

5 Sports Idioms commonly used in the office

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Work is, in many ways, like sports. The ups and downs, the winning and losing, the planning and preparation, the execution and the myriad emotions- they all mirror what happens on a playing field. In fact, some career experts suggest that one should treat our jobs as a game we love, and work will be so much more enjoyable, productive and fulfilling. No wonder we have so many idioms in the English language that are related to sports. While these may be used often on the field, they are also used in our workplaces and meeting rooms with amazing frequency.



In this article, let us explore the usage of 5 sports idioms that you are likely to hear often in your office environment.

1. Play it by the ear: to do something by feel and instinct rather than with a plan, to improvise
In an office meeting, you may hear a colleague say something like, “Regarding the next meeting date, I am not sure yet as there are a couple of other tentative appointments that may be finalized. Let’s just play it by the ear for the next week.” What this means in the above context is that because the person cannot confirm right away, he/she is suggesting that they coordinate amongst themselves informally to work out the schedule for the next meeting.

2. Play with fire: to take a huge risk

‘Play with fire’ is often used as a warning of the potential consequences of taking a particular decision or action.

Example: “Don’t delay responding to that e-mail - you’ll be playing with fire.”

3. Play it cool: to portray indifference or neutrality; to take it easy

We often hear managers talk to their subordinates the need to play it cool when faced with a tough situation. Essentially what they are saying is to portray or showcase a sense of cool indifference;

indicating that one is not really affected by the situation. People in sales are also encouraged to 'play it cool' when a prospect is showing great interest in a product. In this context, playing it cool means the salesman is not showing undue eagerness to sell the product and instead slowly guiding the prospect towards the sale.

Example: "Don't rush into accepting the merger offer, play it cool for a while. That may increase the offer price."

4. **Play ball:** to go along with an idea or person

Disagreements are common in any office. However, it is not productive to make a huge hue and cry of every disagreement and protest against every decision of your manager that you disagree with. Sometimes, it is more prudent (wise) to "play ball" with the colleague you disagree with rather than enter a 'fight mode'.

Example: "Let's play ball with that idea for now and see where it takes us. We can re-evaluate after monitoring for a couple of months."

5. **Hit the ball out of the park:** to achieve great success

This sports idiom may have originated from baseball, one of the most popular sports in America. But it is very relevant to the Indian context as well, where cricketers routinely hit sixes out of the stadium! As the idiom indicates, hitting the ball out of the park means to achieve something big (and probably unexpected) i.e. achieve a huge level of success.

Example: "Our new sales manager is amazing- he just hit the ball out of the park!". Here the implication is that the sales manager clearly exceeded his sales targets by a huge margin.

We hope you find these idioms useful and the next time you hear any of these sports-related English idioms in your office meeting room, you are not taken by surprise. Are there any other idioms you would like to know more about? Ask us in our comments section or through our Facebook page.

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-By Chander Madan

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