

PRINTABLE STUDY PDF

100

Japanese Idioms Study Cards

Meanings · Kana · Examples · Literal Images · Usage
Notes

猫の手も借りたい

目から鱗が落ちる

一石二鳥

A printable card book for real phrases from shows, subtitles,
and study notes.

How to use this PDF

This is not a dictionary dump. Use it as a card book: read, picture, compare, repeat, and write your own sentence.

01

Read the kana

Start with the kana line before checking the English. This helps your eyes get used to real Japanese.

02

Picture the literal image

A cat's paw, a falling monkey, or a hand from a throat is easier to remember than a plain definition.

03

Learn the real meaning

Do not translate word by word. Ask what an English speaker would actually say in the same situation.

04

Notice the usage note

Some phrases are great for daily conversation. Others sound sharp, formal, or better for writing.

05

Say the example out loud

Read the Japanese sentence, then the kana sentence, then the English meaning.

06

Write your own line

Choose the idioms you actually want to use and write a sentence from your own life.

Quick guide

English learners often search for all of these as Japanese idioms, but Japanese separates them into a few useful groups.

慣用句

Kanyoku

Everyday idiomatic expressions. These often use body parts, animals, or simple images.

ことわざ

Proverbs

Lesson-like phrases that carry cultural wisdom, advice, or a memorable life idea.

四字熟語

Yojijukugo

Four-character idioms made of kanji. Some are common; others feel formal or literary.

USAGE

Why notes matter

A phrase can be common and still sound too direct in the wrong setting. Use the scene label and usage note together.

01

CATEGORY

Body Idioms

Feelings and reactions

These idioms turn anger, surprise, desire, and realization into body images.

#01

Body idiom · Casual frustration

頭に来る

あたまにくる

MEANING

to get really angry or annoyed.

EXAMPLE**彼の言い方には本当に頭に来た。**

かれのいいかたにはほんとうにあたまにきた。

The way he said it really got on my nerves.

LITERAL IMAGE

anger rushes straight to your head.

USAGE NOTE

Common in casual speech. In a formal complaint, use 不快に感じました instead.

#02

Body idiom · Emotional reaction

腹が立つ

はらがたつ

MEANING

to feel angry.

EXAMPLE**あんなことを言われて、腹が立った。**

あんなことをいわれて、はらがたつた。

I got angry after being told something like that.

LITERAL IMAGE

your stomach stands up in anger.

USAGE NOTE

Use it when describing your own feelings. It can sound direct if you say it while blaming someone.

#03

Body idiom · Everyday reactions

顔に出る

かおにでる

MEANING

to show on your face.

EXAMPLE

うれしい気持ちが顔に出ているよ。

うれしい きもちがかおにでているよ。

Your happiness is written all over your face.

LITERAL IMAGE

your feelings walk out onto your face.

USAGE NOTE

Easy to use in daily conversation. It can sound warm, playful, or teasing depending on tone.

#04

Body idiom · Likes and cravings

目がない

めがない

MEANING

to have a weakness for something.

EXAMPLE

私は甘いものには目がない。

わたしは あまいものにはめがない。

I have a weakness for sweets.

LITERAL IMAGE

your eyes disappear when you love something too much.

USAGE NOTE

Natural for food, hobbies, idols, animals, and anything you cannot resist.

#05

Body idiom · Learning moment

目から鱗が落ちる

めからうろこがおちる

MEANING

to suddenly understand something.

EXAMPLE**先生の説明を聞いて、目から鱗が落ちた。**

せんせいのせつめいをきいて、めからうろこがおちた。

The teacher's explanation suddenly made everything click.

LITERAL IMAGE

scales fall from your eyes, and the world becomes clear.

USAGE NOTE

Useful when you finally understand grammar, culture, or someone's real meaning.

#06

Body idiom · Honest feedback

耳が痛い

みみがいたい

MEANING

to feel uncomfortable because something is true.

EXAMPLE**その指摘は耳が痛いけど、正しいと思う。**

そのしてきはみみがいたいけど、ただしいとおもう。

That comment hurts to hear, but I think it is right.

LITERAL IMAGE

the truth hurts your ears.

USAGE NOTE

A good phrase for self-reflection. It sounds less defensive than saying you do not want to hear something.

