

THE ROUTLEDGE BOOK OF WORLD PROVERBS

Jon R. Stone



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THE ROUTLEDGE BOOK OF WORLD PROVERBS

A good book, a good friend. (Italian)

Neither love nor a cough can be hidden. (Roman)

Knowledge is a treasure, but practice is the key to it. (Arabian)

One enemy is too many, one hundred friends is not enough. (Indian)

The Routledge Book of World Proverbs invites the reader to travel the globe in search of the origins of such words of wisdom, experiencing the rich cultural traditions reflected in each nation's proverbs. This collection contains over 16,000 gems of humor and pathos that draw upon themes from our shared experiences of life. And we are not just invited to learn about other cultures; proverbs are 'bits of ancient wisdom' and thus teach us about our shared histories.

This book draws together proverbs that transcend culture, time and space to offer a collection that is both useful and enjoyable, making this book one of enduring interest.

Professor Jon R. Stone specializes in Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion. He is author or editor of nine books, including *The Essential Max Müller* (2002), *Expecting Armageddon: Essential Readings in Failed Prophecy* (Routledge, 2000), *The Craft of Religious Studies* (1998), and *Latin for the Illiterati* (Routledge, 1996), which was named '1997 Outstanding Reference Source' by the American Library Association.

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In honor of Dr William P. Germano

The dean of academic editors –

with deepest appreciation

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PREFACE

‘Wisdom is learned through the wisdom of others.’ – Yoruban

In his small book of Persian proverbs, Lawrence Elwell-Sutton relates the fable of a sparrow into whose nest the wind chances to blow a cotton seed. Not knowing what it was, the sparrow inquired of his neighbor and learned that, at length, the seed, if planted, would grow to produce cotton, which could be spun into thread, which could be woven into cloth, which could be dyed and sewn into fine coats, which then could be sold at the bazaar. Delighted by the prospect of gain, the sparrow thereupon took the seed to a peasant farmer, saying, ‘Sow this seed! Half for me, half for you.’ The farmer agreed. After a time, the seed produced a plant whose ripened cotton bolls the farmer divided with the sparrow. Next, the sparrow took his share of cotton to the spinner, saying, ‘Spin this cotton! Half for me, half for you.’ The spinner agreed, and when the thread was spun, he divided it with the sparrow. The sparrow then took the thread to the weaver, saying, ‘Weave this thread! Half for me, half for you.’ The weaver agreed and gave the sparrow half of what he had woven. Next, the sparrow took the cloth to the dyer, saying: ‘Dye this cloth! Half for me, half for you.’ The dyer agreed and dyed the cloth a brilliant blue. But when the sparrow saw the cloth drying on the line, he marveled at the color and thought to himself, ‘What a pity to divide such a fine piece of cloth.’ So, the sparrow swooped down, snatched the cloth, and took it to the tailor, saying, ‘Sew this cloth into coats! One for me, one for you.’ The tailor made two fine coats and hung them on a peg. But, seeing the coats, the sparrow marveled at the stitching and thought to himself. ‘What a pity to share them with the tailor.’ So, the sparrow swooped down, snatched the coats, and took them to the mullah to keep until the weather grew cold and they could be sold at the bazaar. But after the sparrow had flown away, the mullah thought to himself, ‘What need has a

sparrow for a coat,' and decided to keep them for himself. When winter approached, the sparrow came for his coats, but the mullah pretended to know nothing and offered instead to pray for the sparrow. Angry at being cheated, the sparrow flew off, but from a distance he saw the mullah washing the two coats and hanging them up to dry. When the mullah had gone off to pray, the sparrow swooped down, snatched both coats, and took them to the bazaar to sell. But on the way, a great wind blew and carried the two coats away, dropping one coat before the dyer and the other coat before the tailor. In this way justice was done. Hence the proverb, 'What is brought by the wind will be carried away by the wind' (see Elwell-Sutton 1954: 33–4).

This fable, reminiscent of those told by Aesop, offers an apt example of how a simple tale can teach a profound lesson. Not only is justice served, even to double-dealing sparrows and mullahs, but one learns that the wind, in bestowing her gifts, can be just as capricious as a bird. Indeed, one can almost hear the sparrow's neighbor – perchance having witnessed the whole affair from afar – sigh and then recite quietly to himself this very proverb, 'What is brought by the wind . . .,' his voice trailing off into a faint laugh. In this instance, 'recite' is perhaps the best word to use. For just as this sparrow's misadventure brought to mind the proverb cited above, who among us has not greeted the day by glancing out the window while reciting the line, 'Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning . . .,' or greeted someone with a handshake and not instinctively said to ourselves, 'Cold hand, warm heart,' or has not recited any of a number of proverbs hoping to 'snatch opportunity from the passing day'? Proverbs guide our thoughts and actions, and warn us of the hidden dangers along life's way. For, as Archbishop Richard Trench had counseled, 'There is hardly a mistake which in the course of our lives we have committed, but some proverb, had we known and attended to its lesson, might have saved us from it' (see Champion 1938: 3).

When hearing the word 'proverb,' one most often thinks of the wisdom imparted by King Solomon in the Bible or of the clever analects of the sagely Confucius. But proverbs are common to nearly all cultures, both ancient and modern, literate and non-literate. Generally speaking, proverbs are popular sayings that express commonly held truths, with their chief ingredients, according to James Howell, being 'sense, shortness, and salt.' They are, to quote Lord Russell, 'the wit of one and the wisdom of many.' And, as Sir Francis Bacon had pointed out, 'the genius, wit, and spirit of a nation are discovered in its proverbs.' But such observations are not limited to the English. Some 2,000 years before Bacon's time, Aristotle had gathered his own collection of 'ancient' proverbs, referring to them as 'fragments of an elder wisdom' whose 'brevity and aptness' had preserved

them ‘amidst wreck and ruin’ (see Westermarck 1930: 1 and Champion 1938: xvii).

Proverbs are indeed bits of ancient wisdom that, as Max Müller had argued, bear ‘the impress of the early days of mankind.’ But their charm is not simply to be found in their being artifacts of an earlier day, or in their brevity and wit, but in the way they draw upon, and reflect, the common human experiences that are shared across time and space. The Spanish, after Cervantes, described the proverb as ‘a short sentence based on long experience,’ while the Dutch called it ‘the daughter of daily experience.’ To the Germans, proverbs can be compared to butterflies in that ‘some are caught and some fly away.’ Or, for the Arab, ‘a proverb is to speech what salt is to food.’ What is even more intriguing about the proverb is its freshness, applicability, and continued relevance to every age, including our own. Its is an ancient voice that appeals to every generation. For, when King Solomon compared a gold ring in a pig’s snout to a beautiful woman who lacks discretion, he gave both a word of caution to his time and a knowing wink to our own. A similar observation is made by Elwell-Sutton: ‘In East and West alike people “bury the hatchet,” they “lay the axe to the root,” they ask “who will bell the cat,” they observe that “dog does not eat dog,” and they laugh at “the pot for calling the kettle black” ’ (1954: 4–5). Even a cursory glance at vintage collections of proverbs, such as those by Burton Stevenson and S.G. Champion, or the more recent ones by Rosalind Fergusson and Wolfgang Mieder, gives evidence of shared human concepts and experiences, if not borrowed turns of phrase. The similarities are certainly remarkable.

But, lest we see only a broad river with no rivulets flowing into it, Elwell-Sutton goes on to remind us that ‘There may be a common stream of ideas, but as they pass through each cultural area they become changed and transmuted through contact with and absorption by local character, tradition and custom’ (1954: 8). This comment calls to mind the old Latin proverb: ‘Si duo dicunt idem non est idem’; that is, ‘If two languages say the same thing, it is not the same thing.’ And so, as Elwell-Sutton writes further, ‘a loaf of bread means one thing to us, another thing to a Persian.’ And again, ‘in Persia . . . the sun is generally a torment from which one is glad to escape, [but] in Britain it is a rare and welcome visitor’ (1954: 9).

The value and importance, then, of a collection of ancient and modern proverbs from peoples around the world, lies in what we can learn about customs and cultures different from ours. Proverbs can also teach us something about the character of our own. As Elwell-Sutton puts it, ‘A study of their proverbs and folk-lore attached to them will not only give us an idea of outside influences to which they have been subjected in the past,

but will also illumine their ways of thought and their national characteristics to an extent that perhaps no other medium can do' (1954: 8). In this way, by presenting a treasury of ancient and modern proverbs, *The Routledge Book of World Proverbs* seeks to provide its readers with a collection of wise sayings drawn from humanity's shared experiences in the world as well as miniature portraits of humankind's likewise distinct cultural characteristics.

