



ESL
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Keeping Secrets - Idioms

Lesson	CEFR
3	B2

Idiomatic & Cultural English

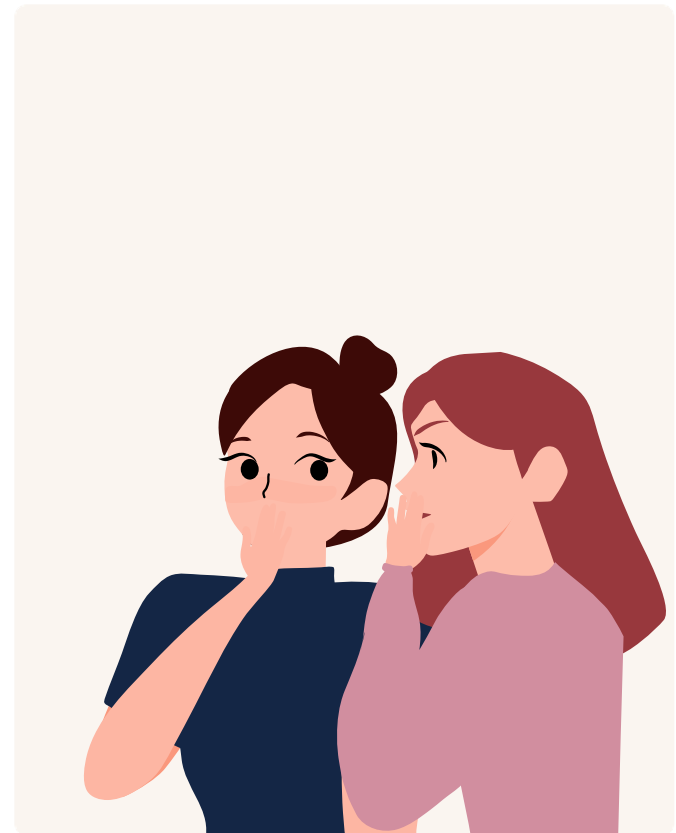
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Introduction

Human beings love sharing information, but managing secrets can be a social and linguistic minefield.

Every language has creative ways to describe gossip, hidden truths, and accidental slips of the tongue.

In English, mastering idioms surrounding secrets will help you navigate complex social situations with confidence!

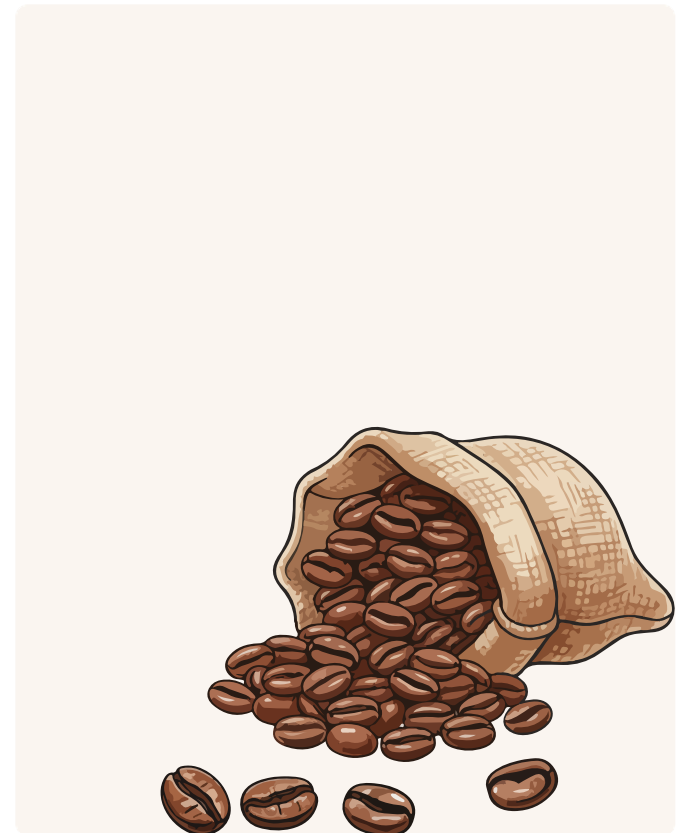


Vocabulary & Idiom Focus

Spill the Beans: To accidentally or prematurely reveal secret information.