#07

Body idiom · Emotional scenes

胸がいっぱい

むねがいっぱい

MEANING

to be overwhelmed with emotion.

EXAMPLE

みんなの優しさに胸がいっぱいになった。

みんなのやさしさにむねがいっぱいになった。

I was overwhelmed by everyone's kindness.

LITERAL IMAGE

your chest becomes full of feelings.

USAGE NOTE

Warm and emotional. It often appears in speeches, interviews, letters, and touching scenes.

#08

Body idiom · Dramatic moments

息をのむ

いきをのむ

MEANING

to gasp or hold your breath in surprise.

EXAMPLE

その景色の美しさに息をのんだ。

そのけしきのうつくしさにいきをのんだ。

The beauty of the view took my breath away.

LITERAL IMAGE

you swallow your own breath.

USAGE NOTE

Good for beautiful, shocking, tense, or dramatic moments.

#09

Body idiom · Disappointment

肩を落とす

かたをおとす

MEANING

to look disappointed or discouraged.

EXAMPLE

試合に負けて、彼は肩を落としていた。

しあいにまけて、かれはかたをおとしていた。

He looked discouraged after losing the game.

LITERAL IMAGE

your shoulders drop when your heart sinks.

USAGE NOTE

Natural in narration, drama summaries, and emotional descriptions.

#10

Body idiom · Strong desire

喉から手が出る

のどからてがでる

MEANING

to want something desperately.

EXAMPLE

あのチケットが喉から手が出るほど欲しい。

あのチケットがのどから てがでるほどほしい。

I want that ticket so badly.

LITERAL IMAGE

a hand reaches out from your throat.

USAGE NOTE

Vivid and dramatic. Use it for things you really want, not small preferences.

02

CATEGORY

Social Idioms

Relationships and group harmony

These phrases help you understand face, secrets, conflict, gratitude, and social distance.

#11

Body idiom · Can sound critical

口が軽い

くちがかるい

MEANING

to have a loose tongue.

EXAMPLE**彼は口が軽いから、秘密は話さないほうがいい。**

かれはくちがかるいから、ひみつははなさないほうがいい。

He has a loose tongue, so you should not tell him secrets.

LITERAL IMAGE

a mouth so light it cannot hold anything in.

USAGE NOTE

Common but negative. Avoid saying it directly to someone unless you are ready to sound critical.

#12

Body idiom · Trust and secrets

口が堅い

くちがかたい

MEANING

to be good at keeping secrets.

EXAMPLE**彼女は口が堅いから、安心して話せる。**

かのじょはくちがかたいから、あんしんしてはなせる。

She knows how to keep a secret, so I can talk to her safely.

LITERAL IMAGE

a mouth locked shut like a firm door.

USAGE NOTE

Positive and safe. Use it when describing someone trustworthy.

#13

Body idiom · Social nuance

顔を立てる

かおをたてる

MEANING

to save someone's face or show respect.

EXAMPLE**先輩の顔を立って、その場では何も言わなかった。**

せんぱいのかおをたてて、そのばではなにもいわなかった。

I said nothing there to save my senior's face.

LITERAL IMAGE

keeping someone's face standing upright.

USAGE NOTE

Important for hierarchy and group harmony. It appears in workplace, family, and group situations.

#14

Body idiom · Social mistake

顔をつぶす

かおをつぶす

MEANING

to make someone lose face.

EXAMPLE**みんなの前で注意して、彼の顔をつぶしてしまった。**

みんなのまえでちゅういして、かれのかおをつぶしてしまった。

I embarrassed him by correcting him in front of everyone.

LITERAL IMAGE

crushing someone's face in public.

USAGE NOTE

Strong and sensitive. Use it carefully, especially in work or family contexts.

#15

Animal idiom · Chemistry with people

馬が合う

うまがあう

MEANING

to get along well.

EXAMPLE

初めて会ったのに、彼とは馬が合った。

はじめてあったのに、かれとはうまがあった。

Even though we had just met, we really hit it off.

LITERAL IMAGE

two horses move at the same pace.

USAGE NOTE

Natural for friends, coworkers, classmates, and people with easy chemistry.

#16

Conversational phrase · Conflict repair

水に流す

みずにながす

MEANING

to let bygones be bygones.