But, while the aim throughout has been to compile as comprehensive a treasury of world proverbs as possible, it did not seem desirable, or even prudent, to heap proverb upon proverb without some way to 'separate the wheat from the chaff.' In preparing his comprehensive book of world proverbs, S.G. Champion expressed frustration over the careless way by which others before him had classified proverbs. He was determined to define more precisely the kinds of sayings that would belong more properly in a collection of proverbs. He writes: 'I can conceive of no greater mental punishment than to be compelled to wade through a collection of so-called proverbs which almost invariably consists of a heterogeneous conglomeration of sayings, colloquialisms, idioms, slang, bon mots, rhymes, riddles, and a mass of stupid, silly, commonplace proverbs, producing in my unfortunate translators and myself a boredom verging on tears' (1938: xiii). To Champion's complaint, I would add that a great number of the proverbs that I have encountered in standard works were little more than statements of obvious facts, insults, similes, hackneyed phrases, or humorous asides. Some examples include: 'Go and wake up your luck' (Persian); 'Don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs' (French); 'He has too many lice to feel an itch' (Chinese); 'Let the big dog eat' (American); 'Either a man or a mouse' (Scottish); 'He cannot find water in the sea' (Spanish); 'You have hit the nail on the head' (Roman); and 'He goes as willingly as a thief to the gallows' (German). Thus, in this present collection, I have endeavored to include only those proverbs which most folklorists and paremiologists would recognize as such.

Beside the initial problem of defining the difference between the proverb and simple idiomatic expressions, there were also nagging problems posed in attempting to attribute proverbs to their respective languages or rightful countries of origin. For instance, one discovers English proverbs in India, China, and America, French and Dutch proverbs in Asia and Africa, Spanish and Portuguese proverbs in the Philippines and the New World, and, of course, Greek and Roman proverbs throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. What is more, many Japanese, Vietnamese, and Korean proverbs appear to be derived from older Chinese proverbs. Added to this problem is the difficulty of determining in which direction these cultural influences flowed. Chinese merchants and European explorers were

doubtlessly influenced by the cultures they sought to trade with or dominate. And no doubt, emigrants traveling to the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought with them their peculiar customs as well as their folk wisdom. For instance, the proverb ‘Every man hath a fool in his sleeve,’ is found in Italian as well as American collections. Additionally, in Anand Prahlad’s *Reggae Wisdom*, one finds in reggae lyrics such well-known proverbs as ‘Birds of a feather flock together,’ ‘An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,’ and ‘Jah [i.e., God] helps those who help themselves,’ among scores of others.

Related to the issue of the proper attribution of proverbs was the problem of multiple versions of the same proverb. As an example, the Italian proverb ‘Good wine needs no bush’ is also found in Spanish as ‘Good wine needs no crier,’ in French as ‘Good wine needs no sign,’ in Dutch as ‘Good wine praises itself,’ and in German as ‘Good wine sells itself.’ The same types of variations occur in ‘Faint heart never won fair lady,’ ‘Every cock is proud on its own dung hill,’ and other such proverbs. With so many versions of one proverb, not only is it difficult to decide which version is the original one, but it makes for far too much repetition in a book of proverbs, as is the case with Wolfgang Mieder’s text. The repetition of the same basic proverb in all its variations evokes the witty Yiddish saying: ‘Once gets a cheer, twice a deaf ear, thrice a kick in the rear.’

Last of all, during the years that I have been working on this project, and even beginning with my first Latin book, I have encountered within nearly all cultures many – too many – racist and sexist proverbs, proverbs that would no doubt offend modern readers. Some of the more mild examples include ‘Lilies are whitest in a black Moor’s hand’ (Italian), ‘He that would cheat a Jew, must be a Jew’ (German), ‘Biting and scratching is Scots folk’s wooing’ (English), and ‘Beat your wife on the wedding day, and your married life will be happy’ (Japanese). While, for a variety of cultural and historical reasons, some editors might wish to include these types of proverbs, I have chosen otherwise and have tried my very best to keep offensive and belittling proverbs out of this collection.

Notwithstanding these and other minor imperfections, it is hoped that readers will be charmed and edified by the selection of proverbs in this collection, and will delight in sharing them with their families and friends. Perchance a seed or two of the world’s wisdom will blow into a neighboring sparrow’s nest.

Humani Nihil Alienum.

Jon R. Stone
California State University, Long Beach
August 2005

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World Proverbs

A

Abbot

An abbot who has been an altar boy knows well who drinks the altar wine. (Spanish)

Ability, Able

A bird can roost but on one branch, a mouse can drink no more than its fill from a river.
(Chinese)

He who is unable is always willing. (Italian)

Above and Below

Those above are going down, those below are going up. (Polynesian)

Absence, Absent

A little absence does much good. (French)

Absence, and a friendly neighbor, washeth away love. (English)

Absence makes the heart grow fonder. (English)

Absence makes the heart grow fonder – for someone else. (American)

Absence sharpens love; presence strengthens it. (English)

Absent, none without blame; present, none without excuse. (Spanish)

After ten years' absence, even the mountains and rivers have changed. (Korean)

He is guilty who is not at home. (Ukrainian)

He who is absent is always in the wrong. (German)

Long absence changes friends. (French)

Long absent, soon forgotten. (English)

The absent are always to blame. (Yiddish)

The absent get further off every day. (Japanese)

The absent one always loses. (Spanish)

Absent-minded

Absent-mindedness is searching for the horse you are riding. (Russian)

Abstain, Abstinence

Abstinence and fasting cure many a complaint. (Danish)

Abstinence is the best medicine. (Tamil)

Abstinence makes the heart grow fonder. (the Editor)

It is easier to abstain than to restrain. (French)

To many, total abstinence is easier than perfect moderation. (St Augustine)

Abundance

Abundance begets indifference. (German)
Abundance does not spread; famine does. (Zulu)
Abundance is from activity. (Turkish)
Abundance will make cotton pull a stone. (Hausan)
Abundance, like want, ruins many. (Rumanian)
From abundance comes boredom. (Roman)
The abundance of money is a trial for man. (Moroccan)
The abundance of money ruins youth. (English)

Abuse, Abuses

A man who is not spoken of is not abused. (Danish)
Abuse does not take away use. (Roman)
Abuse doesn't hang on the collar. (Russian)
Abuse is like a god that destroys his master. (Hawaiian)
Abuses are the result of seeing one another too often. (Swahili)
He who abuses others must not be particular about the answer he gets. (Danish)
If you utter abuse, you must expect to receive it. (Roman)
The abuse of a thing is no argument against its use. (Roman)
What you can't have, abuse. (Italian)

Accept

Who accepts from another sells his freedom. (German)
Who accepts nothing has nothing to return. (German)
Who accepts, sells himself. (Italian)

Accident

A ridiculous accident has often been the making of many. (Roman)
Accidents will happen. (American)
Accidents will happen even in the best regulated families. (English)

Accommodate

As men are, so must you humor them. (Roman)
If you accommodate others, you will be accommodating yourself. (Chinese)

Accomplice

Accomplices in evil actions are always regarded as approaching the deed. (Roman)
The accomplice is as bad as the thief. (Portuguese)

Accomplish, Accomplishment

Accomplishment of purpose is better than making a profit. (Hausan)
Accomplishments are lifelong benefits to those who possess them. (Japanese)
An accomplishment sticks to a person. (Japanese)
If you wish a thing done, go; if not, send. (Danish)

Accuse, Accusation

Accusing the times is but excusing ourselves. (English)

It is just so much easier to accuse than to defend, as it is easier to inflict than to heal a wound. (Roman)

No one is bound to accuse himself. (Roman)

One against whom accusations when made are easily believed. (Roman)

Accustom

Accustom yourself to that which you bear ill, and you will bear it well. (Roman)

One soon gets used to good things. (Yiddish)

We can accustom ourselves to anything. (Roman)

Ache

The worst ache is the present ache. (Lebanese)

Acid

Sharp acids corrode their own containers. (Albanian)

Acquaintance

A person is known by the company he keeps. (English)

Come live with me and you'll know me. (Spanish)

The more acquaintance, the more danger. (English)

You should know a man seven years before you stir his fire. (Roman)

Act, Acts

A stupid act entails doing the work twice over. (Burmese)

Act according to your age. (German)

Act according to your strength. (Roman)

Act honestly, and answer boldly. (Danish)

Act in the valley so that you need not fear those who stand on the hill. (Danish)

Act quickly, think slowly. (Greek)

Act uprightly, and despise calumny; dirt may stick to a mud wall, but not to polish'd marble. (Poor Richard)

Act your office. (Roman)

An act done against my will is not my act. (Roman)

It is not the name but the act that counts. (American)

Judge acts by the intention of the one who acts. (Roman)

That an act is not prohibited, it does not follow that it is permitted. (Roman)

When we cannot act as we wish, we must act as we can. (Roman)

Acting, Actor

All the world practices the art of acting. (Roman)

All the world's a stage and we are merely actors. (English)

