
Quien mucho duerme poco aprende	who sleeps much learns little	don't sleep your life away	Quien mucho duerme poco aprende, así que levántate temprano.	People who sleep too much learn little, so get up early.
Estar entre la espada y la pared	to be between sword and wall	to be between a rock and a hard place	Estoy entre la espada y la pared porque necesito el trabajo, pero el horario es muy malo.	I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place because I need the job, but the schedule is very bad.
Pasar factura	to pass the bill	to take a toll on health	Trabajar tantas horas seguidas puede pasar factura a tu salud.	Working so many hours in a row can take a toll on your health.
Hacer borrón y cuenta nueva	to make erasure and new account	to wipe the slate clean	Después de la discusión, decidimos hacer borrón y cuenta nueva.	After the argument, we decided to start over and leave it behind.
Bajar del guindo	to come down from the cherry tree	to backpedal on a boast	Cuando vio los datos, tuvo que bajar del guindo y admitir que estaba equivocado.	When he saw the data, he had to face reality and admit he was wrong.
Poner verde a alguien	to paint someone green	to badmouth someone	No me gusta que pongas verde a alguien a sus espaldas.	I don't like it when you badmouth someone behind their back.
Ponerse rojo como un tomate	to turn red like a tomato	to blush deeply	Se puso rojo como un tomate cuando el profesor le hizo una pregunta.	He turned bright red when the teacher asked him a question.
Tener la sartén por el mango	to hold the pan by the handle	to call the shots	En esta empresa, el jefe tiene la sartén por el mango.	At this company, the boss has all the power.
Estar en la cuerda floja	to be on the slack rope	to be on thin ice	Después del último error, el director está en la cuerda floja.	After the latest mistake, the director is on thin ice.
Montar en cólera	to mount in anger	to fly into a rage	Mi padre montó en cólera cuando vio el coche roto.	My father flew into a rage when he saw the broken car.
Hacer aguas	to make waters	to fail spectacularly	El plan hizo aguas desde el principio.	The plan was failing from the very beginning.
Irse al garete	to go to the bilge	to go down the drain	Sin clientes, el negocio se fue al garete.	Without customers, the business went under.
Estar en el aire	to be in the air	to be up in the air / uncertain	La fecha del viaje está en el aire.	The travel date is still up in the air.
Dar largas	to give long ones	to stall / put off	No me des largas y dime la verdad.	Don't keep putting me off and tell me the truth.
Hacer el agosto	to make August	to make a killing	La tienda hizo el agosto con la venta de mochilas.	The store made a lot of money from selling backpacks.
Irse por un tubo	to go through a tube	to go down the drain (money)	Con tantas multas, el dinero se me fue por un tubo.	With so many fines, my money disappeared fast.
Ponerse las botas	to put on the boots	to eat heartily	En la fiesta, nos pusimos las botas con la comida.	At the party, we ate a lot of food.
Estar sin blanca	to be without a penny	to be broke	No puedo salir hoy; estoy sin blanca.	I can't go out today; I'm broke.
Tener un humor de perros	to have a dog mood	to be in a foul mood	Hoy tengo un humor de perros y no quiero hablar con nadie.	I'm in a really bad mood today and I don't want to talk to anyone.
Ser del día a la noche	to be from day to night	to happen overnight	Su negocio pasó de ser pequeño a famoso; fue ser del día a la noche.	His business went from small to famous; it happened very quickly.

Word	Literal Meaning	Meaning	Example	Translation
Hacer de tripas corazón	to make heart from guts	to pluck up courage	Hizo de tripas corazón y llamó al médico.	He forced himself to do it and called the doctor.
Estar con un pie en cada barco	one foot in each boat	to sit on the fence	En la reunión, Marta estaba con un pie en cada barco y no decidió nada.	At the meeting, Marta was undecided and didn't make any decision.
Dar la tabarra	to give the boredom	to bore stiff	Deja de dar la tabarra y déjame estudiar.	Stop bothering me and let me study.
Hacer la pelota	to make the ball	to suck up / butter someone up	No me gusta hacer la pelota al jefe.	I don't like sucking up to the boss.
Irse por el camino de la amargura	to go down the path of bitterness	to become resentful	Desde que perdió el trabajo, se fue por el camino de la amargura.	Since he lost his job, he has been very unhappy.
Ponerse hecho una furia	to become a fury	to fly off the handle	Se puso hecho una furia cuando vio el coche rayado.	He got really angry when he saw the scratched car.
