

LIVE & LEARN

— CURRENT ENGLISH — PROVERBS , EXPLAINED



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Live and Learn: Current English Proverbs, Explained

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Abstract

Proverbs are a set of long-lasting, tried, and tested pieces of wisdom that gained popular appeal and passed on through generations. This collection contains more than 1,300 proverbs. Our approach in the selection of the proverbs is based on frequency counts, allowing us to discard a large number of obsolete and outdated proverbs that are abundant in other collections, even recently published ones. The explanations of proverbs follow a consistent structure. Each proverb is explained with a general opening statement, followed by an example situation or more illustrative details. We also provide an explanation of difficult words or the literal meaning when there is a hidden allegory.

Introduction

A proverb is not a proverb unless it's used and recognized by a large population of native speakers of a particular language over a considerable period of time. Unfortunately, many of the so-called proverbs in present-day collections are simply copied over the ages from one book to the next, without validating its usage or popularity. Interestingly, you can find proverbs with a very low number of hits on the web in the 2015 edition of the Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs. For example, "He that follows freits, freits will follow him" has only 26 hits on the web, "The fat man knoweth not what the lean thinketh" has 22, "Better a century of tyranny than one day of chaos" has 16, "Dogs look up to you, cats look down on you, pigs is equal" has 17, and "The more laws, the more thieves and bandits" has 16 hits. In this collection, we only list proverbs that pass our popularity test. They must have a usage frequency above a certain threshold (around 1,000 hits) to be included in our book. This introduction includes an overview of the organization of our book, types of proverbs, truth-value of proverbs, proverb popularity, frequency caveats, and why proverbs die out. Let's start by exploring the definitions of proverbs and how they present themselves in our everyday life.

Organization of This Collection

Over the centuries, compilers of proverb collections devised different approaches for the arrangement of their books, influenced in most cases by lexicographic practices with dictionaries. Many even call their collections "proverb dictionaries," although the word

“dictionary” is a misnomer in this instance, as it means a list of words, not sentences. Although most proverb compilers use alphabetical order, many differ in whether this order should be based on the very first word (even if it is a determiner or preposition), first noun, or first significant (or key substantive) word. A few compilers, however, listed their collections by topic. The purpose in either case is mainly to facilitate the discoverability and usability of the content of their books by allowing users to locate words easily. However, with the advent of electronic publishing, the need for indexing is eliminated. It is to be noted that *paremiology* is the technical term for the study of proverbs and a *paremiologist* is a person specialized in the field of proverbs.

This collection contains more than 1,300 proverbs. Our approach in the selection of the proverbs is based on frequency counts, allowing us to discard a large number of obsolete and outdated proverbs that are abundant in other collections, even recently published ones. The list is also arranged by frequency order, not by alphabetical order, as is the practice with the other books. Thus, the most frequent proverbs come first. The frequency counts inform us about the prominence and importance of a certain proverb in the culture and language. We use this as the basis for ordering, so a learner or an interested reader can learn and become familiar with high priority proverbs and sayings before moving on to the less salient ones.

The explanations of proverbs follow a consistent structure. Each proverb is explained with a general opening statement, followed by an example situation or more illustrative details. We also provide an explanation of difficult words or the literal meaning when there is a hidden allegory. In some instances, we also provide a brief overview of the history or etymology when needed. Notably, many of the proverbs express an opinion or a perspective that can be contradicted. When explaining the proverb, we intend to adopt the viewpoint expressed unless it is stereotypical, discriminatory, or derogatory. In such cases, we point out the specific attitude of the proverb.

Researchers usually make distinction between proverbs and catchy phrases, quotations, and sayings. The author of a quotation is always known, while the creator of a proverb is typically anonymous. However, a proverb does not differ very much from a quotation, as they both begin with one saying an eloquent sentence that later gains a considerable currency. Lord John Russell defined proverbs as, "the wit of one, and the wisdom of many." Therefore, we take a broader approach to cover memorable statements that include proverbs, sayings, along with some famous quotes, adages, slogans, and catchphrases.

What are Proverbs, and Why?

