

# Murad's Spoken English

## . U Idioms

### UNACCUSTOMED

**01.unaccustomed to someone / something:** not used to something.

- I moved here three years ago and I'm still **unaccustomed to this cold weather**.
- I'm **unaccustomed to hearing** women using bad language.

### UNDER

**02.under arrest:** when the police take someone into custody (arrests them) and takes them to the police station.

- The police chased the criminals for five blocks before they captured them and placed them **under arrest**.
- The trial will be difficult because the policeman did not advise the defendant of his Miranda rights after he put him **under arrest**.

**03.under certain circumstances:** in certain situations.

- **Under certain circumstances** you can attend the training for free.
- It's possible to see the mountains from here **under certain circumstances**.

**04.under scrutiny:** being closely watched, examined or investigated.

- After I was caught smoking, my parents of put me **under a lot more scrutiny**.
- The police had three people **under close scrutiny** for the theft of the art gallery's paintings.

**05.under construction:** being built.

- This website is still **under construction**.
- There's a lot of traffic on the freeway because the bridge is **under construction**.

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**06.under cover:** hidden and being done secretly (especially used with police and law enforcement).

- See that woman who looks like a prostitute? She's really a police officer working **under cover**.
- Many security guards at the shopping mall work **under cover**.

**07.under fire:** being attacked by firearms or words.

- When I met my boyfriend's parents they had me **under fire** the entire evening.
- The robbers were **under fire** for 20 minutes before they put down their weapons and surrendered to the police.

**08.under oath:** having made a formal promise or taken an oath to say the truth.

- The judge reminded the witness that he was **under oath** and should tell the truth.
- You will go to jail if you lie **under oath**.

**09.under one's belt:** having the experience of doing something.

- I felt a lot more confident after I got a year of teaching **under my belt**.
- All applicants must have a college degree and at least one year of work experience **under their belts** to apply for this position.

**10.under one's breath:** speaking very quietly with a whisper (low voice).

- Whenever I asked my kids to do their chores they complain **under their breath**.
- This morning my father was grateful when I reminded him **under my breath** that it was my mother's birthday.

**11.under one's nose:** something easily seen or found.

- She was looking for the perfect husband for several years when she realized her dream man—her next door neighbor—was **under her nose** the whole time.
- I can't find my sunglasses! They're right **under your nose**; well actually, on top of your head!

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**12.under pressure:** experiencing a lot of stress and anxiety.

- Our manager is **under a lot of pressure** since the new director doubled our sales target.
- Most high school seniors are **under pressure** because they have to do well in school to get into a good college.

**13.under the circumstances:** because of a certain condition, situation or circumstance.

- I heard your husband's brother recently died and I'm sure that must be difficult. Yes, it is but **under the circumstances** he's actually doing very well.
- Usually, you need an appointment to see the doctor but **under the circumstances**, he's agreed to see you before your flight leaves today.

**14.under the influence (of someone or something):** experiencing the effects of drugs, alcohol or the control of a powerful person.

- Too many young pop singers and actors are arrested for driving **under the influence** these days.
- It's important to monitor who your children's friends are so that they don't become **under the influence of bad kids**.

**15.under the table:** in secret (often doing something illegal).

- Unfortunately, politicians sometimes award contracts to companies **under the table**.
- When we got to the restaurant there was a long line, so I slipped a \$20 bill to the hostess **under the table** and we were seated at a table 10 minutes later.

**16.under the weather:** feeling sick, especially sick with the flu or a common cold.

- I called in sick to work today because I was **feeling under the weather**.
- No, it's nothing serious I just feel **under the weather today**.

UNTIL

**17.until all hours:** until very late.

- We were up **until all hours** last night finishing the report before the deadline.
- Our neighbors are so annoying, they play music really loud **until all hours** during the week.

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**18.until hell freezes over:** forever.

- Those two will hate each other **until hell freezes over**.
- I'm sure politicians will be liars **until hell freezes over**.

**19.until someone is blue in the face:** talking for a very long time.

- I explained how to operate the machine **until I was blue in the face**.
- I yelled at my son for not coming home last night **until I was blue in the face**.

UNISON

**20.in unison:** together at the same time.

- The children's choir wasn't very good today—they were hardly **in unison**.
- When I asked my kids if they wanted to go to the zoo, they screamed "yes" **in unison**.

UNTHINKABLE

**21.do the unthinkable:** to do something that's not expected.

- When I woke up this morning I discovered my husband had **done the unthinkable**; the dishes were washed, the floor had been cleaned and the children's lunches were packed.
- When people are very drunk they sometimes **do the unthinkable**.

UP

**22.not up to something:** don't feel like doing something.

- If you're *not up to* **going out** tonight, let's order a pizza and watch TV.
- I'm **not up to exercising** today but I'm definitely going tomorrow no matter what.

**23.right up there with someone / something:** is good / bad as someone/something else.

- To me, doing homework is **right up there with** having a tooth pulled by the dentist.
- Did you see her new ranking? She's **right up there with** the top tennis players now.

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**24.up against someone / something:** in opposition with someone / something.

- In her next match, she's **up against** a much more difficult player.
- I can't go out tonight because I'm **up against** a tough deadline and have to work.