Action, Actions

A good action is better than a bad action. (African)
Action and reaction are equal. (American)
Action is the proper fruit of knowledge. (English)
Actions speak louder than words. (English)
For the sake of one good action, a hundred evil ones should be forgotten. (Chinese)
Good actions are never lost. (Turkish)
Great actions come from great ability. (Unknown)
Innocent actions carry their warrant with them. (English)
It is a bad action that success cannot justify. (Roman)
Let us be judged by our actions. (Roman)
Never repent a good action. (Danish)
Our outward actions reveal our hidden intentions. (Roman)
Poor in speech, swift in action. (Japanese)
Postpone not a good action. (Irish)
To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. (German)
Words may show a man's wit, but actions his meaning. (Poor Richard)

Acts of God

Acts of God do injury to no one. (Roman)

Add

It is easy to add to what has already been invented. (Roman)
The more you add, the worse it gets. (Yiddish)

Admire

He who esteems none but himself is as happy as a king. (Italian)
The more a woman admires her face, the more she ruins her house. (Spanish)

Adultery

The tears of an adulteress are ever ready. (Egyptian)
Were all adulterers to wear gray coats, gray cloth would be dear. (German)

Advance

He who does not advance recedes. (Roman)

Advantage

A single advantage is worth a thousand sorceries. (Turkish)
Advantage is a better soldier than rashness. (English)
An inch in a sword, or a palm in a lance, is a great advantage. (Spanish)
Every advantage has its disadvantage. (Roman)

Adventure

Adventures are to the adventurous. (English)

Adversity

A dose of adversity is often as needful as a dose of medicine. (American)

Adversity borne with patience opens the door to Heaven. (Spanish)

Adversity brings knowledge, and knowledge wisdom. (Welsh)

Adversity brings out a man's virtue. (American)

Adversity comes with instruction in his hand. (Welsh)

Adversity flatters no man. (English)

Adversity is a better teacher than prosperity. (Spanish)

Adversity is easier borne than prosperity forgot. (English)

Adversity is the foundation of virtue. (Japanese)

Adversity is the parent of virtue. (Japanese)

Adversity makes a great man. (Japanese)

Adversity makes a man wise. (French)

Adversity makes a man wise, not rich. (Rumanian)

Adversity makes strange bedfellows. (French)

Adversity often leads to prosperity. (American)

Adversity reminds men of religion. (Roman)

Adversity reveals genius, and prosperity conceals it. (Roman)

Adversity tries men. (Roman)

Fire tests gold, adversity brave men. (Roman)

Fire tests gold, adversity good men. (German)

He who does not tire, tires adversity. (French)

Advice

A son should treasure his father's advice. (Spanish)

A wife's advice is not worth much, but woe to the husband who refuses to take it.
(Welsh)

Advice after injury is like medicine after death. (Danish)

Advice is least heeded when most needed. (English)

Advice should be viewed from behind. (Swedish)

Advice should precede the act. (German)

Advice to all, security for none. (English)

Ask advice of your equals, help of your superiors. (Danish)

Bad advice is often fatal to the advisor. (Roman)

Crafty advice is often got from a fool. (Irish)

Don't offer me advice; give me money. (Spanish)

Fools need advice most, but wise men only are the better for it. (Poor Richard)

Give advice; if people don't listen, let adversity teach them. (Ethiopian)

Good advice is seldom welcome. (Unknown)

Good medicine is bitter to the taste, but will heal illness; sincere advice is harsh to the ear,
but will benefit one's conduct. (Korean)

Good medicine may taste bitter to the mouth; good advice may sound unpleasant to the
ear. (Japanese)

Good medicine tastes bitter; good advice is seldom welcome. (Unknown)

He asks advice in vain who will not follow it. (French)

He tells me my way, and knows not his own. (Roman)
He who builds according to every man's advice will have a crooked house. (Danish)
He who seeks advice seldom errs. (Filipino)
He who will not take cheap advice, will have to buy dear repentance. (Danish)
He who won't be advised, can't be helped. (German)
If advice will not improve him, neither will the rod. (Greek)
If time comes, advice comes. (German)
If you are wise, take advice. (Irish)
If you wish good advice, consult an old man. (Rumanian)
It is bad not to take advice, but worse to take every advice. (Irish)
It is easy to give advice when all goes well. (Italian)
It's a bad child who does not take advice. (African)
Less advice and more hands. (German)
Let him who will not have advice have conflict. (Irish)
Never give advice in a crowd. (Arabian)
Never give advice unasked. (German)
Never trust the advice of a man in difficulty. (Japanese)
Nothing is so liberally given as advice. (French)
One piece of good advice is better than a bag full. (Danish)
Take a woman's first advice and not her second. (French)
Take help of many, advice of few. (Danish)
The advice of the aged will not mislead you. (Welsh)
The best advice is found on the pillow. (Danish)
There is no price for good advice. (Spanish)
We may give advice, but we cannot give conduct. (Poor Richard)
We receive nothing with so much reluctance as advice. (Roman)
When a thing is done, advice comes too late. (French)
Worthless is the advice of fools. (Roman)
Write down the advice of those who love you, though you like it not at present.
(English)
You can give a piece of advice, but not good luck along with it. (Norwegian)

Advise, Advisor

A friend advises in his interest, not yours. (Arabian)
A man is often a good advisor to others and a bad advisor to himself. (Irish)
Advise me well in this matter, but don't advise me against it. (Yiddish)
Advising is easier than helping. (German)
Advising is often better than fighting. (German)
Advisors are not givers. (Dutch)
Advisors are not the payers. (French)
He that builds next to the highway will have many advisors. (Dutch)
Never advise a man to go to war, or to marry. (Spanish)
No one is wise enough to advise himself. (German)
When things go well it is easy to advise. (Dutch)
Who won't be advised can't be helped. (German)

Afar

Things coming from afar are most esteemed. (Roman)

Affair

A great affair covers up a small matter. (Yoruban)

A great affair grows out of a small matter. (Japanese)

No one is wise in his own affairs. (Dutch)

Affection

Affection is a bad judge. (Italian)

Affinity

A bird may be ever so small, but it always seeks a nest of its own. (Danish)

A blade won't cut another blade; a cheat won't cheat another cheat. (German)

Affinity is a mysterious thing, but it is spicy! (Japanese)

Jackdaw always perches by jackdaw. (Roman)

Like associates more easily with like. (Roman)

Like attracts like. (Japanese)

Like will to like, be they poor or rich. (Dutch)

Likeness is the mother of love. (Italian)

People of the same stock and trade are friendly. (Irish)

Affliction

Affliction shows forth true character. (Spanish)

The bitterest part of a person's affliction is to remember that he was once happy.
(Roman)

We benefit by affliction. (Roman)

Africa

Out of Africa there is always something new. (Roman)

After, Afterthought

After losing the sheep, he repairs the pen. (Korean)

After me, the deluge! (French)

After meat comes mustard. (German)

After mischance, everyone is wise. (French)

After nine months the secret comes out. (Yiddish)

After one that earns comes one that wastes. (Danish)

After pleasant scratching comes unpleasant smarting. (Danish)

After shaving there is nothing to shear. (French)

After sorrow, joy. (Unknown)

After the act wishing is in vain. (French)

After the daughter is married, then come sons-in-law in plenty. (French)

After the horse is stolen, the stable door is shut. (Unknown)

After the house is finished, he deserts it. (Spanish)

After the sour comes the sweet. (Dutch)
After the war, aid. (Greek)
He builds the dam after the flood. (Burmese)
He digs a well to put out a house fire. (Unknown)
When the calf is drowned they cover the well. (Dutch)
When the calf is stolen, the peasant mends the stall. (German)
When the war is over then comes help. (Roman)

Age, Aged

A prodigy at ten, a genius at twenty, an ordinary man at thirty. (Japanese)
Age and wedlock tame man and beast. (English)
Age brings aches. (German)
Age carries everything away, even the mind. (Roman)
Age is a sorry traveling companion. (Danish)
Age is honorable and youth is noble. (Irish)
Age makes many a man whiter, but not better. (Danish)
Age may wrinkle the face, but lack of enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. (Danish)
An aged willow is difficult to bend. (Irish)
As you are at seven so are you at seventy. (Yiddish)
At twenty years of age the will reigns; at thirty the wit; at forty the judgment. (Poor Richard)
At seventy, a candle in the wind; at eighty, frost on the tiles. (Chinese)
Every age has its own care: each one thinks his own time of life is disagreeable. (Roman)
Everyone is the age of his heart. (Guatemalan)
He who at twenty understands nothing, at thirty knows nothing, and at forty has nothing, will lead a wretched old age. (Spanish)
It's not the years that age, but the sorrow. (Russian)
Often a man has no evidence to prove that he has lived a long life other than his age. (Roman)
Sense comes with age. (Spanish)
Teeth lie, gray hair deceives, but wrinkles tell one's true age. (Spanish)
What age destroys no art can restore. (Spanish)

Aggregate

A little and a little, collected together, becomes a great deal. (Arabian)
The heap in the barn consists of single grains, and drop and drop makes an inundation. (Arabian)