EXAMPLE

昔のことは水に流そう。

むかしのことはみずにながそう。

Let's put the past behind us.

LITERAL IMAGE

old trouble floats away with the water.

USAGE NOTE

Useful after conflict. It sounds forgiving, but only use it when both sides are ready to move on.

#17

Body idiom · Team pressure

足を引っ張る

あしをひっぱる

MEANING

to hold someone back.

EXAMPLE

チームの足を引っ張りたくない。

チームのあしをひっぱりたくない。

I do not want to hold the team back.

LITERAL IMAGE

someone pulls another person's leg so they cannot move forward.

USAGE NOTE

Safe when used about yourself. It can sound harsh when used to criticize another person.

#18

Body idiom · Gratitude and indebtedness

頭が上がらない

あたまがあがらない

MEANING

to feel unable to oppose someone because you owe them so much.

EXAMPLE

先生には昔からお世話になっていて、頭が上がらない。

せんせいにはむかしからお世話になっていて、あたまがあがらない。

My teacher has helped me for years, so I feel deeply indebted to them.

LITERAL IMAGE

you cannot raise your head in front of someone.

USAGE NOTE

This often carries gratitude, respect, or a sense of obligation. It is not just fear.

03

CATEGORY

Work and Study

Effort, pressure, and progress

These idioms are easy to reuse in sentences about work, study, goals, and daily pressure.

#19

Animal idiom · Daily conversation

猫の手も借りたい

ねこのてもかりたい

MEANING

to be completely swamped.

EXAMPLE

今日は忙しくて、猫の手も借りたい。

きょうはいそがしくて、ねこのてもかりたい。

I'm completely swamped today.

LITERAL IMAGE

even a cat's tiny paw starts to look useful.

USAGE NOTE

Natural for work, study, chores, or errands. For formal writing, use とても忙しい instead.

#20

Body idiom · Difficult situations

手を焼く

てをやく

MEANING

to struggle with someone or something.

EXAMPLE

新しいシステムに手を焼いている。

あたらしいシステムにてをやいている。

I am having trouble with the new system.

LITERAL IMAGE

your hands get burned while trying to handle it.

USAGE NOTE

Safe for tasks or problems. Be careful when using it about people because it can sound like they are difficult.

#21

Body idiom · Asking for help

手を貸す

てをかす

MEANING

to lend a hand.

EXAMPLE

少し手を貸してくれる？

すこしてをかしてくれる？

Can you lend me a hand for a moment?

LITERAL IMAGE

giving someone your hand so they can finish the task.

USAGE NOTE

Common and useful. In polite speech, say 手を貸していただけますか.

#22

Conversational phrase · Stress and pressure

気が重い

きがおもい

MEANING

to feel weighed down.

EXAMPLE

明日の会議のことを考えると気が重い。

あしたのかいぎのことをかんがえると きがおもい。

Thinking about tomorrow's meeting makes me feel heavy.

LITERAL IMAGE

your mood becomes physically heavy.

USAGE NOTE

Natural for stressful events, awkward meetings, difficult calls, or tasks you do not want to face.

#23

気を使う

きをつかう

Conversational phrase · Social awareness

MEANING

to be considerate or worry about others' feelings.

EXAMPLE

そんなに気を使わなくていいよ。

そんなにきをつかわなくていいよ。

You do not have to be so considerate.

LITERAL IMAGE

using your inner energy to care about others.

USAGE NOTE

Very common in Japanese social life. It can mean kindness, pressure, or emotional labor depending on context.

#24

気を抜く

きをぬく

Conversational phrase · Focus and effort

MEANING

to let your guard down.

EXAMPLE

最後まで気を抜かないで。

さいごまできをぬかないで。

Do not let your guard down until the end.

LITERAL IMAGE

pulling the energy out of yourself too early.

USAGE NOTE

Useful in sports, exams, work, and any situation that needs focus.

#25

Body idiom · Hard work

骨が折れる

ほねがおれる

MEANING

to be hard work.

EXAMPLE

この資料を全部直すのは骨が折れる。

このしりょうをぜんぶなおすのはほねがおれる。

Fixing all these documents is hard work.

LITERAL IMAGE

the task is so hard it could break your bones.

USAGE NOTE

Natural for difficult tasks. It sounds more expressive than 大変です.