**25.up and around / about:** out of bed after illness and moving again.

- After the surgery, she was **up and about** after just a week.
- It's so nice to be **up and around** after being in bed with the flu for a week.

**26.up and coming:** newly starting to be popular or successful.

- Listen to this **up-and-coming** singer, she's fantastic.
- I read Sandy's blog because she really knows all the **up and coming** fashion designers.

**27.up and running:** functioning, working properly.

- Luckily, the technician got the Internet **up and running** again after 20 minutes.
- She had hoped to have the new department **up and running** by the new year, but everything was behind schedule.

**28.up for something:** enthusiastic or interested about something.

- Are you **up for going skiing** this weekend?
- If anyone's **up for a movie** tonight, I'm going to see the latest installment of the Spider-man series.

**29.up for grabs:** possible for anyone to have.

- The director just announced this month's contest and a new MacBook is **up for grabs**.
- There are some gently-used ski jackets **up for grabs** in the staff lounge if anyone is interested.

**30.up front:** clear and honest about something.

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- I wish you had been **up front** about how big your house was because I won't be able to finish the painting job by the date you wanted.
- I want to be **up front** about the amount of travel involved in this job: you'll be expected to travel at least one week every month.

**31.up in arms:** upset, angry.

- The entire team was **up in arms** when the coach said they would have to practice an extra 30 minutes each day.
- I'm **up in arms** about the new fees my bank is going to start charging.

**32.up in the air:** not decided about something, unsettled.

- Our plans for the New Year's are still **up in the air** but I'll let you know what we decide in case you want to join us.
- The person will select to replace the cleaner is still **up in the air** but we have a good list of candidates to choose from.

**33.up in years:** old, elderly.

- She's **up in years** now but everyone thinks she's 20 years younger than she is.
- When I get **up in years** I want to move somewhere where there's a warm climate.

**34.up one's alley:** an activity someone likes and is good at.

- I hate fixing things but luckily home repair is **up my wife's alley**.
- Cooking is **up her alley** so she decided to quit her job and open a catering business.

**35.up the creek:** in trouble or a difficult situation.

- I'm **up the creek!** My credit card bill is due in two days but I don't get paid until next week.
- We missed our flight and now were **up the creek** because there are no available seats on any flights until next Tuesday.

**36.up to someone:** to be responsible for doing something.

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- It's not important what I think; the decision is **up to my boss**.
- If you want to lose weight, it's **up to you** to eat better and start exercising.

**37.up to something:** secretly doing or planning something.

- Whenever it's quiet at home I know my kids are **up to something**.
- When no one wished me a happy birthday all morning I knew my team was **up to something**.

**38.up-to-date:** to the latest standards.

- These figures don't look right. Can you make sure they are **up-to-date**?
- It's important to keep your software **up-to-date** so that you are protected against new viruses.

**39.up to it:** having the desire, interest or capability to do something.

- I really should do some financial planning but I'm not **up to it**.
- I just asked Suzanne to come with us to the shopping mall but she's not **up to it**.

**40.up to no good:** doing something wrong or bad.

- My puppy is always **up to no good** so I have to watch her very carefully.
- My husband has been coming home very late and I'm worried he's **up to no good**.

**41.up to one's eyeballs:** a lot of something undesirable... [read more](#)

- During tax season, accountants are **up to their eyeballs** with work.
- I'm **up to my eyeballs** in debt and need to stop using my credit cards.

**42.up-to-the-minute:** the most recent or latest.

- At Channel 5 news, we deliver **up-to-the-minute** reports about traffic, weather and news that's important to you.
- Check the leader board for **up-to-the-minute** results in the tournament.

# Murad's Spoken English

**43.up until:** until, to a certain time.

- I was **up until** 2 AM finishing my homework last night so I'm exhausted.
- **Up until** we got married my husband was a super loving guy.

UPPER

**44.have the upper hand:** having power, control or advantage.

- Children who come from wealthy families **have the upper hand** when applying to college.
- My dogs are always fighting but this one **has the upper hand** because he's stronger and faster.

UPS

**45.ups and downs:** good and bad things; both good and bad times.

- Even the best marriages have their **ups and downs**.
- I really liked his talk because he discussed both the **ups and downs** of being a famous actor.

UPSIDE

**46.upside down:** with the top side facing downward; changing something completely.

- Her life turned **upside down** after having twins.
- If you hang those roses **upside down**, they'll dry out in a perfect bouquet.

UPTIGHT

**47.be uptight:** worried and anxious.

- My last girlfriend was gorgeous but she was so **uptight**, while my current girlfriend is very average looking but completely confident about her looks.
- My mother is very **uptight** about my grades at school.

USE



# Murad's Spoken English

**48.use every trick in the book:** try everything or every possible method.

- The match was so difficult she had to **use every trick in the book** to beat her opponent.
- I'm not going to stop until I've **used every trick in the book**.

**49.it's no use / there's no use:** there's no reason to do or try something.

- I've tried to talk to her but **it's no use**—she's inconsolable that he broke up with her.
- **There's no use** begging me to help because registration ended yesterday and the class is already full.

**50.use up:** to finish all of something until nothing remains.

- Help! Someone **used up** all the toilet paper and didn't replace the roll with a new one.
- I'm exhausted; I **used up** all my energy mowing the lawn this afternoon.

