

Here is Audio Word Study #051 from Jane Lawson at DailyStep.com

I hope you enjoyed the audio article above about idioms with their origins in card games. In this DailyStep Audio Word Study, you'll find some examples of how to use these idioms in other contexts. Try to refer back to the article to remind yourself of the mental image of what the card players are doing, as this will help make the idioms easier to understand.

1. be dealt a bad hand

Meaning: to be unlucky from the beginning because you did not get a fair share of opportunities.

Example: His family were extremely poor, and he had to look after his sick parents so he could not go to school. But now he is running his own successful company! It's amazing how he has turned his life around, **after being dealt such a bad hand** in the first place.

2. Hold all the cards

Meaning: to be in a strong position because you control the key elements of something

Example: **Landlords hold all the cards** in the property rental market. Tenants don't have much power if their landlord decides to increase the rent.

3. Play your cards close to your chest

Meaning: to be secretive about your thoughts and intentions, so that other people do not know what you are thinking or planning

Example: It's impossible to know whether she will sell the company or not – **she plays her cards very close to her chest**, so we'll just have to wait and see what she decides. (*note: we can also say 'she keeps her cards close to her chest'.*)

4. Lay all your cards on the table

Meaning: to be completely honest and open about your resources and your intentions

Example: I am fed up with these slow negotiations. **I'll lay my cards on the table** – I can offer you two thousand pounds (£2,000.00) for the car, and not a penny more. Will you sell it to me for that price? (*note: we can also say 'put your cards on the table.'*)

5. Play your cards right

Meaning: to behave in the right way so that you get an advantage or succeed in something

Example: **If I play my cards right** at work, I might get a pay rise.

6. Play your trump card

Meaning: to use an advantage that makes you much more likely to succeed than other people

Examples: I didn't think the caretaker of the manor house would allow us to hold a party there, but then **John played his trump card** – he's the grandson of the property owner, so of course we had our party there after all! (*note: this means that when John said that his grandfather owned the property, the caretaker decided to allow the party to go ahead.*)

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7. Have an ace up your sleeve

Meaning: to have secret knowledge or a secret skill or possession which will give you an advantage

Example: I thought we would have to abandon the project due to lack of money, but **John had an ace up his sleeve** – he had enough money in the bank to cover the cost of the whole project!

Now, try to write your own sentences using these expressions. Make sure they are true to your own life if possible, as this will help you to remember them better. I think that is enough for now, but look out for more idiom lessons in my future blogs on DailyStep.com.

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