#26

Body idiom · Skill improvement

腕を上げる

うでをあげる

MEANING

to improve your skill.

EXAMPLE

最近、料理の腕を上げたね。

さいきん、りょうりのうでをあげたね。

Your cooking skills have really improved lately.

LITERAL IMAGE

your arm rises higher as your skill grows.

USAGE NOTE

Positive and safe. It works well for cooking, sports, art, language, and work skills.

04

CATEGORY

Animals, Food, Luck

Funny literal images

These expressions are strange, cute, or vivid, which makes them easier to remember.

#27

Animal idiom · Use with care

鯖を読む

さばをよむ

MEANING

to fudge the numbers.

EXAMPLE

彼は年齢を少し鯖を読んでいるらしい。

かれはねんれいをすこしさばをよんでいるらしい。

Apparently, he is fudging his age a little.

LITERAL IMAGE

counting mackerel so quickly that the numbers get blurry.

USAGE NOTE

Common, but it implies someone is not being honest. Avoid using it about bosses, clients, or serious money matters.

#28

Proverb · Lucky moments

棚から牡丹餅

たなからぼたもち

MEANING

an unexpected stroke of luck.

EXAMPLE

無料でチケットをもらえるなんて、棚から牡丹餅だね。

むりょうでチケットをもらえるなんて、たなからぼたもちだね。

Getting free tickets like that is such a lucky break.

LITERAL IMAGE

a sweet rice cake falls from the shelf into your hands.

USAGE NOTE

Cute and memorable. Use it when good luck appears without much effort.

#29

Proverb · Food and practicality

花より団子

はなよりだんご

MEANING

practical things matter more than pretty things.

EXAMPLE

景色より食べ物が楽しみなんて、花より団子だね。

けしきより たべものが たのしみなんて、はなより だんごだね。

You care more about the food than the view. That is very substance over style.

LITERAL IMAGE

choosing rice dumplings over flowers.

USAGE NOTE

Often playful. It is good for food, travel, shopping, and people who prefer comfort over aesthetics.

#30

Animal proverb · Encouragement

猿も木から落ちる

さるもきからおちる

MEANING

even experts make mistakes.

EXAMPLE

プロでも失敗するよ。猿も木から落ちる。

プロでも しばいするよ。さるも きから おちる。

Even pros make mistakes.

LITERAL IMAGE

even a monkey falls from a tree.

USAGE NOTE

Encouraging and easy to remember. Use it to comfort someone after a mistake.

#31

二兎を追う者は一兎をも得ず

にとをおうものはいっとをもえず

Animal proverb · Focus and priorities

MEANING

chase two things at once, and you may lose both.

EXAMPLE

仕事も試験も完璧にしようとして、結局どちらもうまくいかなかった。

しごともしけんもかんぺきにしようとして、けっきょくどちらもうまくいかなかった。

I tried to perfect both work and exams, and ended up doing well in neither.

LITERAL IMAGE

running after two rabbits and catching neither.

USAGE NOTE

Clear and close to English. It is useful when talking about focus, goals, and priorities.

#32

泣き面に蜂

なきつらにはち

Animal proverb · Bad luck

MEANING

one bad thing happens after another.

EXAMPLE

財布をなくした上に、雨まで降ってきた。泣き面に蜂だ。

さいふをなくしたうえに、あめまでふってきた。なきつらにはちだ。

I lost my wallet, and then it started raining. One thing after another.

LITERAL IMAGE

a bee stings you while you are already crying.

USAGE NOTE

Similar to "when it rains, it pours." It is vivid but not rude.

#33

Proverb-like phrase · Extra advantage

鬼に金棒

おににかなぼう

MEANING

something strong becomes even stronger.

EXAMPLE

彼に新しいパソコンを持たせたら、鬼に金棒だ。

かれにあたらしいパソコンをもたせたら、おににかなぼうだ。

Give him a new computer, and he will be unstoppable.

LITERAL IMAGE

a demon holding an iron club.

USAGE NOTE

Positive and slightly dramatic. Use it when a capable person gets an extra advantage.

#34

Proverb · Ironic comfort

知らぬが仏

しらぬがほとけ

MEANING

ignorance can be bliss.