## USED

**51.used to (do something):** had the habit of doing something in the past.

- I **used to hate** spinach, but now it's one of my favorite vegetables.
- When I was a kid I **used to live** in Nigeria for five years because my father worked for an oil company.

**52.used to (doing) something:** familiar with something; accustomed to something.

- I know you're **used to eating** sugary foods but you're going to have to change your diet if you want to get well.
- Once you get **used to using this software**, you're going to love it.

## USUAL

**53.as usual:** as expected, as normally happens.

- If he's late **as usual**, this time I'm not going to wait for him.
- Congratulations! Your performance was excellent **as usual**.

# Murad's Spoken English

## V idioms

VACUUM

**01.in a vacuum:** not connected to other people or events.

### Example sentences

- If you write this report **in a vacuum**, you're going to have a very limited view of the situation.

VAIN

**02.in vain:** without success.

### Example sentences

- I rushed to the airport to catch my flight but arrived **in vain** as the flight was canceled.

VANISH

**03.vanish into thin air:** to completely disappear.

### Example sentences

- When I asked my roommates to help me clean our apartment everyone **vanished into thin air**.

VENGEANCE

**04.with a vengeance:** with a lot of energy or force.

### Example sentences

- After my wife found out someone stole money from her wallet, she came out of the kitchen **with a vengeance** to ask who took the money.

VERGE

# Murad's Spoken English

**05.on the verge:** close to doing or experiencing something.

## Example sentences

- I was on the **verge of accusing** my roommate of stealing my money from the jar in the kitchen when I remembered I'd used it to pay the pizza delivery man.

VERY

**06.very last:** the final part of something.

## Example sentences

- We arrived late but were able to see **the very last** set of the tennis match.

**07.very thing:** the exact thing needed.

## Example sentences

- I was skeptical, but the vitamins the nutritionist recommended were **the very thing** I needed to get well.

VICINITY

**08.in the vicinity:** an approximate amount, nearly.

## Example sentences

- To purchase the home, you'll need **in the vicinity of \$50,000 cash** as a down payment.

VICIOUS

**09.vicious circle:** a set of repeating events and factors that negatively affect the next event.

## Example sentences

- Extreme dieting always causes a **vicious circle** where the dieter initially loses a lot of weight but then gains back more weight than when they first started the diet.

VIEW

**10.in view of something:** in consideration of something; related to something.

# Murad's Spoken English

## Example sentences

- **In view of my fluency** in three languages, I think your offer should be increased to \$65,000.

**11.on view:** on display where everyone can see something.

## Example sentences

- Did you see the art exhibit? There are many famous impressionist paintings **on view**.

**12.bird's-eye view:** as seen from above; a broad view of a situation.

## Example sentences

- I recommend that you go up to the top floor so you can get **a bird's-eye view** of the city.

**13.take a dim view:** to not approve of something; to see something negatively.

## Example sentences

- College admission officers normally **take a dim view** of students who don't list many extra-curricular activities on their applications.

VIRTUE

**14.by virtue of something:** because of something.

## Example sentences

- She got promoted **by virtue of her experience**, not because of her great looks.

VISIT

**15.pay a visit to someone / something (pay someone / something a visit):** to go see someone or something.

## Example sentences

# Murad's Spoken English

- I haven't heard from my father in two weeks so I'm going to **pay him a visit** and make sure he's okay.

## VOICE

**16.a lone voice in the wilderness:** someone who says something that's not popular; expressing an unpopular opinion.

### Example sentences

- At the management meeting, my suggestion to give everyone a small bonus was **a lone voice in the wilderness**.

## VOID

**17.fill a (the) void:** to provide or replace something that's needed.

### Example sentences

- She's been drinking to try to **fill the void** after her husband left her with two young kids.

## VOLUMES

**18.speaks volumes:** to express something clearly, to be a clear example of something.

### Example sentences

- The dirty looks and silence between them **speak volumes** about their relationship.

## VOUCH

**19.vouch for something:** to support the truth of something.

### Example sentences

- Even though you didn't see her at her desk, I can **vouch for her** that she arrived on time yesterday and went straight to the manager's meeting.

## VOTE

**20.vote something down (vote down something):** to reject something or defeat a vote for something.

### Example sentences

- I suggested we hire a new receptionist instead of having an answering service, but management **voted the idea down**.

# Murad's Spoken English

## W idioms

### WADE

**01.wade through something:** 1) to read a large volume of material or detailed information; 2) to pass through a large group of people.

- We've got to **wade through** 650 job applications we received for the program manager vacancy.
- My friends were right in front of the stage at the concert and I tried to join them but I couldn't **wade through** all the people.

### WAGON

**02.(fall) off the wagon:** drinking alcohol again after having stopped space (this term is usually used for people who have a problem with alcohol).

- Sadly, my father **fell off the wagon** and we're trying to persuade him to go back to rehab.
- Your office called to see if something happened because you didn't go to work today—are you **off the wagon** again?

**03.on the wagon:** not drinking after having been drinking regularly (this term is generally used for people who have problems with alcohol).

- We're all relieved my son is finally **on the wagon** and hope he can stay on it.
- I'm back **on the wagon** after getting arrested for drunk driving—it helped me finally realize I have a serious problem.