Estar en la edad del pavo	to be in the turkey's age	to be in awkward adolescence	Mi hermano está en la edad del pavo y cambia de opinión todo el tiempo.	My brother is at that awkward age and changes his mind all the time.
Ser un cero a la izquierda	to be a zero to the left	to be worthless	Sin experiencia, en esa empresa eres un cero a la izquierda.	Without experience, you are nobody in that company.
Estar más sano que una pera	healthier than a pear	to be fit as a fiddle	Mi abuelo tiene 80 años y está más sano que una pera.	My grandfather is 80 years old and is as healthy as can be.
Estar más tieso que un pino	stiffer than a pine	to be broke / stiff	No puedo salir esta semana; estoy más tieso que un pino.	I can't go out this week; I'm completely broke.
Hablar en cristiano	to speak in Christian	to speak plainly	No entiendo la explicación; ¿puedes hablar en cristiano?	I don't understand the explanation; can you say it in plain language?
Ir al meollo	to go to the pith	to get to the heart of the matter	Vamos al meollo y decidimos qué hacer.	Let's get to the point and decide what to do.
Hacer de la necesidad virtud	to make necessity virtue	to make a virtue of necessity	No quería mudarme, pero hice de la necesidad virtud.	I didn't want to move, but I made the best of it.
Estar en la cresta de la ola	on the crest of the wave	to be on top of the world	Después de ganar el premio, estaba en la cresta de la ola.	After winning the prize, he was at the top of his game.
Tener buena/mala pinta	to have good/bad look	to look promising or suspicious	Ese trabajo tiene buena pinta, pero el anuncio tiene mala pinta.	That job looks promising, but the ad looks bad.
Hacer el oso	to do the bear	to embarrass oneself socially	Hice el oso cuando saludé a la persona equivocada.	I made a fool of myself when I greeted the wrong person.
Ponerse las gafas	to put on glasses	to be objective / see clearly	Antes de discutir, ponte las gafas y mira los hechos.	Before arguing, put on your glasses and look at the facts.
Estar en el quinto infierno	to be in the fifth hell	to be in the middle of nowhere	Su pueblo está en el quinto infierno, lejos de todo.	Their town is in the middle of nowhere, far from everything.
Ir al lío	to go to the mess	to jump right in	No tenemos mucho tiempo, así que vamos a ir al lío.	We don't have much time, so let's get to the point.
Hacer la mano	to make the hand	to get skilled at something	Con la práctica, poco a poco vas a hacer la mano.	With practice, you will slowly get the hang of it.

Word	Literal Meaning	Meaning	Example	Translation
Estar en el banquillo	to be on the bench	to be on trial / in the hot seat	Después del error, el jefe está en el banquillo.	After the mistake, the boss is under scrutiny.
Dar carpetazo	to give a folder slam	to shelve an issue	La empresa decidió dar carpetazo al proyecto.	The company decided to put an end to the project.
Ser la oveja negra	to be the black sheep	to be the family outcast	En su familia, él siempre ha sido la oveja negra.	In his family, he has always been the black sheep.
Hacer buenas migas	to make good crumbs	to get along well	Mi compañera y yo hacemos buenas migas desde el primer día.	My coworker and I have gotten along well since the first day.
Dar la brasa	to give the ember	to pester repeatedly	Deja de dar la brasa y déjame estudiar.	Stop bothering me and let me study.
Echar leña al fuego	to throw wood on the fire	to add fuel to the fire	No discutas más; solo vas a echar leña al fuego.	Don't argue anymore; you're only going to make things worse.
Apagar el fuego	to put out the fire	to calm a situation	La mediadora intentó apagar el fuego entre los dos vecinos.	The mediator tried to calm things down between the two neighbors.
No tener ni pies ni cabeza	to have neither feet nor head	to make no sense	Tu explicación no tiene ni pies ni cabeza.	Your explanation makes no sense.
Ser moneda corriente	to be common currency	to be commonplace	En esta ciudad, el tráfico es moneda corriente por la mañana.	In this city, traffic is common in the morning.
Dar en el blanco	to hit the target	to hit the mark	Tu respuesta dio en el blanco.	Your answer hit the mark.
Estar en la luna	to be on the moon	to be absent-minded	Perdón, estaba en la luna y no escuché tu pregunta.	Sorry, I was daydreaming and didn't hear your question.
Hacer de las suyas	to do one's own things	to get up to mischief	Los niños hicieron de las suyas mientras los adultos hablaban.	The children got up to their usual mischief while the adults were talking.
Estar hasta el moño	to be up to the bun	to be fed up	Estoy hasta el moño de tanto ruido en la calle.	I'm fed up with all the noise in the street.