EXAMPLE

本当の値段を知らないほうが幸せかも。知らぬが仏だね。

ほんとうのねだんを知らないほうがしあわせかも。しらぬがほとけだね。

Maybe it is better not to know the real price. Ignorance is bliss.

LITERAL IMAGE

not knowing lets you stay as calm as a Buddha.

USAGE NOTE

Often used with humor. It can also carry a slightly cynical tone.

05

CATEGORY

Japanese Proverbs

Life lessons and culture

These phrases feel more like cultural wisdom than everyday slang.

#35

Proverb · Long-term effort

石の上にも三年

いしのうえにもさんねん

MEANING

patience and persistence pay off.

EXAMPLE

語学はすぐに上達しない。石の上にも三年だ。

ごがくはすぐにじょうたつしない。いしのうえにもさんねんだ。

Language learning does not improve overnight. Persistence matters.

LITERAL IMAGE

sitting on a cold stone until it finally becomes warm.

USAGE NOTE

Common in study, work, and long-term goals. It sounds motivational rather than casual.

#36

Proverb · Motivation

七転び八起き

ななころびやおき

MEANING

keep getting back up.

EXAMPLE

何度失敗しても、七転び八起きの気持ちで頑張ろう。

なんどしっばいしても、ななころびやおきのきもちでがんばろう。

No matter how many times we fail, let's keep getting back up.

LITERAL IMAGE

falling seven times and standing up eight.

USAGE NOTE

Positive and motivational. It works well in essays, speeches, and personal reflection.

#37

Proverb-like phrase · Too late now

後の祭り

あとのまつり

MEANING

it is too late now.

EXAMPLE

今さら謝っても、後の祭りだ。

いまさら あやまっても、あとのまつりだ。

Apologizing now is too little, too late.

LITERAL IMAGE

arriving after the festival is already over.

USAGE NOTE

Common and useful. It can sound a bit cold, so soften it in sensitive situations.

#38

Proverb · Practical advice

急がば回れ

いそがばまわれ

MEANING

slow and steady can be faster in the end.

EXAMPLE

近道より安全な道を行こう。急がば回れだ。

ちかみちより あんぜんなみちを いこう。いそがばまわれだ。

Let's take the safer route instead of the shortcut.

LITERAL IMAGE

taking the long way because rushing can backfire.

USAGE NOTE

Useful for study, work, travel, and problem-solving. It sounds practical rather than emotional.

#39

Proverb · Cultural idea

出る杭は打たれる

でるくいほうたれる

MEANING

people who stand out may get criticized.

EXAMPLE**日本では、出る杭は打たれると言われることがある。**

にほんでは、でるくいほうたれると言われることがある。

In Japan, people sometimes say that the nail that sticks out gets hammered down.

LITERAL IMAGE

a raised stake gets hit with a hammer.

USAGE NOTE

Useful for cultural discussion, but do not use it as a simple explanation for all Japanese behavior.

#40

Proverb · Adjusting to change

住めば都

すめばみやこ

MEANING

any place can start to feel like home.

EXAMPLE**最初は不便だったけど、住めば都だね。**

さいしょはふべんだったけど、すめばみやこだね。

It was inconvenient at first, but now it feels like home.

LITERAL IMAGE

wherever you live can become the capital.

USAGE NOTE

Warm and useful for moving, travel, study abroad, or adjusting to a new job.

#41

Proverb · Conflict repair

雨降って地固まる

あめふってじかたまる

MEANING

after trouble, things can become stronger.

EXAMPLE

喧嘩したけど、前より仲良くなった。雨降って地固まるだね。

けんかしたけど、まえよりなかよくなった。あめふってじかたまるだね。

We fought, but now we are closer than before.

LITERAL IMAGE

after rain, the ground becomes firm.

USAGE NOTE

Often used after conflict, tension, or a difficult event that leads to a better relationship.

#42

Proverb · Careful speech

口は災いの元

くちはわざわいのもと

MEANING

careless words cause trouble.

EXAMPLE

余計なことを言ってしまった。口は災いの元だね。

よけいなことをいってしまった。くちはわざわいのもとだね。

I said something unnecessary. Words really can cause trouble.

LITERAL IMAGE

disaster begins at the mouth.

USAGE NOTE

Good for self-reflection. It can sound preachy if you say it to someone else.