### WAIT

**04.wait and see:** to wait over a period of time for news or results about something.

- I've submitted my novel to 20 publishers and now all I can do is **wait and see**.
- Just **wait and see**—you're going to love your job in a few weeks when you get used to it.

**05.wait on someone:** to serve someone.

# Murad's Spoken English

- When my kids became teenagers I stopped **waiting on them** and they quickly learned how to help themselves.
- “Would you like to try on those shoes?” “Thank you but another salesperson is **waiting on us.**”

**06.wait out something (wait something out):** to let time pass until something happens or ends.

- The authorities have ordered all residents to evacuate—no one is allowed to **wait the storm out.**
- I've tried to **wait out the thunderstorm** but after 20 minutes I had no choice but to run to my car and I got soaking wet.
- There's nothing the doctor can do—it's the flu and I've just got to rest and **wait it out.**

**07.wait on someone hand and foot:** to do many different things to serve someone.

- After my mom had a stroke she needed someone to **wait on her hand and foot.**
- Women who earn money usually are not trapped at home having to **wait on their husbands hand and foot.**

**08.wait tables:** to serve customers as a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.

- **Waiting tables** is a popular job for students and artists.
- I really don't recommend **waiting tables**—I seriously injured my back carrying heavy trays of food when I was a waiter.

WAKE

**09.in the wake of something:** happening after or as a result of something.

- **In the wake of rioting** after championship games, the police have increased security for the Super Bowl.
- My mother has been living with us **in the wake of my father's death.**

**10.wake up to something:** to become aware and understand something important.

# Murad's Spoken English

- One day you're going to **wake up to the fact** that you're worrying about your daughter doesn't help her but it does hurt you.
- When he really **wakes up to understanding** how much he hurt us then maybe I'll give him a second chance.

**11.wake up and smell the coffee:** to become aware of and do something about a situation.

## Example sentences

- You failed algebra? **Wake up and smell the coffee** or you're not going to graduate with your class in June.

WALK

**12.take a walk:** to leave, go away.

- When the customer wouldn't stop yelling, my manager told him to **take a walk** or he'd call the police.
- I'd rather **take a walk** than stay in an abusive relationship.

**13.walk all over someone / something:** to treat someone badly and without respect.

- My sister let her kids **walk all over her** for years but she's finally saying "no" to them.
- Say something! Don't let your roommate **walk all over you**.

**14.walk off with something:** to leave with something that you didn't have permission to take.

- I had a party Saturday night and someone **walked off with my mom's gold bracelet**.
- Rats! That customer just **walked off with my pen**.

**15.walk out on someone / something:** to suddenly end or abandon a relationship.

- The cleaning staff **walked out on their jobs** during our stay so our hotel room was only cleaned once all week.



# Murad's Spoken English

- My sister was so scared of her boyfriend she just **walked out on him**, only taking a few clothes with her.

**16.walk the walk:** to show something by your actions (and not just by your words).

- We always give the applicants a writing test to make sure they can **walk the walk**.
- He was an excellent player in high school but he never **walked the walk** in college.

**17.walk (someone) through something:** to explain step-by-step or in detail how to do something.

- Sorry but I'm terrible with computers. Can you **walk me through installation and activation**?
- On your first day we'll **walk you through** how to open and close the store.

**18.walk on eggshells:** to be extremely careful around someone in order not to upset them.

- When I visit my parents I have to **walk on eggshells** so now I hardly visit them.
- Everyone is **walking on eggshells** at my firm because the owner is visiting our office this week.

WALL

**19.drive someone up the wall:** to really bother or annoy someone.

- My secretary pops her chewing gum loudly all day long and it absolutely **drives me up the wall**.
- Please don't play your music so loud, you know that **drives your father up the wall**.

**20.off the wall:** strange or unusual.

- As Michael Jackson sang, "live a life **off the wall**... and just enjoy yourself."
- You've got to see how she decorated her apartment—it's really **off the wall**.

**21.a fly on the wall:** to be able to secretly hear and observe something.

## Murad's Spoken English

- My manager just got called into the director's office—oh, how I'd love to be **a fly on the wall!**
- I'd like to be **a fly on the wall** when the committee reviews our applications.

**22.(with) one's back against the wall:** in a difficult situation without many options.

- I wish I could help you, but **my back is against the wall** because I don't get paid for two more weeks.
- After failing three quizzes, **my back is against the wall** and I've got to pass all of the rest of them.

WANT

**23.want for something:** to not have something you need.

- My parents were poor but we never **wanted for love**.
- When I volunteered in Africa I realized I really didn't **want for anything**.

WARD

**24.ward off someone / something (ward someone / something off):** to try to keep someone / something harmful away.

- We keep the lights on our porch at night to **ward off burglars**.
- This ointment is fantastic for **warding off mosquitoes**.

WARM

**25.warm up to (someone / something):** to begin to like someone / something.

- My mother is so afraid of everything she's just beginning to **warm up to using the microwave**.
- Since our baby was born my father is finally starting to **warm up to my husband**.

WARTS

**26.warts and all:** including bad qualities, habits, etc.

- My son is a slob but I love him **warts and all**.
- The key to a successful marriage is accepting your spouse **warts and all**.

