

Greetings, everyone! My name is Laurence and this is *English in Practice*!

MUSIC

Welcome to this bonus episode of *English in Practice*, in which I shall explain the meanings of five idioms that all involve legs. As mentioned previously, I do not have time to upload an interview episode every week, but hopefully this short episode will be helpful for you anyway.

Since it is the first episode of this type, I would be extra appreciative to hear from you and get some feedback. You can either email me using the following address: englishinpracticepodcast@gmail.com, or contact me through the Facebook page, 'English in Practice: A Podcast for Intermediate-Advanced Learners.' A like there would also be wonderful.

For those who wish to download the transcript, simply visit my website: www.jamesfable.com. James Fable is my penname – an invented name that I use for writing. Don't let that confuse you.

That's it for announcements. Let's move on to learning about some idioms with legs.

MUSIC

Okay. English has many, many idioms involving legs – and I'll provide a link in the description to the corresponding Free Dictionary page, so you can have a look – but the five I have picked out for today are some of the most used.

The first of these is *to be on one's last legs*. People say this a lot, and the key word in this idiom is not legs but *last*. If someone is on their last legs, it means that they are near the end in some way – perhaps they are extremely tired and will soon collapse. For example, 'David has been up all night and is now on his last legs.' That means, David is so tired that he is struggling to stay awake; he will fall asleep soon.

However, we use this idiom more often with objects, especially machines, even if they do not have legs of any sort. In this usage, it means that something is sure to break soon. For example, ‘The coffee machine is ten years old and has been repaired a dozen times. It’s surely on its last legs now.’ In other words, ‘The coffee machine is so old that it is sure to break soon.’

Excellent. No need to linger; let’s move on to idiom number two!

SOUND EFFECT

Okay, the second idiom is *to cost an arm and a leg*. Now, this has nothing to do with the illegal trade in human body parts, at least I hope that isn’t where the saying comes from; it simply means that something is very expensive, that it costs a fortune. Obviously, our limbs are of great value to us, and that is presumably the logic behind this idiom.

Let me give you a couple of examples. ‘The Millers had a fabulous holiday in the Caribbean, but they paid an arm and a leg for it.’ In other words, ‘The Millers paid an enormous sum of money to go on holiday to the Caribbean.’

Another example: ‘Do you like my new television? I hope so, because it cost me an arm and a leg.’ That means, the television was extremely, extortionately, expensive.

Let’s move on to the third idiom.

SOUND EFFECT

To pull somebody’s leg. This is a way of saying that you are playing a joke on someone, that you are tricking them. I can give you two real examples. A few weeks ago, I was sitting outside with some friends, and they tried to convince me that there was a squirrel up a nearby tree. I soon realised, though, that there was no squirrel, so I asked: ‘Are you pulling my leg?’ And yes, my friends were pulling my leg – they were playing a joke on me – as they wanted to try and confuse me. I’m very tempted here to make a joke about the German sense of humour, but I think it’s better not to lose half my listeners so early on.

Anyway, another example. Sometimes when we went on family holidays, my dad would ask my mum on the way to the airport, 'You have our passports, right?' And my mum would answer, 'Stop it. I know you are pulling my leg,' because she knew that my father had our passports. He was playing a joke on her, trying to trick her into believing that we had left our passports at home. In other words, he was pulling her leg.

Here comes the fourth idiom.

SOUND EFFECT

Break a leg. Again, we have to understand this figuratively, metaphorically, because you can actually break the bone in your leg, of course. If someone tells you to break a leg, they mean: 'Give it all you've got! Good luck!' For example, if you are about to sing at a concert, your friend might come up to you and say, 'You look great. Break a leg!' In other words, 'Go for it! Time to shine!'

It's a phrase of encouragement that is especially used in the theatre, where wishing someone good luck is supposed to jinx them; that means, by wishing someone good luck, people believe you might instead bring them bad luck. This may be the origin of the phrase *break a leg*: by wishing the actor to break a leg – which would be very bad luck – you hope the opposite will happen, namely that everything will go well.

One more example. Imagine you have to give a presentation at work and have been preparing for weeks. On the day of the presentation, your colleague says: 'I believe in you. Break a leg!' That's like saying: 'Good luck! Go and impress them!'

Good, I hope I have made that clear. Time for the fifth and final idiom.

SOUND EFFECT

To leg it. This is the simplest of them all and is very colloquial. It is also typically British – I think you are unlikely to hear this in other English-speaking countries.

To leg it simply means ‘to run away as fast as you can’, usually to escape from someone. For example, two burglars, two robbers, break into a house. Soon, one of the burglars hears a police siren, so he says to the other: ‘We’ve got to leg it. The cops are here!’ In other words: ‘We’ve got to run! The police are here!’

One more example. Imagine your friend has had her handbag stolen and is now telling you what happened. She says: ‘Someone came up from behind me, took my bag and legged it!’ That means, the thief stole her handbag, then ran away as fast as he could.

SOUND EFFECT

Excellent. That was our final idiom. But before we go, let’s quickly recap the five idioms we have covered today:

To be on one’s last legs = this means to be exhausted or on the point of breaking, if you are talking about an object.

To cost an arm and a leg = this is another way of saying that something is extortionately expensive.

To pull somebody’s leg = this means to trick someone, to play a joke on them.

Break a leg = this means: ‘Good luck! Show them what you can do! Impress them!’

And finally, *to leg it* = which means to run away.

I hope everything is clear. As mentioned at the beginning, it would be great to get some feedback on this episode. Did you, for example, find my explanations clear? Did I cover too many idioms, or would you have liked to hear more? Perhaps you even found five a good number.

If you would like to give me your opinion, then please email me at englishinpracticepodcast@gmail.com or message me through the Facebook page, ‘English in Practice: A Podcast for Intermediate-Advanced Learners.’ Don’t be afraid of making mistakes in your message; it would simply be nice to hear from you. Also, if you

have enjoyed the podcast, please subscribe, tell your friends about it, share the Facebook page, etc.

That's all from me for today. I hope you have enjoyed this episode of *English in Practice*. Look out for an interview episode next week. All the best. Over and out.

Idioms with legs on the Free Dictionary: <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/leg>

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