



Our Favorite Expressions

Serie 6 ©

by Pascal Grierson

1. Monday

“To set the cat among the pigeons”

You would use this expression to describe an unwanted action that is likely to cause a disturbance. So you could say to your son: “Don’t tell mum that dad tied the dog to the lamppost when he went to the pub. That really would set the cat among the pigeons.”

2. Tuesday

“To spill the beans”

This is when someone reveals secret information unintentionally or indiscreetly. Its origin might lie in a complicated Ancient Greek voting process involving white and black beans in containers.

Knocking over a container, thus spilling the beans, would spoil the vote.

You might spill the beans about the surprise party your mum was planning for your dad — which wouldn’t go down too well with her!

3. Wednesday

“To beat about the bush”

This means to dither or take a long time to get to the point. It is more commonly used in the negative. For example, if someone in a meeting is being slow or vague in trying to express something, the boss could say “stop beating about the bush and make your point”.

Its origin is in the practice of beating bushes to get birds to fly out for hunters to shoot them; the bush beating being the preamble to the main event!

4. Thursday

“Crocodile tears”

To shed crocodile tears is to cry insincerely. The root of this expression lies in the myth that crocodiles shed tears as they eat their prey – unsubstantiated and highly unlikely. A very common example of these kinds of tears is unsurprisingly, in young children, notably the ‘terrible twos’!

5. Friday

“A sight for sore eyes”

This expression is used when a person sees someone or something that they are glad to see. For example if you have had a long and difficult day in the office and you decide to go to the pub with a friend, and they come back from the bar with your favourite drink, you would say “oh thanks, that’s a sight for sore eyes”.