



22 Common Chinese Idioms

The Chinese Language Institute

汉字	Pinyin	English
绘声绘色	huìshēng-huìsè	vivid and colorful, true to life
未雨绸缪	wèiyǔ-chóumóu	lit. before it rains, bind around with silk; fig. to prepare for a rainy day
呕心沥血	ǒuxīn-lìxuè	lit. to spit out one's heart and spill blood; fig. to work one's heart out
想入非非	xiǎngrùfēifēi	to indulge in fantasy
人声鼎沸	rénshēng-dǐngfèi	lit. a boiling cauldron of voices; a noisy and overexcited reaction or response to something
祸不单行	huòbùdānxíng	misfortune does not come singly; when it rains it pours
息息相关	xīxī-xiāngguān	closely bound up
灯红酒绿	dēnghóng-jiǔlǜ	lit. lanterns red, wine green; fig. feasting and pleasure seeking
一暴十寒	yīpù-shíhán	lit. have one day's sun and 10 days' cold; fig. sporadic effort; to work for a day then skimp
出神入化	chūshén-rùhuà	to reach perfection
面面相觑	miànmiàn-xiàngqù	to look at each other in dismay
小心翼翼	xiǎoxīn-yìyì	cautious and solemn
敝帚自珍	bìzhǒuzìzhēn	lit. value the broom as one's own; fig. to attached value to something that is your own
天壤之别	tiānrǎngzhībié	lit. as different as sky and earth; fig. worlds apart
振聋发聩	zhènlóng-fākuì	lit. so loud that even the deaf can hear; fig. rousing even the apathetic
津津有味	jīnjīn-yǒuwèi	with great interest
琳琅满目	lín láng-mǎnmù	lit. glittering jewels to delight the eyes; fig. a dazzling line-up
聚精会神	jùjīng-huìshén	to concentrate one's attention
蔚然成风	wèirán-chéngfēng	to become a general trend
目不斜视	mùbùxiéshì	lit. not look sideways; fig. to be fully concentrated
如法炮制	rúfǎ-páozhì	lit. to prepare the herbal medicine by the prescribed method; fig. to follow a set pattern
老马识途	lǎomǎ-shítú	lit. an old horse knows the way; fig. an experienced worker knows what to do