06

CATEGORY

Yojijukugo

Four-character idioms

These four-kanji idioms are useful because they have clear images or English-friendly meanings.

#43

Yojikugou · Easy English match

一石二鳥

いっせきにちょう

MEANING

to kill two birds with one stone.

EXAMPLE

通勤中に日本語を聞けば、勉強にもなるし時間も無駄にならない。一石二鳥だ。

つうきんちゅうににほんごをきけば、べんきょうにもなるしじかんもむだにならない。いっせきにちょうだ。

Listening to Japanese during your commute is a two-for-one win.

LITERAL IMAGE

one stone brings down two birds.

USAGE NOTE

Very easy for English speakers to remember because the idea matches English closely.

#44

Yojikugou · Opinions and tastes

十人十色

じゅうにんという

MEANING

everyone is different.

EXAMPLE

好きな勉強法は人によって違う。十人十色だ。

すきなべんきょうほうはひとによってちがう。じゅうにんというだ。

Everyone has a different study method.

LITERAL IMAGE

ten people, ten colors.

USAGE NOTE

Positive and safe. Use it for tastes, personalities, opinions, and learning styles.

#45

Yojjukugo · Teasing phrase

三日坊主

みっかぼうず

MEANING

someone who gives up quickly.

EXAMPLE

また日記をやめたの？三日坊主だね。

またにつきをやめたの？みっかぼうずだね。

You quit journaling again? You never stick with it, do you?

LITERAL IMAGE

a monk for only three days.

USAGE NOTE

Common and funny, but it can sound teasing. Use it carefully when talking about someone else.

#46

Yojjukugo · Cultural phrase

一期一会

いちごいちえ

MEANING

a once-in-a-lifetime encounter.

EXAMPLE

この出会いを大切にしたい。一期一会だから。

このであいをたいせつにしたい。いちごいちえだから。

I want to treasure this meeting because it may only happen once.

LITERAL IMAGE

one time, one meeting.

USAGE NOTE

Beautiful and cultural. It is common in speeches, travel writing, tea ceremony contexts, and reflective posts.

#47

Yojikugo · Can sound harsh

自業自得

じごうじとく

MEANING

you reap what you sow.

EXAMPLE

勉強しなかったから落ちたんだよ。自業自得だ。

べんきょうしなかったから おちたんだよ。じごうじとくだ。

You failed because you did not study. You brought it on yourself.

LITERAL IMAGE

your own actions return to you as your own result.

USAGE NOTE

Very direct. It is safe for self-reflection, but harsh when said to someone who is already upset.

#48

Yojikugo · Confusing situations

右往左往

うおうさおう

MEANING

to run around in confusion.

EXAMPLE

電車が止まって、駅でみんな右往左往していた。

でんしゃがとまって、えきでみんな うおうさおうしていた。

The train stopped, and everyone at the station was running around in confusion.

LITERAL IMAGE

moving right, then left, with no clear direction.

USAGE NOTE

Useful for chaotic scenes. It is common in news, writing, and spoken summaries.

#49

Yojjukugo · Doubt and belief

半信半疑

はんしんはんぎ

MEANING

half-believing and half-doubting.

EXAMPLE

その話を半信半疑で聞いていた。

そのはなしを はんしんはんぎで きいていた。

I listened to the story with mixed doubt and belief.

LITERAL IMAGE

one half of your mind believes, and the other half doubts.

USAGE NOTE

Natural in daily speech and writing. Use it when you are not fully convinced yet.

#50

Yojjukugo · Writing and speeches

温故知新

おんこちしん

MEANING

to learn something new by studying the past.

EXAMPLE

古い記事を読み返すと、新しい発見がある。まさに温故知新だ。

ふるいきじを よみかえすと、あたらしい はっけんがある。まさに おんこちしんだ。

When I reread old articles, I discover something new. That is learning from the past.

LITERAL IMAGE

warming up old knowledge until it reveals something new.

USAGE NOTE

More formal and reflective. It works well in essays, speeches, learning posts, and cultural topics.

Bonus quick cards

The second set of 50 idioms uses a denser format. These are useful for reading, shows, subtitles, workplace conversations, and casual reactions.

#51

目を通す

めをとおす

Meaning

to look over

資料に目を通した。

Useful for documents and emails.