Keep under wraps: To keep something completely secret or hidden from the public view.

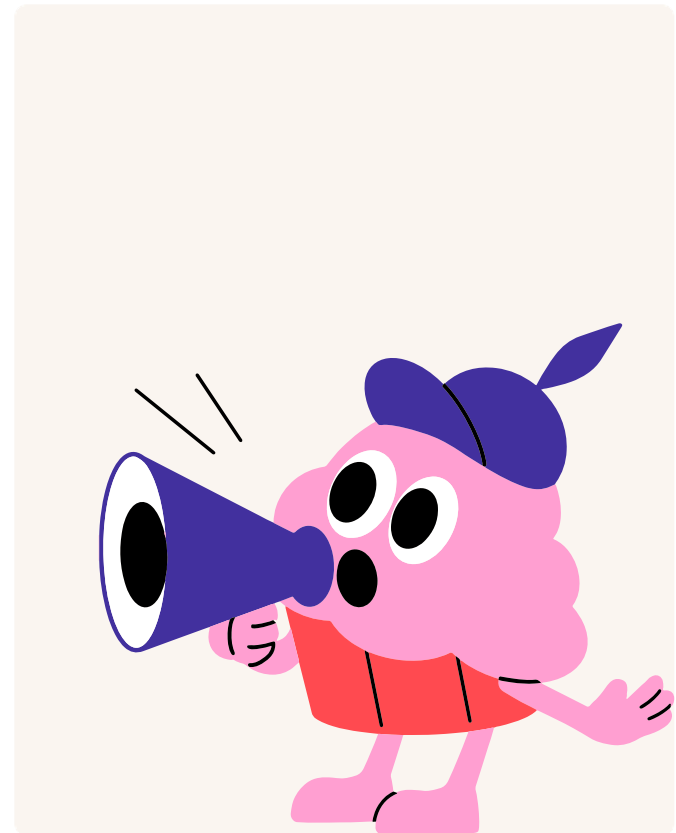
Let the cat out of the bag: To disclose a secret, often inadvertently, allowing a hidden truth to escape.



Vocabulary & Idiom Focus

Fly on the wall: An unnoticed observer who is able to hear or see a private conversation firsthand.

Blabbermouth: A person who talks excessively and indiscreetly, frequently revealing secrets to others.



The Psychology of a Secret

Why is it so difficult for a blabbermouth to keep a secret?

Psychologists suggest harboring confidential information acts as a physical burden on the brain. When told to keep an exciting piece of news under wraps, the brain stays in a state of constant alertness to prevent us from letting it slip.

Ironically, this hyper-focus often triggers a psychological slip, causing us to let the cat out of the bag when we least intend to. Whether you are gossiping or trying not to spill the beans, secrets dictate trust dynamics. Who hasn't wished to be a silent fly on the wall?

Idiom Matching Challenge

Match the idiom on the left with its correct contextual meaning on the right:

1. "My lips are sealed."

A) I promise that I will absolutely not repeat this secret to anyone.

2. "To blow the whistle."

B) To publicly expose illegal, unethical, or corrupt activity inside an organization.

3. "To sweep it under the rug."

C) To deliberately hide a mistake or embarrassing secret, hoping everyone forgets it.

4. "To dish the dirt."

D) To share juicy, negative gossip or scandalous secrets about someone else.

Let's Discuss!

Round 1: Personal Trust & Slip-ups

- Are you generally good at keeping secrets, or do you have a reputation among your friends for being someone who easily spills the beans?
- Tell a story about a time someone accidentally let the cat out of the bag and ruined a surprise. How did everyone react?
- If a close friend asked you to keep a massive secret completely under wraps, is there anyone you would still secretly share it with?

Let's Discuss!

Round 2: Gossip, Media, and Society

- Why do you think humans are so fascinated by celebrity gossip and corporate whistleblowers? Why do we love seeing people dish the dirt?
- If you could be a silent fly on the wall for one hour anywhere in history, which room or conversation would you choose to eavesdrop on?
- Do you think it is ever morally acceptable for a company or government to sweep a major mistake under the rug to prevent public panic?