Agree, Agreement

Agreement with two people, lamentation with three. (Kashmiri)
Rare is agreement between beauty and modesty. (Roman)
When cat and mouse agree, the farmer has no chance. (Danish)
When the cat and mouse agree, the grocer is ruined. (Persian)
When two agree in their desire, one spark will set them both on fire. (English)

Aim, Aiming

A man does not always aim at what he means to hit. (Danish)

Aim at a certain end. (Roman)

Aim at a sure thing. (American)

Aim at what you can accomplish. (Roman)

Aiming isn't hitting. (Swahili)

Before shooting, one must aim. (African)

Do not aim at lofty things. (Roman)

It is not enough to aim, you must hit. (Italian)

Who aims at things beyond his reach, the greater will be his fall. (Roman)

Ale

Ale in, wit out. (English)

Better good sale than good ale. (Scottish)

Plenty know good ale but many know little else. (English)

Alert

No occasion to be alert is to be overlooked. (Roman)

All

Do not all you can; spend not all you have; believe not all you hear; and tell not all you know. (Chinese)

We cannot all do all things. (Roman)

Allah

Allah gives to each according to the measure of his heart. (Persian)

Allah is nearer to you than your jugular vein. (Arabian)

Allah is the one who knows everything, not man. (Hausan)

Allah provides, but he needs a nudge. (Persian)

Allah will give water to the wheat on a rock. (Hausan)

He who puffs at the lamp of Allah will singe his beard. (Persian)

Alligator

Don't call the alligator a big-mouth till you have crossed the river. (Honduran)

No call alligator long mouth till you pass him. (Jamaican)

Almost

All but saves many a man. (Danish)

Almost is not eaten. (Zulu)

Almost kills no man. (Danish)

Almost never killed a fly. (German)

Alms, Almsgiving

Alms are the golden key that opens the gate of Heaven. (German)

Alms do not empty the purse, and a mass does not exhaust the day's duty. (German)

Alms given openly will be rewarded in secret. (Chinese)
 Alms never make one poor. (English)
 Better to give nothing than stolen alms. (German)
 Do not trumpet your almsgiving. (English, after Jesus)
 Giving alms never lessens the purse. (Spanish)
 He who gives alms to the poor faces Heaven. (Filipino)
 More alms are at hand for a cripple than for a scholar. (Yiddish)
 No one ever became poor through giving alms. (Italian)

Alone

Better to be alone than in bad company. (German)
 He who eats alone chokes alone. (Spanish)
 He who eats alone, coughs alone. (Egyptian)
 He who falls alone cries alone. (Unknown)
 He who sleeps alone keeps long cold, two soon warm each other. (German)
 It is not good to be alone, even in Paradise. (Yiddish)
 Man cannot live in this world alone. (American)
 Never less alone than when alone. (Roman)
 One man alone is no man. (Roman)
 Who eats his fowl alone, must saddle his horse alone. (Portuguese)

Altar

He that serves at the altar ought to live by the altar. (English)

Ambassador

An ambassador bears no blame. (Italian)

Ambition, Ambitious

Ambition and fleas both jump high. (German)
 Ambition will tear your coat. (Mexican)
 Every ambitious man is a captive and every covetous one a pauper. (Arabian)
 False ambition leads to perdition. (Egyptian)
 He who sacrifices his conscience to ambition burns a picture to obtain the ashes. (Chinese)
 If you would be pope, you must think of nothing else. (Spanish)
 Nothing humbler than ambition, when it is about to climb. (Poor Richard)

Ambush

At an ambush of villains a man does better with his feet than his hands. (Spanish)

Ancestor, Ancestry

If a man falls he blames his ancestors. (Korean)
 They brag most of their ancestors who are unworthy of them. (Danish)
 We can scarcely call birth and ancestry, and what we have not ourselves done, our own.
 (Roman)

Anchor

He is like the anchor that is always in the sea, yet does not learn to swim. (Italian)

It is better to lose the anchor than the whole ship. (Dutch)

Angel, Angels

A young angel, an old devil. (French)

Nowadays you must go to Heaven to meet an angel. (Polish)

Time was when angels walked the earth, now they are not even in Heaven. (Yiddish)

When an angel turns bad, it is worse than the Devil. (German)

When the angels present themselves, the devils abscond. (Egyptian)

Anger, Angry

A lover's anger is short-lived. (Italian)

A man is only as big as the things that make him mad. (American)

A man, when angry, is beside himself. (Roman)

An angry lover tells himself many lies. (Roman)

An angry man heeds no counsel. (Portuguese)

An angry man is not fit to pray. (Yiddish)

Anger and haste hinder good counsel. (English)

Anger assists hands however weak. (Roman)

Anger can be an expensive luxury. (Italian)

Anger can't stand, without a strong hand. (German)

Anger dies quickly with a good man. (English)

Anger does not accomplish anything; patience is the chief virtue. (Yoruban)

Anger edges valor. (English)

Anger ends in cruelty. (Indian)

Anger has no eyes. (Indian)

Anger hears no counsel. (German)

Anger increases love. (Italian)

Anger is a bad counselor. (French)

Anger is a brief madness. (Roman)

Anger is a stone cast into a wasp's nest. (Indian)

Anger is more hurtful than the injury that caused it. (English)

Anger is never without a reason, but seldom with a good one. (Poor Richard)

Anger is not appeased by anger. (Roman)

Anger is short-lived in a good man. (English)

Anger manages everything badly. (Roman)

Anger so clouds the mind that it cannot perceive the truth. (Roman)

Anger without power is folly. (German)

Anger without power receives the blow. (Egyptian)

Anger, though concealed, is betrayed by the countenance. (Roman)

Better to cross an angry man than a fasting man. (Danish)

By getting angry, you show you are wrong. (Madagascan)

Do not trust an angry man with a sword. (Roman)

Give way to your anger for an instant and you may rue it for a lifetime. (Chinese)

He that can reply to an angry man is too strong for him. (Dutch)
He who conquers his anger has conquered an enemy. (German)
Hunger and delay stir up one's bile in the nostrils. (Roman)
Kick a stone in anger and you will hurt your own foot. (Korean)
Let not the sun set on your anger. (the Bible)
Like fragile ice, anger passes away in time. (Roman)
Never answer a letter while you are angry. (Chinese)
Never let the sun go down on your anger. (Italian)
Never write a letter while you are angry. (Chinese)
So long as a man is angry he cannot be in the right. (Chinese)
The anger of the prudent never shows. (Burmese)
The best answer to anger is silence. (German)
The best remedy for anger is delay. (Roman)
The force of anger is broken by a soft answer. (Roman)
The one who subdues his anger, conquers his greatest enemy. (Roman)
The physician of anger is reason. (Greek)
When against any your anger grows, be sure you never come to blows. (Chinese)
When an angry man returns to himself, he is angry with himself. (Roman)
When anger blinds the eyes, truth disappears. (Danish)
When anger comes, wisdom goes. (Hindi)

Animal

Even wild animals, if you keep them in confinement, forget their fierceness. (Roman)
Every animal loves itself. (Roman)

Answer

It is a good answer which knows when to stop. (Italian)
Let the superior answer for the actions of his agent. (Roman)
No answer is also an answer. (Danish)
Not every word requires an answer. (Italian)
To a civil question, a civil answer. (Danish)
Who answers for another pays. (French)

Ant, Ants

Ants do not visit empty barns. (Roman)
Even the ant has its anger. (Roman)
Even the ant has its bite. (Turkish)
Every ant has its ire. (Portuguese)
Many ants together can carry a beetle. (Spanish)
None preaches better than the ant, and she says nothing. (Poor Richard)

Anticipate

Better anticipate than be anticipated. (Portuguese)
His mouth waters before the soup is ready. (Burmese)

Anvil

A great anvil fears not noise. (Roman)

Either an anvil or a hammer. (French)

The anvil is used to noise. (German)

The anvil fears no blows. (Rumanian)

Anxiety, Anxious

Anxious about the shoe, but careless about the foot. (Roman)

Dreadful is the state of that mind that is anxious about the future. (Roman)

The tiger and the leopard are likewise anxious. (Chinese)

Apart

Mouth and heart are wide apart. (German)

Ape, Apes

An ape, a priest, and a louse, are three devils in one house. (Dutch)

An ape is an ape, though clad in purple. (English)

An ape is an ape, though decked with gold. (Roman)

An ape's an ape, a varlet's a varlet, though they be clad in silk and scarlet. (Roman)

An ape's an ape, though he wear a gold ring. (Dutch)

An old ape hath an old eye. (Roman)

An old ape never made a pretty grimace. (French)

Apes remain apes, though you clothe them in velvet. (German)

No ape but swears he has the handsomest children. (German)

When apes climb high, they show their naked bottoms. (Dutch)

Appearance, Appearances

A pleasing countenance is no small advantage. (Roman)

A pretty face costs money. (Yiddish)

A smart coat is a good letter of introduction. (Dutch)

An open countenance often conceals closed thoughts. (Portuguese)

Appearances are deceiving. (German)