#52

目が高い

めがたかい

Meaning

to have a good eye

そのバッグを選ぶなんて、目が高いね。

Positive praise for taste or judgment.

#53

口を挟む

くちをはさむ

Meaning

to butt in

話の途中で口を挟まないで。

Direct and can sound annoyed.

#54

手が回らない

てがまわらない

Meaning

to be too busy to handle everything

今はそこまで手が回らない。

Natural for work and planning.

#55

足を運ぶ

あしをはこぶ

Meaning

to make a visit

週末に展示会へ足を運んだ。

A little polished and useful in writing.

#56

腕が鳴る

うでがなる

Meaning

to be eager to show one's skill

久しぶりの試合で腕が鳴る。

Good for sports, cooking, and challenges.

#57

気を取り直す

きをとりなおす

Meaning

to pull yourself together

失敗したけど、気を取り直して続けよう。

Encouraging and practical.

#58

息が合う

いきがあう

Meaning

to be in sync

二人の演技は息が合っていた。

Good for teams, friends, and performers.

#59

腰を据える

こしをすえる

Meaning

to settle down and focus

今年は腰を据えて勉強したい。

Useful for long-term goals.

#60

歯が立たない

はがたたない

Meaning

to be no match for

この問題には全然歯が立たなかった。

Good for hard tasks or strong opponents.

#61

鼻が高い

はながたかい

Meaning

to feel proud

娘が表彰されて、鼻が高い。

Usually about pride in someone close.

#62

鼻につく

はなにつく

Meaning

to get on one's nerves

彼の自慢話が鼻につく。

Negative and critical.

#63

首を長くする

くびをながくする

Meaning

to wait eagerly

返事を首を長くして待っている。

Soft and friendly.

#64

首をかしげる

くびをかしげる

Meaning

to wonder or be puzzled

彼女は説明を聞いて首をかしげた。

Good for narration and reactions.

#65

首が回らない

くびがまわらない

Meaning

to be financially stuck

借金で首が回らない。

Strong and serious.

#66

恩に着る

おんにきる

Meaning

to be grateful or indebted

助けてくれて恩に着るよ。

Sounds heartfelt or slightly old-fashioned.

#67

肩を持つ

かたをもつ

Meaning

to take someone's side

どうして彼の肩を持つの？

Can sound accusatory.

#68

肩身が狭い

かたみがせまい

Meaning

to feel small or ashamed

遅刻ばかりで肩身が狭い。

Good for social discomfort.

#69

口裏を合わせる

くちうらをあわせる

Meaning

to get one's stories straight

二人は口裏を合わせていた。

Often implies hiding the truth.

#70

裏をかく

うらをかく

Meaning

to outsmart someone

相手の裏をかいて勝った。

Useful for strategy and games.

#71

一目置く

いちもくおく

Meaning

to respect someone's ability

みんな彼の實力に一目置いている。

Positive and respectful.

#72

目をかける

めをかける

Meaning

to look after or favor

先生は彼に目をかけている。

Can imply special attention.

#73

波風を立てる

なみかぜをたてる

Meaning

to stir up trouble

ここで波風を立てたくない。

Good for group harmony topics.

#74

油を売る

あぶらをうる

Meaning

to waste time chatting

油を売っていないで、早く戻って。

Casual and slightly scolding.

#75

骨を折る

ほねをおる

Meaning

to make an effort for someone

友人のために骨を折った。

More about effort than difficulty.

#76

腹をくくる

はらをくくる

Meaning

to brace yourself and decide

もう腹をくくるしかない。

Strong resolve.

#77

歯を食いしばる

はをくいしばる

Meaning

to grit your teeth and endure

つらい時期を歯を食いしばって乗り越えた。

Dramatic and motivational.

#78

気が散る

きがちる

Meaning

to get distracted

音がうるさくて気が散る。

Very useful in daily life.

#79

気が済む

きがすむ

Meaning

to feel satisfied or get closure

謝ったら気が済んだ。

Good for emotions and closure.

#80

気が利く

きがきく

Meaning

to be thoughtful or considerate

彼女は本当に気が利く。

Positive praise.

#81

手に汗を握る

てにあせをにぎる

Meaning

to be on the edge of your seat

手に汗を握る試合だった。

Great for sports and drama.

