



Our Favorite Expressions

Serie 5 ©

by Pascal Grierson

1. Monday

“To put the cart before the horse”

This expression is very useful to ensure things are done in the right sequence. You wouldn't get very far if you literally attached your cart to the front of your horse. Clearly, if the cart is attached behind the horse you'll get moving to your destination. This metaphor can be used in every day life as well as in business, and can be likened to another expression “don't run before you can walk”.

2. Tuesday

“To let the cat out of the bag”

You and a group of friends plan a surprise party for Victor's birthday. A few days before the day itself one of those friends accidentally reveals the plan to the Victor. That friend has “let the cat out of the bag!”

The most popular explanation for this saying is from the 16th century, when villainous market traders would replace a valuable pig in a bag, with a cat. If they accidentally let it out the trick was revealed.

3. Wednesday

“A bull in a china shop”

This refers to someone who lacks subtlety or sophistication in handling a delicate situation. With a little imagination one can see quite clearly what damage a bull let loose in a china shop would do! If during a conversation someone says something entirely inappropriate and perhaps hurtful, you could turn around to the person next to you and say: “Simon's like a bull in a china shop!”

4. Thursday

“To have other fish to fry”

This expression is used when one has more important or better things to do or attend to. You might say: “I hope the meeting doesn't go on too long – I've got other fish to fry.”

5. Friday

“To kill two birds with one stone”

This popular expression relates to getting two things done at the same time, hence the clear imagery one can conjure up. Your husband might say to you as you get into the car: “Why don't we pick up the dry cleaning on the way to the supermarket?” to which you would say “Sure, good idea, we'll kill two birds with one stone”.