

Get the Ball Rolling: 4 Productivity Idioms for Work

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Key words & expressions · English

8 learning entries

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

1

get the ball rolling

DEF

To start an activity, project or process.

Energetic and collaborative; it suggests taking the first practical action.

Let's get the ball rolling with a short planning meeting.

One clear email got the ball rolling.

2

learn the ropes

DEF

To learn how a job, activity or system works.

Informal and reassuring; it focuses on becoming familiar with practical routines.

Give me a week to learn the ropes.

Julia helped the new colleague learn the ropes.

3

cut corners

DEF

To do something in a cheaper, faster or easier way that reduces quality or safety.

Usually negative; it criticises a shortcut that ignores proper standards.

We cannot cut corners on customer safety.

The rushed team cut corners and made avoidable mistakes.

4

back to the drawing board

DEF

Used when a plan has failed and you need to design a new one.

It accepts that the present approach is not working and frames a restart constructively.

The first design failed, so it is back to the drawing board.

If the test does not work, we will go back to the drawing board.

5

a proper standard

DEF

A level of quality that is correct, suitable and professionally acceptable.

Proper adds the idea that the expected requirements have genuinely been met.

The final report must meet a proper standard.

Training helps everyone work to the same proper standard.



6

an avoidable mistake

DEF

An error that could have been prevented with enough care or preparation.

A useful collocation for discussing quality, planning and responsibility without exaggeration.

Skipping the final check caused an avoidable mistake.

Clear instructions can prevent avoidable mistakes.

7

a serious rethink

DEF

A careful and substantial reconsideration of a plan or idea.

Stronger than a quick review; it suggests that important changes may be necessary.

The schedule needs a serious rethink.

Poor feedback forced the team into a serious rethink.

8

take the first practical step

DEF

To begin by doing one concrete action instead of only discussing a goal.

A reusable productivity phrase that turns an intention into visible progress.

Choose one task and take the first practical step today.

Booking the room was our first practical step.