Tener la negra	to have the black one	to have bad luck	Hoy tengo la negra: perdí el autobús y también el móvil.	I'm having terrible luck today: I missed the bus and also lost my phone.
Hacer el ridículo	to make the ridiculous	to make a fool of oneself	Hice el ridículo cuando me caí en medio de la reunión.	I made a fool of myself when I fell in the middle of the meeting.
Ser harina de otro costal	flour from another sack	another kettle of fish	Tu idea es interesante, pero el presupuesto es harina de otro costal.	Your idea is interesting, but the budget is a different matter.
Hablar por boca de ganso	speak through goose's mouth	to speak for someone else	No hables por boca de ganso; quiero saber tu opinión.	Don't just repeat what others say; I want to know your opinion.
Dar largas a alguien	give long ones	to string someone along	Deja de dar largas a alguien y dime si vas a venir.	Stop putting me off and tell me if you are coming.
Estar hecho un ají	made a chili	to be furious	Mi hermano estaba hecho un ají cuando vio el coche rayado.	My brother was furious when he saw the scratched car.
Se me hace la boca agua	my mouth makes water	mouth-watering	Se me hace la boca agua cuando pienso en esa pizza.	My mouth waters when I think about that pizza.

Word	Literal Meaning	Meaning	Example	Translation
No saber ni papa de algo	not know a potato	to have no clue	No sé ni papa de matemáticas, así que necesito ayuda.	I don't know anything about math, so I need help.
Estar en Babia	to be in Babia	to be distracted	Durante la reunión, estaba en Babia y no escuché nada.	During the meeting, I was daydreaming and didn't hear anything.
Ir al meollo del asunto	go to the pith	get to the heart of the matter	Vamos al meollo del asunto y decidamos hoy.	Let's get to the point and decide today.
Echar un cable	throw a cable	to give a hand	¿Me puedes echar un cable con la mudanza mañana?	Can you give me a hand with the move tomorrow?
Irse por la tangente	go by the tangent	to dodge the issue	Cada vez que le preguntan por el error, se va por la tangente.	Every time they ask him about the mistake, he changes the subject.
Ponerse de uñas con alguien	put nails with someone	to clash with someone	Se puso de uñas con su vecino por el ruido.	He got angry with his neighbor because of the noise.
Tener la mosca detrás de la oreja	fly behind the ear	to be suspicious	Tengo la mosca detrás de la oreja desde que cambió de opinión tan rápido.	I've had a bad feeling since he changed his mind so quickly.
No tener abuela	to have no grandmother	to be shameless	Dice que cocina mejor que nadie; no tener abuela, ¿verdad?	He says he cooks better than anyone; he really likes to praise himself, doesn't he?
Estar como pez en el agua	like fish in water	to be in one's element	En la piscina, Ana está como pez en el agua.	In the pool, Ana is completely in her element.
Hacer la cama a alguien	make the bed for someone	to set someone up	Creo que quieren hacer la cama a Luis en el trabajo.	I think they want to set Luis up at work.
Irse al traste	go to the bin	to go wrong	El plan se fue al traste por la lluvia.	The plan fell apart because of the rain.
Ponerse morado	to turn purple	to eat too much	Después de la cena, se puso morado con el postre.	After dinner, he ate a lot of dessert.
No saber ni papa	not know a potato	clueless	No sabe ni papa de matemáticas.	He doesn't know anything about math.
A falta de pan, buenas son tortas	without bread cakes are good	beggars can't be choosers	No había pizza, así que comimos bocadillos; a falta de pan, buenas son tortas.	There was no pizza, so we ate sandwiches; when you can't have the best, you make do with what you have.
A quien madruga, Dios le ayuda	God helps early risers	early bird catches the worm	A quien madruga, Dios le ayuda, así que salimos temprano.	The early bird gets the worm, so we left early.
A caballo regalado no le mires el diente	gift horse teeth	don't look a gift horse in the mouth	Me regalaron una chaqueta usada, y a caballo regalado no le mires el diente.	They gave me a used jacket, and you shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth.
Más vale pájaro en mano que ciento volando	bird in hand	a bird in the hand	Prefiero aceptar este trabajo; más vale pájaro en mano que ciento volando.	I'd rather take this job; a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
Cuenta conmigo	count on me	you can count on me	Si necesitas ayuda con la mudanza, cuenta conmigo.	If you need help with the move, count on me.
Dios aprieta pero no ahorca	God squeezes but doesn't choke	tough but survivable	Dios aprieta pero no ahorca, así que seguiremos adelante con calma.	God squeezes, but he does not strangle, so we will keep going calmly.
