

When Everything Costs an Arm and a Leg: 4 Money Idioms

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

85 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

Martin, I have found the perfect hotel for our summer holiday.

Perfect location?

Right beside the beach.

Perfect rooms?

Large, bright, and every room has a sea view.

Perfect price?

Well... perhaps the price is not completely perfect.

How much is it?

I would prefer not to say.

Julia, does this hotel cost an arm and a leg?

Possibly one arm, one leg, and a few fingers.

Then we need a new plan.

Welcome to Your English Toolbox and Practice Arena Five-Minute English.

I am Martin.

And I am Julia.

Today we are exploring Lesson Three of our free idioms course: Money.

The course takes you through twenty-five lessons and one hundred useful English idioms.

Each lesson includes a natural dialogue, clear meanings, grammar notes, examples, listening and interactive practice.

You can find the course at Your English Toolbox dot com slash idioms.

And the direct link to this free lesson is waiting for you in the episode description.

Today we are learning four expressions: cost an arm and a leg, on a shoestring, make ends meet, and save for a rainy day.

Let us return to my beautiful but painfully expensive hotel.

If something costs an arm and a leg, it is extremely expensive.

The expression is an informal exaggeration.

You do not really pay with parts of your body.

Fortunately.



We could say, "That new phone costs an arm and a leg."

Or, "The repairs cost us an arm and a leg."

Notice that cost is irregular.

The past form is also cost, not costed.

So the repairs cost us an arm and a leg.

Exactly.

Now, if the hotel is too expensive, perhaps we could travel on a shoestring.

On a shoestring means using a very small amount of money.

You can travel on a shoestring, make a film on a shoestring, or start a business on a shoestring.

And before a noun, we often say a shoestring budget.

We travelled on a shoestring, but we had a shoestring budget.

That sounds possible.

We could stay at a small hostel and prepare our own food.

Good.

Because after paying my bills this month, I am simply trying to make ends meet.

To make ends meet means to have just enough money to pay for essential living costs.

Rent, food, electricity and transport.

It does not mean that you are earning a lot of money.

It means your income and your necessary expenses can just meet.

And ends is always plural.

Make ends meet, not make the end meet.

Perhaps an expensive beach hotel is not the right choice when we are trying to make ends meet.

Especially because I also want to save for a rainy day.

To save for a rainy day means to keep money for a future problem or unexpected need.

The rainy day is figurative.

You might need the money if your car breaks down or your boiler stops working.

You can save for a rainy day or put money aside for a rainy day.

And before a noun, we can talk about rainy-day savings.

So your plan is to travel on a shoestring and keep your savings for an emergency.

Exactly.

I am beginning to like this plan.

Time for a quick challenge.

Say the correct idiom before Martin answers.

Situation one.

A simple concert ticket is unbelievably expensive.



It costs an arm and a leg.

Situation two.

Two students travel across Europe with almost no money.

They travel on a shoestring.

Situation three.

A family has just enough income to cover its essential bills.

They make ends meet.

Final situation.

You put some money aside in case your car needs an unexpected repair.

You save for a rainy day.

Now choose one expression and make a sentence about your own life.

Quick recap.

Cost an arm and a leg means be extremely expensive.

On a shoestring means with a very small budget.

Make ends meet means have enough money for essential living costs.

And save for a rainy day means keep money for a future difficulty.

Continue with Lesson Three through the direct link in the description.

Its interactive practice will help you retrieve these expressions instead of simply recognising them.

So, Martin, where are we going on holiday?

Somewhere that does not cost an arm and a leg.

On a shoestring?

On a very comfortable shoestring.

I am not sure that exists.

Then we may need to save for another rainy day.