# Murad's Spoken English

## WASH

**27.wash down something (wash something down):** to drink a liquid to help swallow something.

- Could I have a glass of water so I can **wash down these pills**?
- We **washed down** my birthday cake with a bottle of champagne.

**28.wash out (something) (wash something out):** to cancel an event because of rain.

- Sadly, we went all the way to Paris for the French Open but the matches were **washed out** the day we had tickets.
- Let's have the picnic in July so it won't get **washed out** this year.

**29.wash up:** to wash or clean your hands.

- I'm shocked at how many people don't **wash up** before eating at restaurants.
- Kids please turn off the TV and **wash up** for dinner.

## WASTE

**30.go to waste:** to not be used.

- When the Native American Indians killed a buffalo absolutely nothing **went to waste**.
- Since we moved into an apartment and have a small refrigerator we can't buy a lot of food, so now nothing **goes to waste**.

**31.waste away:** to slowly become thin and weak.

- After my grandma died, my grandfather didn't want to eat and began to **waste away**.
- After I got cancer I started **wasting away** until I began drinking these high-calorie nutritious shakes.

**32.waste one's breath:** to say something that will probably be ignored.

- You could tell her that her hairstyle looks ridiculous but you'd just be **wasting your breath**.
- I don't **waste my breath** asking my kids to get off the Internet—instead I just disconnect it each night at 8 PM.

# Murad's Spoken English

## WATCH

**33. keep a close watch on / over someone / something:** to carefully follow or protect someone / something.

- Could you please water my plants and **keep a close watch on my house** while I am away?
- Something is strange—I'm going to **keep a close watch over my 13-year-old** from now on.

**34. watch out:** be aware and careful.

- **Watch out** for that bucket of water behind you — I don't want you to fall over it.
- Whenever we drive through this wooded area I have to **watch out** for animals running into the road.

**35. watch out for someone / something:** 1) to carefully be aware in order to avoid a problem; 2) to look carefully to try to make sure someone else is safe and okay.

- Our older brother always **watches out for us at school** to make sure no one bothers us.
- **Watch out for pickpockets**, especially when you travel near train stations.

**36. watch over someone / something:** protect someone / something by being alert for any problems or danger.

- Could you **watch over my backpack** while I run to the bathroom?
- I prefer to live in a gated community with security guards **watching over us**.

## WATER(S)

**37. keep one's head above water:** 1) to have just enough to live or survive (especially having enough money); 2) to manage to do all of your work.

### Sentence examples

- She **keeping her head above water** right now but if she doesn't find another job soon she'll have to move back home to her parents' house.

**38. in hot water:** to be in a difficult situation for doing something wrong.

# Murad's Spoken English

- I'm **in hot water** for skipping classes this morning.
- You'll be **in hot water** if anyone notices you're watching movies at work.

**39.not hold water:** to not seem true or reasonable.

- Your excuse that you didn't get my email **does not hold water** because Julie said your forwarded it to her.
- This weak apology is **not going to hold water** with our customers.

**40.water down something (water something down):** to make something weaker.

- We stopped going to that bar because they were **watering down their cocktails**.
- Our legal department said we need to **water the statement down** or risk getting sued.

**41.water under the bridge:** it's not possible to change something that's already happened.

- I wish I hadn't sold the watch my father gave me but now it's **water under the bridge**.
- We both said terrible things but it's **water under the bridge**—let's learn from this and move on.

**42.muddy the waters:** to make things more complicated or confusing.

- Wait a while. If you release another statement now you'll only **muddy the waters**.
- Unfortunately, the results of this new survey really **muddy the waters**.

**43.test the waters:** to try something new (especially to see what will happen or how others will react).

- I'm **testing the waters** to see if having a photo on my CV makes any difference.
- Before you quit your job and start a consulting business I recommend you **test the waters** with one or two clients.

# Murad's Spoken English

## WAVELENGTH

**44.on the same wavelength:** agreeing or having the same opinion.

- My business partner and I were **on the same wavelength** when we first started but now we have very different ideas about the company.
- Amazingly, we were all **on the same wavelength** at today's meeting.

## WAVES

**45.make waves:** to shock or upset people by doing something different.

- After Madonna and Lady Gaga, it's pretty hard to **make waves** in music anymore.
- When you go overseas next semester try not to **make waves**—the world is a dangerous place these days.

## WAY

**46.bluff one's way:** to pretend to be something you are not to achieve something.

- I forgot to bring my ID but I was able to **bluff my way** past security.
- I've **bluffed my way** through the interview but I'm going to get fired because I don't have the skills to do this job.

**47.by the way:** an expression used in a conversation to indicate there is some additional information you want to say.

- **By the way**, did you hear that my sister will be home for the holidays?
- I really love your new haircut **by the way**.

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- When the Civil Rights Act was passed it **cleared the way for all minorities** to get better jobs and education.
- Whenever a woman breaks into the top level of any field it **clears the way for others** to follow.

**49.either way:** whatever happens (no matter which option you decide).

- Both dresses are beautiful so **either way** you look great.

# Murad's Spoken English

- We haven't decided where we will stay yet but **either way** we're definitely going to the beach this weekend.

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**51.wear the pants:** to be the dominant partner in a relationship or marriage.