#82

足がすくむ

あしがすくむ

Meaning

one's legs freeze from fear

高い所に立つと足がすくむ。

Physical fear reaction.

#83

顔が広い

かおがひろい

Meaning

to be well-connected

彼はこの業界で顔が広い。

Good for networking contexts.

#84

顔を出す

かおをだす

Meaning

to show up briefly

あとで会場に顔を出すね。

Natural for casual visits.

#85

手を切る

てをきる

Meaning

to cut ties

彼とはもう手を切った。

Strong and final.

#86

縁を切る

えんをきる

Meaning

to sever a relationship

その人とは縁を切った。

Stronger and more emotional than 手を切る.

#87

息が詰まる

いきがつまる

Meaning

to feel suffocated or tense

この空気は息が詰まる。

Good for tense rooms and pressure.

#88

気が長い

きがながい

Meaning

to be patient

彼は気が長い人だ。

Neutral or positive.

#89

気が短い

きがみじかい

Meaning

to be short-tempered

私は少し気が短い。

Safer as self-description.

#90

水を差す

みずをさす

Meaning

to dampen the mood

楽しい話に水を差さないで。

Useful for social situations.

#91

二の足を踏む

にのあしをふむ

Meaning

to hesitate

高いので買うのに二の足を踏んだ。

Good for decisions.

#92

板につく

いたにつく

Meaning

to look natural in a role

彼の司会ぶりが板についてきた。

Positive progress phrase.

#93

大目に見る

おおめにみる

Meaning

to overlook or be lenient

今回は大目に見てください。

Useful for apologies and requests.

#94

耳を傾ける

みみをかたむける

Meaning

to listen closely

相手の意見に耳を傾ける。

Polished and safe.

#95

目を疑う

めをうたがう

Meaning

to not believe one's eyes

その結果を見て目を疑った。

Good for surprise.

#96

目に入れても痛くない

めにいれてもいたくない

Meaning

to be unbearably dear

孫は目に入れても痛くないほどかわいい。

Often used about children or grandchildren.

#97

腹を割る

はらをわる

Meaning

to speak frankly

今日は腹を割って話そう。

Useful for honest conversations.

#98

眉をひそめる

まゆをひそめる

Meaning

to frown in disapproval

彼の発言に多くの人が眉をひそめた。

Often used in writing or reports.

#99

立つ鳥跡を濁さず

たつとりあとをにごさず

Meaning

leave cleanly without trouble

辞める時こそ、立つ鳥跡を濁さずだ。

Useful for endings and departures.

#100

弘法にも筆の誤り

こうぼうにもふでのあやまり

Meaning

even masters make mistakes

プロのミスもある。弘法にも筆の誤りだ。

Similar to 猿も木から落ちる, but more formal.

Review: match the meaning

Cover the right column first. Try to remember the natural English meaning, not the word-by-word translation.

猫の手も借りたい	to be completely swamped
目から鱗が落ちる	to suddenly understand
鯖を読む	to fudge the numbers
棚から牡丹餅	a lucky break
石の上にも三年	persistence pays off
十人十色	everyone is different
半信半疑	half in doubt
水に流す	let bygones be bygones

Review: fill in the blank

Write the missing idiom, then say the full sentence out loud.

今日は忙しくて、_____。

Answer: 猫の手も借りたい

先生の説明を聞いて、_____。

Answer: 目から鱗が落ちた

昔のことは_____。

Answer: 水に流そう

このくらいの作業なら_____。

Answer: 朝飯前だよ

語学はすぐに上達しない。_____。

Answer: 石の上にも三年だ

My own sentences

Pick idioms you actually want to use. Write one short sentence from your own life.

Idiom	My sentence	Where I saw it

Keep noticing, not just memorizing

Japanese idioms become easier when you stop treating them as random phrases and start seeing them as small scenes. Save the ones you keep meeting in shows, subtitles, manga, conversations, and reading notes.

NEXT

Choose 10 favorites

Do not review all 100 at once.
Choose the 10 idioms you want to recognize first.

PRACTICE

Make them personal

Turn each idiom into one sentence about your own day, mood, work, or study life.

INPUT

Look for them again

When an idiom appears in a subtitle or show, it becomes much easier to remember.

REPEAT

Read the kana aloud

Say the sentence before checking the English. That is how the phrase starts to feel usable.