As a man dresses so is he esteemed. (Danish)

As is the face so is the mind. (Roman)

As you look at a man, so he appears. (Yiddish)

Be as you would seem to be. (German)

Be what you seem to be. (Roman)

Good clothes open all doors. (German)

I should wish to be rather than to seem. (Roman)

Neglect of appearance becomes men. (Roman)

The appearances of things are deceptive. (Roman)

The first appearance deceives many. (Roman)

Appetite

A good appetite needs no sauce. (Polish)

A waiting appetite kindles many a spite. (Italian)
All things require skill except an appetite. (German)
Appetite comes after eating. (Italian)
Appetite comes with eating. (French)
Excess of delight palls the appetite. (Roman)
For a good appetite there is no hard bread. (Dutch)
He who restrains his appetite avoids debt. (Chinese)
Let us go where our appetite prompts us. (Roman)
No sauce like appetite. (French)
The death that will kill a man begins as an appetite. (Nigerian)
The less one eats, the greater the appetite. (Vietnamese)

Applaud, Applause

Applause is the beginning of abuse. (Japanese)
Applause is the reward of virtue. (Roman)
Men seek less to be instructed than applauded. (American)
The applause of the people is a blast of air. (Italian)
The people boo me, but I applaud myself. (Roman)

Apple

An apple a day keeps the doctor away. (English)
An apple that ripens late keeps longest. (Serbian)
An apple thrown into the air will turn a thousand times before it reaches the ground.
(Persian)
Bite into a bitter apple first, and the good one will taste all the sweeter. (German)
Don't look for apples under poplar trees. (Slavic)
Everything round isn't an apple. (Armenian)
Handsome apples are sometimes sour. (Dutch)
How could the apple be but as the apple tree? (Irish)
Never look for a worm in the apple of your eye. (French)
One bad apple will spoil the whole barrel. (English)
Sometimes it is better to give your apple away, than to eat it yourself. (Italian)
The apple does not fall far from the tree. (German)
The apple never falls far from the tree. (English)
The attractive apple sometimes hides a worm within. (German)
The bad apple floats on top. (Yiddish)
The rotten apple spoils his companion. (Poor Richard)
Who has tasted a sour apple, will have the more relish for a sweet one. (Dutch)

Appreciate

No one appreciates what he has until it is gone. (American)
No one is appreciated until he is gone. (German)
One never appreciates what he has until he has lost it. (English)

Approach

Firmly in the matter, and gently in the manner. (Roman)

Approve

Approve not of him who commends all you say. (Poor Richard)

The one who does not disapprove, approves. (Roman)

Archer

The archer that shoots badly has a lie ready. (Spanish)

Argue, Argument

He argues in vain who argues without means. (Roman)

Lower your voice and strengthen your argument. (Lebanese)

Never argue with a man who buys ink by the barrel. (Chinese)

Prepare your proof before you argue. (Yiddish)

The arguments of the strongest have always the most weight. (French)

There's no argument like that of the stick. (Spanish)

To argue stubbornly is to stray from the truth. (Spanish)

Armor

Armor is lighter putting on than taking off. (German)

The best armor is to keep out of range. (Italian)

Arms

Arms and money require good hands. (Spanish)

Arms are of little service abroad unless directed by the wisdom of counselors at home.
(Roman)

Arms carry peace. (Italian)

Arms cause laws to be respected. (Roman)

Arms, women, and books should be looked at daily. (Dutch)

Army

An army marches on its stomach. (French)

An army of deer commanded by a lion is more formidable than one of lions
commanded by a deer. (Roman)

An army of sheep led by a lion would defeat an army of lions led by a sheep. (Arabian)

If it moves, salute it; if it doesn't move, pick it up; and if you can't pick it up, paint it.
(American Army)

It is easier to recruit ten thousand privates than one general. (Japanese)

It is the blood of the soldier that makes the general great. (Italian)

Around

What comes around, goes around. (German)

Arrogance

Arrogance diminishes wisdom. (Arabian)

Arrogance is a weed that grows mostly on a dunghill. (Arabian)

Arrow, Arrows

Do not shoot the arrow that will return against you. (Kurdish)

Draw not thy bow before thy arrow be fixed. (Persian)

If you have no arrows in your quiver, go not with archers. (German)

If you sow arrows, you will reap arrows. (Filipino)

Not every sort of wood is fit to make an arrow. (French)

The arrow that has left the bow cannot be recalled. (German)

The arrow will not always hit the object which it threatens. (Roman)

Art, Arts

All art is an imitation of nature. (Roman)

Apelles was not a master painter the first day. (Irish)

Art holds fast when all else is lost. (German)

Art improves upon nature. (English)

Art is art, despite its success. (Danish)

Art is born of the observation and investigation of nature. (Roman)

Art is improved by practice. (Roman)

Art is long, life is short. (Roman)

Art knows no nationality. (Korean)

Every art requires the whole person. (French)

It is a sign of nobility to patronize the arts. (Irish)

It is easier to criticize art than to create it. (Spanish)

It is the perfection of art when no trace of the artist appears. (Roman)

Nature without an effort surpasses art. (Roman)

That which achieves its effect by accident is not art. (Roman)

The learned understand the principles of art, the unlearned feel its pleasure. (Roman)

Where art is displayed truth does not appear. (Roman)

Artisan, Artist

A good painter need not give a name to his picture, a bad one must. (Polish)

A skilled artisan doesn't fuss about his material. (Japanese)

Every land supports the artisan. (Roman)

Knowledge without practice makes but half an artist. (West African)

Musicians, poets, painters are half crazy. (Spanish)

Painters and poets have leave to lie. (Roman)

The artist never dies. (German)

Ashamed

He that is ashamed to eat is ashamed to live. (French)

Ashes

Ashes fly back into the face of him who throws them. (African)

Under white ashes lie glowing embers. (Danish)

Ask, Asking

Ask a lot, but take what is offered. (Russian)

Ask and you shall receive. (English)

Ask for much to receive a little. (German)

Ask no more of others than of yourself. (Chinese)

Ask the experienced rather than the learned. (Arabian)

Ask the way even if you know the way. (Korean)

Ask too much to get enough. (Spanish)

Asking costs little. (Italian)

Better to ask than go astray. (Italian)

Better to ask twice than to lose your way once. (Danish)

By asking for the impossible, obtain the best possible. (Italian)

Courteous asking breaks even city walls. (Russian)

Handsomely asked, handsomely refused. (French)

He that asks faintly begs for denial. (German)

He that cannot ask cannot live. (Yiddish)

He that does not ask will never get a bargain. (French)

He who asks does not go wrong, but his secret is known. (Hausan)

He who asks questions cannot avoid the answers. (West African)

In the asking is the receiving. (Mexican)

It costs us nothing to ask. (American)

Never ask of him who has, but of him who wishes you well. (Spanish)

The one who asks timidly courts denial. (Roman)

The person who asks for little deserves nothing. (Mexican)

To have a calf, ask for an ox. (German)

What we obtain merely by asking is not really our own. (Roman)

You ought to obtain what you ask, as you only ask for what is fair. (Roman)

Asleep

Not all are asleep who have their eyes shut. (Italian)

Ass, Asses

A braying ass eats little hay. (Italian)

A contented ass enjoys a long life. (Portuguese)

A goaded ass must trot. (Italian)

A hungry ass eats any straw. (Italian)

An ass does not appreciate fruit compote. (Turkish)

An ass does not hit himself twice against the same stone. (Dutch)

An ass does not stumble twice over the same stone. (French)

An ass is but an ass, though laden with gold. (Rumanian)

An ass to an ass is a beauty. (Roman)

An ass with her colt goes not straight to the mill. (Spanish)
 An ass's tail will not make a sieve. (Italian)
 An ass's trot does not last long. (Italian)
 Asses carry the oats and horses eat them. (Dutch)
 Asses that bray most eat least. (German)
 Better to be killed by robbers than by the kick of an ass. (Portuguese)
 Better to have a bad ass than be your own ass. (Spanish)
 Either the ass will die, or he that goads it. (Spanish)
 Even an ass will not fall twice in the same quicksand. (Italian)
 Even an ass will not follow someone onto the ice. (German)
 Every ass loves to hear himself bray. (English)
 For a stubborn ass a stubborn driver. (French)
 Give me the ass that carries me in preference to the horse that throws me. (Spanish)
 Give oats to an ass and he'll run after thistles. (Dutch)
 He who is an ass and thinks himself a stag, finds his mistake when he comes to leap the ditch. (Italian)
 If an ass goes a-traveling, he'll not come home a horse. (French)
 If one person tells you that you have ass's ears, take no notice; should two tell you so, procure a saddle for yourself. (Yiddish)
 If the ass had horns and the ox knew its strength, the world would be done for. (Yiddish)
 If three people say you are an ass, put on a bridle. (Spanish)
 If three say you are an ass, put on a tail. (Spanish)
 If three say you are an ass, put on the ears. (Dutch)
 It is better to strive with a stubborn ass than to carry the wood on one's back. (Spanish)
 Let him be an ass who brays at an ass. (Spanish)
 Make yourself an ass, and everyone will lay his sack upon you. (German)
 Many asses have only two legs. (Roman)
 Never went out an ass and came home a horse. (Unknown)
 Not every ass has long ears. (German)
 Nothing passes between asses but kicks. (Italian)
 One ass among many monkeys is grinned at by all. (Spanish)
 One ass nicknames the other 'Long-ears!' (German)
 Out of a little grass comes a great ass. (German)
 The ass and his driver do not think alike. (German)
 The ass carries corn to the mill, and gets thistles. (German)
 The ass embraced the thistle, and they found themselves relations. (Portuguese)
 The ass is the one who cannot say no. (German)
 The ass knows well in whose face it brays. (Spanish)
 The ass must browse where it is tied. (German)
 The ass of many owners is eaten by wolves. (Portuguese)
 The ass that is common property is always the worst saddled. (French)
 The ass that trespasses on a stranger's premises will leave them laden with wood. (Portuguese)
 The ass well knows in whose house it brays. (Portuguese)
 The ass will go into business with the lion. (German)