## Example sentences

- My grandma was a tiny little lady but she definitely **wore the pants** in her marriage.

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**52.window of opportunity:** a chance to do something that is only available for a short period of time.

## Example sentences

- My grandma was a tiny little lady but she definitely **wore the pants** in her marriage.

WOLF

**53.wolf in sheep's clothing:** someone or something that pretends to be good or friendly but is actually trying to cause damage, harm or cheat (take advantage of) you.

## Examples

- Luckily I realized years ago that my mother-in-law was a **wolf in sheep's clothing**—she's nice but always highlights my faults and tells the family about every mistake I make.

WORD(S)

**54.three little words:** these three short words are "I love you."

# Murad's Spoken English

- Finally, I was just about to say those **three little words** to my boyfriend when he told me he thought it would be better if we were just friends.
- My boyfriend keeps complaining that I never say those **three little words** but they are big words to me! I like him a lot but I just don't fall in love very easily.

**55.a man/woman of few words:** someone who does not talk a lot, only when there is something important to say.

## Example sentences

- My father isn't shy at all—he's just a **man of few words**.

## WORM

**56.(open / open up) a can of worms:** a situation or issue that becomes even more complicated as you try to deal with it or solve the problem.

## Sentence examples

— When Sarah decided to look at her boyfriend's iPhone **she opened a can of worms**.

## W idioms

### WADE

**01.wade through something:** 1) to read a large volume of material or detailed information; 2) to pass through a large group of people.

- We've got to **wade through** 650 job applications we received for the program manager vacancy.
- My friends were right in front of the stage at the concert and I tried to join them but I couldn't **wade through** all the people.

### WAGON

**02.(fall) off the wagon:** drinking alcohol again after having stopped space (this term is usually used for people who have a problem with alcohol).

- Sadly, my father **fell off the wagon** and we're trying to persuade him to go back to rehab.
- Your office called to see if something happened because you didn't go to work today—are you **off the wagon** again?

**03.on the wagon:** not drinking after having been drinking regularly (this term is generally used for people who have problems with alcohol).

- We're all relieved my son is finally **on the wagon** and hope he can stay on it.



# Murad's Spoken English

- I'm back **on the wagon** after getting arrested for drunk driving—it helped me finally realize I have a serious problem.

WAIT

**04.wait and see:** to wait over a period of time for news or results about something.

- I've submitted my novel to 20 publishers and now all I can do is **wait and see**.
- Just **wait and see**—you're going to love your job in a few weeks when you get used to it.

**05.wait on someone:** to serve someone.

- When my kids became teenagers I stopped **waiting on them** and they quickly learned how to help themselves.
- “Would you like to try on those shoes?” “Thank you but another salesperson is **waiting on us**.”

**06.wait out something (wait something out):** to let time pass until something happens or ends.

- The authorities have ordered all residents to evacuate—no one is allowed to **wait the storm out**.
- I've tried to **wait out the thunderstorm** but after 20 minutes I had no choice but to run to my car and I got soaking wet.
- There's nothing the doctor can do—it's the flu and I've just got to rest and **wait it out**.

**07.wait on someone hand and foot:** to do many different things to serve someone.

- After my mom had a stroke she needed someone to **wait on her hand and foot**.
- Women who earn money usually are not trapped at home having to **wait on their husbands hand and foot**.

**08.wait tables:** to serve customers as a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.

- **Waiting tables** is a popular job for students and artists.

# Murad's Spoken English

- I really don't recommend **waiting tables**—I seriously injured my back carrying heavy trays of food when I was a waiter.

## WAKE

**09.in the wake of something:** happening after or as a result of something.

- **In the wake of rioting** after championship games, the police have increased security for the Super Bowl.
- My mother has been living with us **in the wake of my father's death**.

**10.wake up to something:** to become aware and understand something important.

- One day you're going to **wake up to the fact** that you're worrying about your daughter doesn't help her but it does hurt you.
- When he really **wakes up to understanding** how much he hurt us then maybe I'll give him a second chance.

**11.wake up and smell the coffee:** to become aware of and do something about a situation.

## Example sentences

- You failed algebra? **Wake up and smell the coffee** or you're not going to graduate with your class in June.

## WALK

**12.take a walk:** to leave, go away.

- When the customer wouldn't stop yelling, my manager told him to **take a walk** or he'd call the police.
- I'd rather **take a walk** than stay in an abusive relationship.

**13.walk all over someone / something:** to treat someone badly and without respect.

- My sister let her kids **walk all over her** for years but she's finally saying "no" to them.
- Say something! Don't let your roommate **walk all over you**.

# Murad's Spoken English

**14.walk off with something:** to leave with something that you didn't have permission to take.

- I had a party Saturday night and someone **walked off with my mom's gold bracelet.**
- Rats! That customer just **walked off with my pen.**

**15.walk out on someone / something:** to suddenly end or abandon a relationship.

- The cleaning staff **walked out on their jobs** during our stay so our hotel room was only cleaned once all week.
- My sister was so scared of her boyfriend she just **walked out on him**, only taking a few clothes with her.

**16.walk the walk:** to show something by your actions (and not just by your words).

- We always give the applicants a writing test to make sure they can **walk the walk.**
- He was an excellent player in high school but he never **walked the walk** in college.

