

## Idioms | Lesson 25

Hands are tied | Heart in the right place | A slip of the tongue | Behind someone's back | Face to face

### Example Dialogue

**James** : Psst! Alex, what's the answer to question 19?

**Alexandra**: 19? There's no such question!

**James** : A slip of the tongue! I meant 9.

**Alexandra**: Can't help you, I'm afraid! My hands are tied.

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**Laura**: You could have just told me everything face to face instead of discussing it with everyone behind my back!

**Edward**: I'm sorry...

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**Noah**: What did you mean by saying "he eats like an elephant?"

**Abby**: My heart was in the right place; I didn't want to insult you!



*Try to figure out the meaning of these idioms.*

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### Example Passage

When I was in middle school I had a classmate whose name was Sam. Sam was a quiet boy, who was made fun of frequently. Our classmates never teased him **face to face**; they only laughed at him **behind his back**. I felt that he knew about this, but chose to feign disinterest.

One day, Sam had to give a presentation in front of the class. He was worried and, naturally, **a slip of the tongue** occurred. It was a funny mistake and Sam stopped talking. The whole classroom burst into laughter. I didn't laugh, but I didn't do anything about it either. At that time, I thought that **my hands were tied** and I couldn't possibly do anything for him.

After that lesson I tried talking to Sam. However, he didn't talk to me. **My heart was in the right place**, but Sam probably thought I would laugh at him as well.



*Again, try to figure out the meaning of these idioms.*

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## Definitions

**(your) hands are tied** | when you are prevented from doing something

*I would tell you the answers, but **my hands are tied!***

*I'd like to give all of you a raise, but my **hands are tied.***

**heart in the right place** | about someone who has good intentions

*His **heart is in the right place**; he didn't mean to hurt you.*

*Although he is a strict parent, you can tell his **heart is in the right place.***

**a slip of the tongue** | make a trivial mistake while speaking

*She made **a slip of the tongue** when she called him Mark. His name is Mike.*

*I called his girlfriend by his former lover's name – it was **a slip of the tongue.***

**behind someone's back** | without someone knowing

*They spread rumors **behind my back!***

*They were trashing his managerial skills **behind his back.***

**face to face** | in person; directly

*Let's meet **face to face**, and then talk, ok?*

*I'd rather talk **face to face** than negotiate via Skype.*

**Make sure you can understand the meaning of these idioms.**

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### Practice

Fill in the blanks with the correct **idioms** (in a correct form) to complete the sentences.

- 1 | I would help, but my \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 | It was \_\_\_\_\_; of course polar bears don't live in Africa.
- 3 | \_\_\_\_\_ when I said you shouldn't talk this much.
- 4 | I prefer talking \_\_\_\_\_ rather than on the phone.
- 5 | Don't talk \_\_\_\_\_; that's very rude.
- 6 | His \_\_\_\_\_; he can't help us with our coursework.
- 7 | His \_\_\_\_\_, even though he gets into so many fights.
- 8 | They have been meeting up \_\_\_\_\_! Nobody invited me.
- 9 | How about we discuss this \_\_\_\_\_?
- 10 | I had \_\_\_\_\_ and called grandma "Mom."



**APPLICATION:** Create your own sentences using these idioms.

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### Exercise

Fill in the blanks with the correct **idioms** (in a correct form) to complete the dialogue.

(Adrian is telling Stella some news.)

**Stella** : Hi, Adrian!

**Adrian** : Hi, Stella! Have you heard what people have been saying \_\_\_\_\_ ?

**Stella** : No. Is it something bad?

**Adrian** : They think you're really mean. They're spreading unpleasant rumors.

**Stella** : What?! Why?

**Adrian** : You're quite direct, you know... Like, last time you told Steven he needed a shower. You had \_\_\_\_\_ too and called him Stewart...

**Stella** : I really didn't mean to hurt his feelings; \_\_\_\_\_ !

**Adrian** : I know you meant well, but people misunderstood.

**Stella** : Can you tell them?

**Adrian** : I'm afraid my \_\_\_\_\_. I can't help. Plus, it's better you tell them \_\_\_\_\_.

**Stella** : (*sigh*) I wish people wouldn't be so quick to judge.



**APPLICATION:** Create your own dialogue using these idioms with your teacher.

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