The ass will not lose its oats for want of braying. (French)
The ass's hide is used to the stick. (Italian)
The braying of an ass does not reach Heaven. (Italian)
The son of an ass brays twice a day. (Spanish)
There are more asses than carry sacks. (Italian)
Though an ass goes to Rome, it still comes back an ass. (French)
Though laden with gold, an ass is still an ass. (German)
When all men say you are an ass, it is high time to bray. (German)
When the ass is too happy it begins dancing on the ice. (Dutch)
Where the ass lies down, there some hair will be found. (German)
Wherever an ass is crowned to fame, both town and country bear the shame.
(German)
Willy-nilly, the ass must go to the fair. (Portuguese)
You cannot make an ass drink if it's not thirsty. (French)

Assail, Assailed

A man assailed is half overcome. (French)

Assistance

A benefit is estimated according to the mind of the giver. (Roman)
Assist men in their extremities and bring relief to men when in danger. (Chinese)
Assistance given when it is not required, is as bad as an injury. (Roman)
Offer not assistance when you can be of no service. (Roman)

Associate, Association

He who associates with the virtuous becomes good; he who associates with the wicked becomes evil. (Chinese)
To associate with evil men is like sleeping among knives and swords; although you have not been wounded, you are constantly afraid. (Chinese)

Assurance, Assured

Assurance is two-thirds success. (Italian)
Nothing is assured to men. (Roman)

Astray

All we, like sheep, have gone astray. (the Bible)
It is better to turn back than go astray. (German)
We most often go astray on a well-beaten path and a much-traveled road. (Roman)

Atheist

There are no atheists in foxholes. (American)

Attempt

A bold attempt is half success. (Danish)
Either do not try it or go through with it. (Roman)

He who strives to do, does more than he who has the power. (Spanish)

It's better to try than to hope. (Irish)

Attraction, Attractive

An ass is beautiful in the eyes of an ass; a sow in those of a sow; and every race is attractive to itself. (Roman)

While we attract we are attracted [i.e., we are drawn by mutual attraction]. (Roman)

Auction

At an auction keep your mouth shut. (Spanish)

Audience

If you want an audience, start a fight. (Chinese)

Authority

Authority does not depend on age. (African)

He that exceeds his commission must answer for it at his own cost. (Italian)

He who has no bread has no authority. (Turkish)

Avarice

Avarice blinds our eyes. (Japanese)

Avarice bursts the bag. (French)

Avarice increases with wealth. (French)

Gold and silver are mingled with dirt, till avarice parts them. (Chinese)

It is not want but abundance that makes avarice. (German)

Luxury is in want of many things, avarice of everything. (Roman)

Poverty craves many things, but avarice more. (German)

Poverty is in want of many things, avarice of everything. (Roman)

Poverty wants some things, luxury many things, avarice all things. (Poor Richard)

The avaricious man is kind to no person, but most unkind to himself. (Roman)

There are no limits to avarice. (Korean)

When all other sins grow old, avarice is still young. (French)

Avenge, Avenging

Noiseless is the approach of the avenging deities. (Irish)

The avenging god follows in the steps of the proud. (Roman)

Avoid, Avoidance

Avoid both the fool and the saint. (Serbian)

Avoid strife with those in power. (Roman)

Avoid the inquisitive person, for he is sure to be a talker. (Roman)

He avoided the fly and swallowed the spider. (Portuguese)

I have avoided what is censurable, not merited what is commendable. (Roman)

Man never takes sufficient and hourly care against that which he ought to avoid. (Roman)

See that in avoiding cinders you step not on burning coals. (Roman)

Three things it is best to avoid: a strange dog, a flood, and a man who thinks he is wise.
(Welsh)

Ax, Axe

Don't use an axe to embroider. (Malaysian)
Little ax can cut down big tree. (Jamaican)
The ax falls first upon a straight tree. (Korean)
The ax forgets what the tree remembers. (Roman)
The ax strikes the chisel, and the chisel strikes the wood. (Chinese)
You need a sharp axe for a tough bough. (Russian)

B**Baby**

Don't throw out the baby with the bath water. (English)
Kissing the baby touches the mother's cheek. (Siamese)
Throw not the baby out with the bath. (Danish)
When the baby grows, the crying changes. (African)

Bachelor, Bachelorhood

Bachelor, a peacock; betrothed, a lion; married, an ass. (Spanish)
There is no sovereignty like bachelorhood. (Turkish)

Back

'Give me a push from my back' does not mean give me a hunchback. (Nigerian)
The willing back gets all the load. (German)

Backbite

The listener makes the backbiter. (French)

Bacon

In the end, it will be known who ate the bacon. (French)

Bad

A bad cause requires many words. (German)
Bad is never good until worse happens. (Danish)
Bad tidings always come too soon. (German)
Bad ware is never cheap. (French)
Bad ware must be cried up. (German)
He keeps his road well enough who gets rid of bad company. (Portuguese)
Nothing bad is all bad. (Mexican)
Nothing so bad as not to be good for something. (German)
Nothing so bad but it finds its master. (Dutch)
Nothing so bad but it might have been worse. (Dutch)

Once bad is to be presumed always bad. (Roman)
'Tis easier to prevent bad habits than to break them. (Poor Richard)
What is bad for one is good for another. (French)

Bad Luck

All is good luck or bad luck in this world. (French)
Bad luck comes by pounds and goes away by ounces. (Italian)
Bad luck is good for something. (French)
Bad luck upon bad luck, and a stone for a pillow. (Spanish)
Even the luckless need their luck. (Yiddish)
He that has no bad luck grows weary of good luck. (Spanish)
If a black cat crosses the street, bad luck is around the corner. (Unknown)
In bad luck, hold out; in good luck, hold in. (German)
See a pin and pick it up, all the day you'll have good luck; see a pin and let it lie, bad luck
you'll have all day. (French)
Storing milk in a sieve, you complain of bad luck? (Afghani)

Bad Name

Give a dog a bad name and it will begin to stink. (Unknown)
Give a dog a bad name and you may as well hang it. (English)

Bad News

Bad news always comes in the morning. (English)
Bad news comes apace. (German)
Bad news has wings. (French)
Bad news is always true. (Spanish)
Bad news is the first to come. (Italian)
Bad news runs a thousand miles. (Japanese)
Bad news travels fast. (American)
Bad news travels faster than good. (Unknown)
Bad news comes in threes. (American)
Before good news goes out the door, bad news is known for a thousand miles. (Chinese)
Good news knocks louder than bad. (Spanish)
He who brings bad tidings, comes soon enough. (German)
Ill tidings come soon enough. (Dutch)

Bagpipe, Bagpiper

Bring not a bagpipe to a man in trouble. (Roman)
In the bagpiper's house, all are dancers. (Spanish)
The bagpipe never utters a word till its belly is full. (French)

Bait

A little bait catches a large fish. (Greek)
He who does not bait his hook fishes in vain. (French)
It is not the hook or the rod, but the bait that lures. (Spanish)

The bait hides the hook. (English)
The fish sees the bait, not the hook. (Chinese)

Bake, Baker

As you bake, so shall you brew. (German)
As you brew, so you shall bake. (Dutch)
He is little suited to be a baker, whose head is made of butter. (Danish)
The baker's child goes hungry. (Turkish)
You must bake with the flour you have. (Danish)

Balance (Scale)

The balance in doing its job knows neither gold nor lead. (French)

Bald

A bald head is combed before dawn. (Spanish)
A bald head is soon shaven. (German)
A completely bald head is like the full moon. (Spanish)
After a hundred years we shall all be bald. (Spanish)
God made a few good heads, and put hair on the rest. (American)
Hair by hair and the head gets bald. (Danish)
No one becomes bald overnight. (Spanish)

Bale

By their bindings the bales are known. (Italian)