**17.walk (someone) through something:** to explain step-by-step or in detail how to do something.

- Sorry but I'm terrible with computers. Can you **walk me through installation and activation?**
- On your first day we'll **walk you through** how to open and close the store.

**18.walk on eggshells:** to be extremely careful around someone in order not to upset them.

- When I visit my parents I have to **walk on eggshells** so now I hardly visit them.
- Everyone is **walking on eggshells** at my firm because the owner is visiting our office this week.

WALL

**19.drive someone up the wall:** to really bother or annoy someone.

# Murad's Spoken English

- My secretary pops her chewing gum loudly all day long and it absolutely **drives me up the wall**.
- Please don't play your music so loud, you know that **drives your father up the wall**.

**20.off the wall:** strange or unusual.

- As Michael Jackson sang, "live a life **off the wall**... and just enjoy yourself."
- You've got to see how she decorated her apartment—it's really **off the wall**.

**21.a fly on the wall:** to be able to secretly hear and observe something.

- My manager just got called into the director's office—oh, how I'd love to be **a fly on the wall!**
- I'd like to be **a fly on the wall** when the committee reviews our applications.

**22.(with) one's back against the wall:** in a difficult situation without many options.

- I wish I could help you, but **my back is against the wall** because I don't get paid for two more weeks.
- After failing three quizzes, **my back is against the wall** and I've got to pass all of the rest of them.

WANT

**23.want for something:** to not have something you need.

- My parents were poor but we never **wanted for love**.
- When I volunteered in Africa I realized I really didn't **want for anything**.

WARD

**24.ward off someone / something (ward someone / something off):** to try to keep someone / something harmful away.

- We keep the lights on our porch at night to **ward off burglars**.
- This ointment is fantastic for **warding off mosquitoes**.

WARM

# Murad's Spoken English

**25.warm up to (someone / something):** to begin to like someone / something.

- My mother is so afraid of everything she's just beginning to **warm up to using the microwave.**
- Since our baby was born my father is finally starting to **warm up to my husband.**

## WARTS

**26.warts and all:** including bad qualities, habits, etc.

- My son is a slob but I love him **warts and all.**
- The key to a successful marriage is accepting your spouse **warts and all.**

## WASH

**27.wash down something (wash something down):** to drink a liquid to help swallow something.

- Could I have a glass of water so I can **wash down these pills?**
- We **washed down** my birthday cake with a bottle of champagne.

**28.wash out (something) (wash something out):** to cancel an event because of rain.

- Sadly, we went all the way to Paris for the French Open but the matches were **washed out** the day we had tickets.
- Let's have the picnic in July so it won't get **washed out** this year.

**29.wash up:** to wash or clean your hands.

- I'm shocked at how many people don't **wash up** before eating at restaurants.
- Kids please turn off the TV and **wash up** for dinner.

## WASTE

**30.go to waste:** to not be used.

- When the Native American Indians killed a buffalo absolutely nothing **went to waste.**
- Since we moved into an apartment and have a small refrigerator we can't buy a lot of food, so now nothing **goes to waste.**

# Murad's Spoken English

**31.waste away:** to slowly become thin and weak.

- After my grandma died, my grandfather didn't want to eat and began to **waste away**.
- After I got cancer I started **wasting away** until I began drinking these high-calorie nutritious shakes.

**32.waste one's breath:** to say something that will probably be ignored.

- You could tell her that her hairstyle looks ridiculous but you'd just be **wasting your breath**.
- I don't **waste my breath** asking my kids to get off the Internet—instead I just disconnect it each night at 8 PM.

WATCH

**33.keep a close watch on / over someone / something:** to carefully follow or protect someone / something.

- Could you please water my plants and **keep a close watch on my house** while I am away?
- Something is strange—I'm going to **keep a close watch over my 13-year-old** from now on.

**34.watch out:** be aware and careful.

- **Watch out** for that bucket of water behind you — I don't want you to fall over it.
- Whenever we drive through this wooded area I have to **watch out** for animals running into the road.

**35.watch out for someone / something:** 1) to carefully be aware in order to avoid a problem; 2) to look carefully to try to make sure someone else is safe and okay.

- Our older brother always **watches out for us at school** to make sure no one bothers us.
- **Watch out for pickpockets**, especially when you travel near train stations.

**36.watch over someone / something:** protect someone / something by being alert for any problems or danger.

# Murad's Spoken English

- Could you **watch over my backpack** while I run to the bathroom?
- I prefer to live in a gated community with security guards **watching over us**.

WATER(S)

**37. keep one's head above water:** 1) to have just enough to live or survive (especially having enough money); 2) to manage to do all of your work.

## Sentence examples

- She **keeping her head above water** right now but if she doesn't find another job soon she'll have to move back home to her parents' house.

**38. in hot water:** to be in a difficult situation for doing something wrong.

- I'm **in hot water** for skipping classes this morning.
- You'll be **in hot water** if anyone notices you're watching movies at work.

**39. not hold water:** to not seem true or reasonable.

- Your excuse that you didn't get my email **does not hold water** because Julie said your forwarded it to her.
- This weak apology is **not going to hold water** with our customers.

