

McGRAW-HILL EDUCATION

Conversational American English

The
Illustrated Guide
to the
Everyday Expressions
of American English



RICHARD A. SPEARS • BETTY BIRNER • STEVEN KLEINEDLER
Illustrated by Luc Nisset

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About This Dictionary

Every language has conventional and much-used ways of expressing even the most commonplace requests, inquiries, or responses. Some of these expressions are idioms or idiomatic. Others are perfectly understandable and literal English, but people unfamiliar with the language may have difficulty formulating them in typical and conventional ways. Derived from *NTC's Dictionary of Everyday American English Expressions*, this book is a collection of nearly 5,000 such expressions grouped into 464 topics that are listed under 11 major categories of social interaction. New to this reference are extensive illustrations that place numerous expressions in a visual context, facilitating understanding and memorization.

The complete list of major category headings and their topics can be found in the **Topic and Situation Index**, beginning on page xi. This index can also be used for browsing through the topics. See a complete explanation of how to use this index on page xi. Each of the 464 topics has been assigned a number, and these numbers are the basis of the indexing systems. The numbers appear at the beginning of each topic heading in the body of the book to aid in finding a particular topic.

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Using This Dictionary

The meaning of the expressions can be determined from the topic heading. All the expressions under a particular heading convey essentially the same type of information.

- ♦ The expressions themselves contain hints and explanations where necessary. For instance, in the expression . . .

I got sidetracked.

sidetracked = detoured; distracted

. . . the equal sign (=) indicates that the word or phrase on the left is defined as the word or phrase on the right.

- ♦ In the expression . . .

Can you stay for dinner?

Can you = Would you, Are you able to, Will you

. . . the = indicates that the word or phrase on the left can be replaced by any of the words or phrases on the right.

- ♦ In the expression . . .

Get off your high horse. (*informal*)

= Be less arrogant.

. . . the equal sign (=) at the beginning of the line indicates that a restatement of the entire expression follows.

- ✦ In the expression . . .

You and what army? (*slang*)

. . . the word *slang* in parentheses indicates the register or usage of the expression. Other similar indicators are *Biblical*, *cliché*, *euphemistic*, *folksy*, *formal*, *French*, *German*, *idiomatic*, *informal*, *ironic*, *Italian*, *Japanese*, *jocular*, *juvenile*, *Latin*, *mild oath*, *mildly vulgar*, *oath*, *rude*, *sarcastic*, *Spanish*, *taboo*, and *vulgar*.

- ✦ In the expression . . .

Fore!

(*said in golfing when the ball is struck*)

. . . the information in parentheses explains something about the context in which the expression is used.

Topic and Situation Index

This index includes 11 major category headings, under which the topics for each category appear in boldface type. The specific expression groups for each topic are then presented in the order in which they are found in the list of expressions. A topic number, rather than a page number, is provided after each topic description, indicating where to find that topic in the list.

For instance, if you wanted to find an expression having to do with a pain in the head, you would look under the category **Personal Matters** for a group of expressions labeled **Sickness**. Under **Sickness** you would find the expression group “Describing a pain in the head **326**.” Look for “Describing a pain in the head” at number 326 in the list of expressions.

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