Ball

He that plays at racket must watch the ball. (Dutch)
Keep your eye on the ball. (American)
Take the ball as it bounces. (French)
Take the ball on the hop. (Irish)

Bamboo

You won't help bamboo shoots grow by pulling them up higher. (Chinese)
Young bamboo trees are easy to bend. (Vietnamese)

Baptize

Baptize your own child first. (Irish)

Barbarians

Set barbarians to stop barbarians. (Chinese)

Barber

A barber does not shave himself. (African)
A barber learns to shave by shaving fools. (Rumanian)
He is a very sorry barber who has but one comb. (Italian)

Never ask a barber if you need a haircut. (American)
On a fool's beard the barber learns to shave. (Italian)
On poor people's beards the young barber learns his trade. (German)
One barber shaves the other. (German)
The bad barber leaves neither hair nor skin. (Spanish)
The village barber knows the village news. (Spanish)

Barefoot

He that goes barefoot must not plant thorns. (English)
He that sows thorns, should never go barefoot. (Poor Richard)

Bargain, Bargaining

A bargain is a bargain. (German)
A good bargain is a pick-purse. (Polish)
At a good bargain pause and ponder. (Italian)
At a great pennyworth pause awhile. (English)
Bargaining has neither friends nor relations. (Poor Richard)
Bargains are costly. (German)
Don't bargain for fish which are still in the water. (Indian)
Go to a man in difficulty and you will get a bargain. (Irish)
Good bargains are ruinous. (French)
Good seems every bargain that is far away. (Irish)
Great bargains empty the purse. (Italian)
He who hunts after bargains will scratch his head. (Catalan)
It is a bad bargain, where both are losers. (Roman)
It is only good bargains that ruin. (French)
It takes two to make a bargain. (American)
It's never a bargain when you spend money to save money. (the Editor)
Let your bargain suit your purse. (Irish)
Make every bargain clear and plain, that none may afterwards complain. (Roman)
Make the best of a bad bargain. (German)
Make your bargain before beginning to plow. (Spanish)
No one gets a bargain he does not ask for. (French)
On a good bargain, think twice. (English)

Bark, Barking

His bark is worse than his bite. (English)
One barking dog sets the whole street to barking. (Unknown)
One dog barks at something, the rest bark at him. (Chinese)
The barking of a dog does not disturb the man on a camel. (Egyptian)
The barking of dogs does not reach Heaven. (Sicilian)
The dog barks and the ox feeds. (Italian)
The dog barks at the stone, not at him that throws it. (German)
The dog does not bark in its own house. (Egyptian)
The dog that barks much is never good for hunting. (Portuguese)

The dog that barks much, bites little. (Portuguese)
The dog that bites does not bark in vain. (Italian)
The dog that has no understanding barks loudly. (Japanese)
The dog's bark is not might but fright. (Madagascan)
The dogs may bark but the caravan moves on. (Arabian)
The greatest barkers bite not sorest. (English)
The lion does not turn around when a small dog barks. (African)
The smaller the dog, the harder the bark. (the Editor)
When an old dog barks, look out. (Roman)
When dog is eating it cannot bark, lest its food run away. (Unknown)
When one dog barks, another will follow suit. (Roman)
Why keep a dog and bark yourself? (English)

Barkeeper

The barkeeper loves a drunk, but not for a son-in-law. (Yiddish)

Barn

The barn may not be beautiful but it keeps out rain. (Hausan)

Bashful, Bashfulness

A bashful dog never fattens. (German)
Bashfulness is of no use to the needy. (Dutch)
It is only the bashful that lose. (French)
Bashfulness will not avail a beggar. (Roman)

Bastard

A bastard is the son of no one. (Roman)
Don't let the bastards grind you down. (Portuguese)

Bathe

Bathe early every day and sickness will avoid you. (Indian)
One who bathes willingly with cold water doesn't feel the cold. (Tanzanian)

Battle

A bold onset is half the battle. (German)
Away from the battle all are soldiers. (German)
In the stress of battle brave men do not feel their wounds. (Roman)
Seldom is there a battle from which no one escapes. (Irish)
There is no battle unless there be two. (Roman)

Bay

Each bay has its own wind. (Fijian)

Be

Better that it be so than that it may be so. (Irish)

That which must be, will be. (Danish)

What has not been, may be. (Italian)

What must be, must be. (Spanish)

What will be, will be. (Italian)

Beak

Every hooked beak is maintained by prey. (French)

Beam

No matter how stout one beam, it cannot support a house. (Chinese)

Bean

Every bean hath its black. (English)

Bear (noun)

Bear won't bite bear. (Roman)

Call the bear 'Uncle' till you are safe across the bridge. (Turkish)

Don't play with a bear if you don't want to be bit. (Italian)

Don't sell the bear's skin before you enter the woods. (Yiddish)

Don't sell the bear skin before you have killed the bear. (German)

Even savage bears agree among themselves. (Roman)

The bear dances but the owner collects the fare. (Korean)

Bear (verb)

Bear and forbear. (English)

Easy to declare, hard to bear. (Yiddish)

Beard

A man without a beard is like a loaf without a crust. (Russian)

He who dyes his beard deceives no one but himself. (Spanish)

He who has a beard entertains himself with it. (Spanish)

If a beard were all, the goat would be the winner. (Danish)

If being well-bearded brings happiness, then a he-goat must be happier than any of us.

(Roman)

If the beard were all, the goat might preach. (German)

It is merry in the hall when beards wag all. (French)

It's convenient to learn the barber's trade on the other fellow's beard. (Yiddish)

Little beard, little shame. (Spanish)

Long whiskers cannot take the place of brains. (Russian)

The beard does not make the philosopher. (Italian)

The brains do not reside in the beard. (German)

When a man's beard turns gray, so do his friends. (Egyptian)

When your son's beard has fully grown, it's time to shave your own. (Arabian)

Beast

Every beast roars in its own den. (African)

One beast recognizes another. (Roman)

Beat, Beating

Beat your own and others will fear you. (Russian)

Beaten, but today the beater. (Egyptian)

Better beaten than broken. (German)

Even a boy can beat a man when bound. (Roman)

The beaten pay the fine. (French)

You may as well give a good beating as a bad one. (French)

Beautiful

A beautiful bird is a caged bird. (Japanese)

A beautiful flower does not stay on the stem. (German)

A beautiful girl, though she indeed be poor, is yet abundantly dowered. (Roman)

A beautiful thing is never perfect. (Egyptian)

A beautiful woman is more beautiful undressed than were she dressed in fine purple.
(Roman)

A beautiful woman smiling, bespeaks a purse weeping. (Italian)

A daughter is more beautiful than her beautiful mother. (Roman)

As an ass is beautiful to an ass, so a pig is to a pig. (Roman)

Beautiful things are secured with the most difficulty. (Roman)

Beautiful women have generally an evil fate; intelligent men are seldom handsome.
(Chinese)

Everything beautiful is loveable. (Roman)

He who loves a one-eyed girl thinks that one-eyed girls are beautiful. (Roman)

It is the beautiful bird that gets caged. (Chinese)

Not that which is great is beautiful, but that which is beautiful is great. (Roman)

She who is born beautiful is born married. (Hindi)

The truly beautiful is never separated from the useful. (Roman)

Beauty

A poor beauty finds more lovers than husbands. (English)

Beauty and folly are often companions. (French)

Beauty carries its dowry in its face. (Danish)

Beauty does not ensnare men; they ensnare themselves. (Chinese)

Beauty draws with a single hair. (Danish)

Beauty is a fading flower. (Danish)

Beauty is a good letter of introduction. (German)

Beauty is a transitory blessing. (Roman)

Beauty is but dross if honesty be lost. (Dutch)

Beauty is but skin deep. (English)

Beauty is difficult to attain. (Roman)

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. (English)

Beauty is lost soon enough. (German)
Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes all the way through. (American)
Beauty is short-lived. (Korean)
Beauty is ten, nine of which is dressing. (Georgian)
Beauty is the seasoning of virtue. (Polish)
Beauty will fade, but not goodness. (Filipino)
Beauty will not make the pot boil. (Irish)
Beauty will not season your soup. (Polish)
Beauty will sit and weep, fortune will sit and eat. (Indian)
Beauty without chastity, a flower without fragrance. (Indian)
Beauty without virtue is a curse. (Georgian)
Beauty without virtue is like a rose without scent. (Danish)
Beauty, unaccompanied by virtue, is as a flower without perfume. (French)
Fancy surpasses beauty. (Spanish)
He who strives after beauty, let him endure the arduous. (Roman)
Health and cheerfulness make beauty; finery and cosmetics cost money and lie. (Spanish)
Meal, not beauty, makes a porridge. (Irish)
Naked love loves not the beauty that is due to art. (Roman)
One cannot make soup out of beauty. (Estonian)
She who is born a beauty is born betrothed. (Italian)
The autumn of beauty is still beautiful. (Roman)
The one who marries beauty marries trouble. (Yoruban)
The veil that covers the face seldom covers beauty. (Russian)
To each his own beauty. (Roman)

