

The skeleton in the closet	A secret source of shame, potentially ruinous if exposed, which a person or family makes efforts to conceal.
<p>The expression has its origins in the medical profession. Doctors in Britain were not permitted to work on dead bodies until an Act of Parliament permitting them to do so was passed in 1832. Prior to this date the only bodies they could dissect for medical purposes were those of executed criminals. Although the execution of criminals was far from rare in 18th century Britain, it was very unlikely that a doctor would come across many corpses during his working life. It was therefore common practice for a doctor who had the good fortune to dissect the corpse of an executed criminal to keep the skeleton for research purposes. Public opinion would not permit doctors to keep skeletons on open view in their surgeries so they had to hide them. Even if they couldn't actually see them, most people suspected that doctors kept skeletons somewhere and the most logical place was the cupboard.</p>	
Clean slate	If you start something with a clean slate, then nothing bad from your past is taken into account.
<p>In "the olden days" a person with a credit account in a small store was said to buy things "on the slate". The storekeeper would keep an account of the person's transactions written in chalk on a sheet of slate. When the account was settled, the slate was wiped clean, preparatory to starting again.</p>	
Shooting fish in a barrel	An effortless or simple action, with guaranteed success.
<p>Before the days of refrigeration, fish were packed and stored in large barrels. The barrels were packed to the rim full of fish. Any shot that entered the barrel would hit at least one of them. Thus nothing can be easier than shooting fish in a barrel.</p>	
Calling one's bluff	Forcing somebody to admit the truth.
<p>The expression "calling your bluff" comes from poker, where you "call" a game to see someone's actual cards.</p>	
In the lime light	At the centre of attention.
<p>"Limelight," which is also known as "calcium light," was used as stage lighting for years after being discovered by Goldsworth Gurney in the 1820s. Gurney was employed by the Surrey Institute as a lecturer in chemistry and philosophy. On the side, he did a bit of experimenting of his own. He invented an "oxy-hydrogen blowpipe," which works by introducing a jet of oxygen and hydrogen to a flame, making it extremely hot. He found that introducing a small chunk of lime (the stone, not the fruit) to the flame resulted in a blinding white light that could be visible for miles.</p>	
To spill the beans	To give away a secret or to confess.
<p>The term spill the beans derives from the electing of a council member in ancient Greece. Each council member would vote with either a white bean (yes) or a brown bean (no), and these would secretly be put into a jar, and no one would know which way the members voted. However, if the jar was knocked over causing the beans to spill out, the proportion of yes and no votes could be seen.</p>	

Don't cry over spilled milk	Getting upset over certain things, like spilled milk, is not going to fix it.
<p>Why cry over spilled milk? The origin of this saying most likely sprang from fairy lore. In order to attract fairies to a house, or appease the resident sprites, laying out food and cold creamy milk was common. Whenever milk was spilled, it was considered an offering to the fairies. Because of the difficulty in feeding a family, normally wasting food was frowned upon, but the wastage of milk was always overlooked as an offering. If the person spilling the milk was reprimanded, the scolder was seen as unwilling to give this gift, and let it be given only grudgingly. This was thought to anger the fairies and bring bad luck upon the house.</p>	
Beat a dead horse	To bring up an issue that has already been concluded; something that's considered to be pointless.
<p>This phrase may originate with horse racing, where horses are sometimes "beaten" by their riders to get them moving faster. Depending on the rules, a jockey usually has access to a riding crop, which is sorta like a miniature whip, and this is used to slap the horse on the thigh. The horse responds either by running faster, or not at all if it's too tired. While there is much controversy involved with how race horses should be treated, the purpose of "beating" horses during a race is to make them go faster. On the other hand, if the horses were dead, then there wouldn't really be much of a or point in beating them. Thus, the pointlessness of beating a dead horse would eventually go on to apply to other things.</p>	