De tal palo, tal astilla	such stick such splinter	like father like son	Juan ayuda mucho en casa; de tal palo, tal astilla.	Juan helps a lot at home; like father, like son.

Word	Literal Meaning	Meaning	Example	Translation
Perro que ladra no muerde	barking dog	bark worse than bite	No te preocupes por él; perro que ladra no muerde.	Don't worry about him; a barking dog does not bite.
Entre broma y broma, la verdad se asoma	between jokes truth appears	truth slips out joking	Entre broma y broma, la verdad se asoma, y al final dijo lo que pensaba.	There is truth in jokes, and in the end he said what he really thought.
El que madruga Dios le ayuda	early riser God helps	early bird	El que madruga Dios le ayuda, así que salí temprano para evitar el tráfico.	The early bird gets the worm, so I left early to avoid traffic.
Secretos en reunión son de mala educación	secrets in meeting rude	don't whisper in company	Secretos en reunión son de mala educación, así que háganlo en voz alta.	Secrets in a meeting are rude, so talk about it out loud.
A mal tiempo buena cara	bad weather good face	stay positive	A mal tiempo buena cara, aunque hoy todo salió mal.	Keep a positive attitude in bad times, even though everything went wrong today.
Echar de menos	throw missing	to miss someone	Te voy a echar de menos cuando te vayas de viaje.	I am going to miss you when you go on your trip.
Tener ganas de	have desire to	to feel like	Hoy tengo ganas de descansar en casa.	Today I feel like resting at home.
Hacer cola	make queue	to stand in line	Tuvimos que hacer cola durante veinte minutos para entrar al museo.	We had to stand in line for twenty minutes to get into the museum.
Tomar el sol	take sun	to sunbathe	En la playa, me gusta tomar el sol por la mañana.	At the beach, I like to sunbathe in the morning.
Hacer un favor	do favor	to do a favor	¿Puedes hacer un favor y abrir la ventana?	Can you do me a favor and open the window?
Echar un vistazo	throw a glance	to take a look	Voy a echar un vistazo al correo antes de salir.	I'm going to take a quick look at my email before I leave.
Dar un paseo	give a walk	to take a walk	Después de cenar, vamos a dar un paseo por el parque.	After dinner, let's go for a walk in the park.
Ponerse de acuerdo	put in agreement	to agree	No fue fácil, pero al final nos pusimos de acuerdo.	It wasn't easy, but in the end we reached an agreement.
Llevarse bien	carry well	to get along	Mis vecinos se llevan bien y siempre se ayudan.	My neighbors get along well and always help each other.
Caer bien	fall well	to be likable	Mi nueva profesora me cae bien.	I like my new teacher.
Caer mal	fall badly	to rub wrong way	Ese compañero me cae mal porque siempre llega tarde.	I don't like that classmate because he is always late.
Andar con cuidado	walk with care	to be careful	Anda con cuidado en las escaleras.	Be careful on the stairs.
Hablar claro	speak clear	speak plainly	Prefiero hablar claro para evitar malentendidos.	I prefer to speak clearly to avoid misunderstandings.
Ponerse serio	become serious	get serious	Después de bromear un rato, el profesor se puso serio y empezó la clase.	After joking around for a while, the teacher got serious and started the class.
Hacer caso	make case	pay attention	Mi madre me dijo que hiciera caso a los consejos de mi abuela.	My mother told me to listen to my grandmother's advice.

Word	Literal Meaning	Meaning	Example	Translation
Hacer daño	make harm	to hurt	No empujes la mesa, porque puedes hacer daño a alguien.	Don't push the table, because you could hurt someone.
Hacer falta	make lack	to be needed	Para esta tarea, hace falta un diccionario.	For this task, you need a dictionary.
Hacer tiempo	make time	to kill time	Mientras esperábamos el tren, hicimos tiempo en una cafetería.	While we were waiting for the train, we passed the time in a café.
Hacer viaje	make trip	to take a trip	El verano pasado hicimos viaje a Perú con toda la familia.	Last summer, we took a trip to Peru with the whole family.
Tener prisa	have hurry	to be in a hurry	Tengo prisa, así que no puedo quedarme mucho tiempo.	I'm in a hurry, so I can't stay very long.
Tener éxito	have success	to succeed	Con mucho esfuerzo, el equipo tuvo éxito en el torneo.	With a lot of effort, the team was successful in the tournament.
Tener lugar	have place	to take place	La reunión tendrá lugar mañana por la tarde.	The meeting will take place tomorrow afternoon.