Becoming

It more becomes a woman to be silent than to talk. (Roman)
It much becomes us to live honorably. (Roman)

Bed, Bedtime

A bed may never say all it knows. (German)
Any bed is a palace if you fancy it. (Burmese)
As a man makes his bed, so he must lie in it. (Unknown)
As you have made your bed, so must you lie in it. (Irish)
Bed is the poor man's opera. (Egyptian)
Do not strip before bedtime. (French)
Go to bed with the hen, get up with the rooster. (German)
Go to bed with the lamb and rise with the lark. (Spanish)
If a bed is too short, draw up your legs. (Spanish)
It is hard to sleep on a strange bed. (Spanish)
It is no advantage for a man in fever to change his bed. (Roman)
The one known as an early-riser can stay in bed until noon. (Irish)
The person who lies in bed with children will find himself wet in the morning.
(Mexican)
The warmest bed is a mother's. (Yiddish)

The way you make your bed, is the way you shall lie. (Swedish)

There is no bed like one's own. (German)

Those who go to bed with babies get up damp. (Spanish)

Too much bed makes a dull head. (English)

Where a man makes his bed, there must he also sleep. (German)

You've made your bed, now lie in it. (American)

Bee, Bees

Bees do not become hornets. (French)

Bees do not sip from faded flowers. (Chinese)

Bees taste from every flower. (Spanish)

Bees that have honey in their mouths have stings in their tails. (French)

Better one bee than a host of flies. (Italian)

Every bee's honey is sweet. (English)

How hallowed the bee, which makes honey for man and wax for God. (Spanish)

No bees, no honey. (Roman)

One bee is better than a thousand flies. (Spanish)

The bee has both sweetness and a sting. (Hausan)

The bee, from her industry in the summer, eats honey all the winter. (Belgian)

When the bee comes to your house, let it have nectar; you may want to visit the bee's house some day. (African)

When you hear the bee buzzing, you know that it is making honey and wants someone to take it. (Hausan)

Where there are bees, there is honey. (Roman)

Beekeeper

The beekeeper never lacks dessert. (Spanish)

Beer

Better weak beer than an empty cask. (Danish)

Beware, froth is not beer. (Danish)

Cider on beer, never fear; beer upon cider, makes a bad rider. (English)

Froth is no beer. (Dutch)

He that drinks beer, thinks beer. (Danish)

Not all of life is beer and skittles. (German)

When the beer goes in the wits go out. (Danish)

Wine upon beer is very good cheer; beer upon wine consider with fear. (German)

Before

Think before you speak, and look before you leap. (Irish)

Thatch your roof before rainy weather; dig your well before you become parched with thirst. (Chinese)

Beg, Begging

Better to beg than steal. (Dutch)

Better to have to give than have to beg. (Portuguese)
Constant begging only meets with constant refusal. (Irish)
He buys very dear who begs. (Portuguese)
He who knows how to beg may leave his money at home. (Danish)
I had rather buy than beg. (Roman)
If begging should unfortunately be your lot, then knock only at the large gates. (Arabian)
It is better to beg than to be hanged. (Spanish)
What is got by begging is dearly bought. (Danish)
With hat in hand a man can travel the entire land. (German)

Beggar, Beggars

A beggar never becomes a giver. (Greek)
A beggar's estate lies in all lands. (Dutch)
A beggar's hand is a bottomless basket. (Dutch)
A beggar's sack is bottomless. (German)
A beggar's wallet is never full. (Portuguese)
Beggars and dogs fight for crumbs. (German)
Beggars breed and rich men feed. (German)
Beggars can never be bankrupt. (Dutch)
Beggars can't be choosers. (American)
Beggars fear no rebellion. (Dutch)
Beggars mounted ride their horses to death. (Dutch)
Give a beggar a bed and he'll repay you with a louse. (Chinese)
It is a beggar's pride that he is not a thief. (Japanese)
One beggar likes not that another has two wallets. (Danish)
One ungrateful beggar does injury to all who are wretched. (Roman)
Put a beggar into your barn and he will make himself your heir. (Spanish)
Put a beggar on horseback and he will gallop away. (Irish)
Set a beggar on horseback, and he'll ride to the Devil. (German)
The beggar is the companion of the loafer. (Hausan)
The beggar may sing before the thief. (Belgian)
The beggar's bag is bottomless. (German)
The beggar's weapon is his cough. (Hausan)
To a beggar not even his own parents show affection. (Roman)
When it rains porridge the beggar has no spoon. (Danish)

Begin and End

Good to begin well, better to end well. (English)
He who begins badly, ends badly. (Spanish)
He who begins ill, finishes worse. (Italian)
He who begins many things, finishes few. (Italian)
Take care not to begin anything of which you may repent. (Roman)
What is well begun is already half done. (Roman)
Who begins amiss ends amiss. (German)
Who begins too much, accomplishes little. (German)

Beginning, Beginnings

A bad beginning may make a good ending. (German)
A good beginning makes a good ending. (English)
A hard beginning makes a good ending. (Italian)
All beginnings are hard, said the thief, and began by stealing an anvil. (Dutch)
Bad beginnings lead to bad results. (Roman)
Beware beginnings. (German)
Every beginning is weak. (Irish)
Everything must have a beginning. (French)
Of a good beginning comes a good end. (Chinese)
The beginning hot, the middle lukewarm, the end cold. (German)
The beginning is half of the whole. (Roman)
The beginning is the half of every action. (Greek)
The beginnings of all things are small. (Roman)

Behave

To a man behave like a man, to a dog behave like a dog. (Albanian)

Behind

He who does not go forward, stays behind. (German)

Belief, Believe

Believe no man more than yourself when you are spoken of. (Roman)
Believe not all you hear. (English)
Believe not half of what you hear, nor all of what you see. (German)
Believe not your ears but your eyes. (Korean)
Believe only half of what you see, nothing of what you hear. (Roman)
Believe that, and drink some water to wash it down. (French)
Do not believe any man more than yourself about yourself. (Roman)
For him who does not believe in signs, there is no way to live in the world. (Russian)
For what a man would like to be true, that he more readily believes. (English)
If what we see is doubtful, how can we believe what is spoken behind the backs.
(Chinese)
If you believe everything you read, it is better not to read. (Japanese)
It is better to believe too much than too little. (Chinese)
It is equally dangerous to believe and to disbelieve. (Roman)
Men are readier to believe their eyes than their ears. (Roman)
Quick to believe is quickly deceived. (Serbian)
The eyes believe themselves; the ears believe other people. (German)
The one who believes is the one who achieves. (German)
Those who readily believe are readily deceived. (the Editor)
We are slow to believe that which, if believed, would work us harm. (Roman)
What the eyes see, the heart believes. (German)
Who goes not, sees not; who proves not, believes not. (Italian)
Who neither believes Heaven or Hell, the Devil heartily wishes him well. (German)

Who sees with the eye believes with the heart. (Unknown)
You believe that easily, which you hope for earnestly. (Roman)
You might believe a good man easily, a great man with pleasure. (Roman)

Bell, Bells

A bell rings for good reason. (Spanish)
A cracked bell can never sound well. (German)
A motionless bell never rings. (Chinese)
Bells call to church but do not enter. (French)
Bells toll twice for a woman and thrice for a man. (Spanish)
Even bells tremble when they strike. (Spanish)
Nine tolls of the church bell make a man. (English)
One bell serves a parish. (Italian)
People make the bells say what they please. (French)
The bell does not go to mass, and yet it calls everyone to it. (Italian)
The bell is loud because it is empty. (Polish)
The bell never rings of itself. (Roman)
While the great bells are ringing no one hears the little ones. (Danish)

Belly

A bellyful is a bellyful. (French)
A full belly brings forth every evil. (Poor Richard)
A full belly counsels well. (French)
A full belly dances better than a fine coat. (Danish)
A full belly is neither good for flight, nor for fighting. (Spanish)
A full belly sets a man to dance. (French)
A full belly, a cheerful mind. (German)
A fat belly does not produce a refined mind. (Danish)
Don't make an oven of your cap or a garden of your belly. (French)
First the belly, then the collar. (German)
Full stomach, happy heart. (Mexican)
If it were not for the belly, the back might wear gold. (Poor Richard)
Ill befalls the belly that forgets eaten bread. (Portuguese)
Let their bellies be full, for it is they that carry the legs. (Portuguese)
Neither an ocean nor a large belly can ever be filled. (Unknown)
Ten men, ten bellies. (Japanese)
The belly gives no credit. (Danish)
The belly is a bad advisor. (German)
The belly is a pot that's difficult to fill. (Unknown)
The belly is the giver of genius [i.e., poverty inspires genius]. (Roman)
The belly overrules the head. (French)
The belly robs the back. (French)
The belly warm, the foot at rest. (Portuguese)
The epicure puts his purse into his belly. (Spanish)
The full belly does not believe in hunger. (Italian)