**40. water down something (water something down):** to make something weaker.

- We stopped going to that bar because they were **watering down their cocktails**.
- Our legal department said we need to **water the statement down** or risk getting sued.

**41. water under the bridge:** it's not possible to change something that's already happened.

- I wish I hadn't sold the watch my father gave me but now it's **water under the bridge**.
- We both said terrible things but it's **water under the bridge**—let's learn from this and move on.

# Murad's Spoken English

**42.muddy the waters:** to make things more complicated or confusing.

- Wait a while. If you release another statement now you'll only **muddy the waters**.
- Unfortunately, the results of this new survey really **muddy the waters**.

**43.test the waters:** to try something new (especially to see what will happen or how others will react).

- I'm **testing the waters** to see if having a photo on my CV makes any difference.
- Before you quit your job and start a consulting business I recommend you **test the waters** with one or two clients.

## WAVELENGTH

**44.on the same wavelength:** agreeing or having the same opinion.

- My business partner and I were **on the same wavelength** when we first started but now we have very different ideas about the company.
- Amazingly, we were all **on the same wavelength** at today's meeting.

## WAVES

**45.make waves:** to shock or upset people by doing something different.

- After Madonna and Lady Gaga, it's pretty hard to **make waves** in music anymore.
- When you go overseas next semester try not to **make waves**—the world is a dangerous place these days.

## WAY

**46.bluff one's way:** to pretend to be something you are not to achieve something.

- I forgot to bring my ID but I was able to **bluff my way** past security.
- I've **bluffed my way** through the interview but I'm going to get fired because I don't have the skills to do this job.

**47.by the way:** an expression used in a conversation to indicate there is some additional information you want to say.

- **By the way**, did you hear that my sister will be home for the holidays?
- I really love your new haircut **by the way**.



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## Sentence examples

— When Sarah decided to look at her boyfriend's iPhone **she opened a can of worms**.

# Murad's Spoken English

## X Idioms

**01.x marks the spot:** an “x” is used to show the exact location (spot) of something.

### Example sentences

- As you can see on the diagram, **x marks the spot** where the murder occurred.

# Murad's Spoken English

## Y Idioms

YEAR(S)

**02.year after year:** every year for many years.

### Example sentences

- **Year after year** my kids give me ugly ties as Christmas gifts.

**03.year in, year out:** every year for many years.

### Example sentences

- He worked at the company **year in, year out** for decades before he was laid off.

**04.(all) year round:** during the whole year, happening all year.

### Example sentences

- Most people only eat roast turkey and stuffing on Thanksgiving and Christmas but we keep it on the menu **all year round** at our restaurant.

**05.in years:** in a long time.

### Example sentences

- I hadn't seen my high school English teacher **in years** but she looks exactly the same.

**06.getting on in years:** becoming old.

### Example sentences

- My mom is **getting on in years** so we're building an extra room in our house for her.

YELL

# Murad's Spoken English

**07.yell bloody murder:** to scream really loudly.

## Example sentences

- When the thief tried to grab my bag, I **yelled bloody murder** and he let go and ran away.

YES

**08.yes man:** someone who always agrees with authority (always says “yes”).

## Meaning

**Idiom: yes man**

- Someone who always agrees with everything that someone else says. (The person always says “yes”)

YOU, YOU'RE, YOURSELF

**09.you can say that again:** you strongly agree with something someone said.

## Example sentences

- A: "This pie is delicious." B: "**You can say that again!**"

**10.you can't take it with you:** enjoy life today because you can't take your money or possessions with you when you die.

## Example sentences

- Why don't you ever drive your sports car? **You can't take it with you**, ya know?

**11.you can't teach an old dog new tricks:** the idea that older people can't learn new skills or learn how to do new things.

## Example sentences

- My grandfather has 5,000 followers on Twitter and Instagram—who says **you can't teach an old dog new tricks!**

# Murad's Spoken English

**12.you get what to pay for:** the price of something usually equals its quality (especially cheap things are of low quality).

## Example sentences

- It's true **you get what you pay for**—this \$239 laptop is unbelievably slow.

**13.you're toast:** you're in trouble.

## Example sentences

- **You're toast** when your mom finds out you ruined her blouse.

**14.by yourself:** all alone.

## Example sentences

- If you just want to be **by yourself**, why don't you say so?

**15.keep something to yourself:** Keeping or having something only for you.

## Example sentences

- If that's what you really believe, I suggest you keep your opinions **to yourself**.

**16.yours truly:** me, myself.

## Example sentences

- A: "Wow, who cooked all this good food?" B: "**Yours truly**."

## Z Idioms

ZERO

**01.zero in on something:** to focus or pay attention to one particular thing.

## Example sentences

# Murad's Spoken English

- I think you should **zero in on chapter two** because it's the most relevant for your situation.

ZIP

**02.zip one's lips:** to be silent; to not tell a secret (as if the lips were zipped with a zipper so the person cannot talk).

## Example sentences

- I'm going to resign in two weeks but **zip your lips** please!

ZONE

**03.zone out:** to not pay attention to things happening around you.

## Example sentences

- As soon as my boyfriend talks about sports, I automatically **zone out**.

ZOOM

**04.zoom in on something:** to examine or look at something more closely.

## Example sentences

- **Zoom in on that part** of the map; I think I recognize that area.