Proverbs are generally considered as a set of long-lasting, tried, and tested pieces of wisdom that gained popular appeal and passed on through generations. Speakers and writers are tempted to allude to proverbs as eloquent, succinct, and witty pieces of knowledge, and sometimes use them as an indirect way to encapsulate a certain standpoint. Some proverbs are dressed in attractive linguistic and figurative attire that lends them more plausibility. From the linguistic perspective, a large number of proverbs employ clever, rhetorical devices such as rhyming, alliteration and parallelism. They express a complex meaning and express common-sense truths in an eloquent, pithy phrase. From the figurative perspective, they typically contain simile with strong imagery that conveys a certain meaning in a very subtle way. The proverbs

with metaphorical or allegorical meaning have the ability to trigger the curiosity of listeners and challenge their intellect to make the connection between the literal and intended meaning.

We learn a lot about the culture and the value system of a certain society by looking at the top most frequent number of proverbs. It informs us about their most encouraged behaviors and highly-valued morals, be they learning, perseverance, generosity, hospitality, reciprocation, discretion, tolerance, diligence, patriotism, obedience, patience, cooperation, friendship, bravery, respect, or something else. Anthropologists find it very valuable to study a society's proverbs, as they provide an accurate picture of the set of dynamics governing the group, including their implied beliefs and habits.

Proverbs provide speakers with concise anecdotal expressions with aesthetic flavor that mitigates the force of an attitude, argument, or advice. In some societies, proverbs are used to serve certain societal needs, such as establishing authority, influencing others, winning an argument, or settling disputes. In such societies, proverbs are the didactic means older generation use to encourage younger generations to conform to desired rules and inherited norms and traditions. Nonetheless, many proverbs insightfully speak to the realities of life, provide rhetorical adages that instill motivation and inspiration in others or warn them against the negative potential of uncalculated risks or neglected problems. This is why the same kernel of wisdom gleaned from many proverbs is found to have counterparts across different cultures and different languages, and some of them were able to endure the test of time and remain current for ages.

It would be erroneous to think that proverbs have no place in modern-day science-oriented society, and regard them as old-fashioned, obsolete, deprecated or cliched. This viewpoint may inhibit us from seeing the true value of proverbs. Surprisingly for some, proverbs are still popular and influential today as they were centuries ago. They are included in many contemporary titles of songs, books, movies, and drama scenes, such as, "Life is sweet," "Enough is enough," "Diamonds are a girl's best friend," "Fight fire with fire," "Better late than never," "Never too late to learn," "There's no place like home," "Love is blind," "Forgive and forget," "Much ado about nothing," "Finders keepers," "Mind your own business," "Like father, like son," "Seeing is believing," "Dead men tell no tales," and "Easy does it".

Proverbs are usually called upon to serve in many domains, such as health and fitness, motivation and inspiration, as well as advertising. Advice on health includes: "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," "You are what you eat," and "Prevention is better than cure." Inspirational and motivational proverbs include: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again," "No gain without pain," and "Never too old to learn." In advertising, proverbs can be used as companies' slogans, such as Tesco's "Every little helps," Morton Salt's, "When it rains, it pours!" Nike's catchy phrase, "Just do it," and the Army's, "Be all that you can be." Even De Beers created an apparent a proverb, "A Diamond is forever." In fact, most of the top frequency proverbs are included in our collection because they became titles of literary/entertainment work.

Proverbs also serve as a good title for a blog post, newspaper article, or YouTube video, whether explicitly or by allusion. Here is a short list of such titles:

- "England's Difficulty, Ireland's Opportunity"
- "Success has many fathers"
- "Beauty is only skin deep"
- "Forest Degradation: Canada's *Skeleton in the Closet*"
- "The Blind Leading the Blind"

- “Practice makes perfect: Carve this virtual turkey”
- “Time is money: ‘Asprey’ may bring up to \$4 million at auction”
- “College Football Power Rankings: Better late than never for Ohio State to step up”
- “Love is blind! Wife reverses straight into her husband's stationary car”
- “Finders keepers? Buyer finds \$7.5 million in cash inside Southern California” storage unit”
- “More working hours for women? Easier said than done”
- “It's time to forgive and forget with James Harrison”
- “Seeing is believing: How redesigning trucks can eliminate blindspots”
- “Leaving new staff to sink or swim could leave firms high and dry”
- “Waste not, suffer not”
- “On the deportment of the press, Trump should practice what he preaches”
- “For the Euro, All Roads Lead to Rome”
- “Call a Spade a Spade and not a big spoon. You are either fat, petite or skinny”
- “UK credit impulse: There is nothing new under the sun”
- “Haste makes waste: Why the European directive proposal for a digital sales” tax should be thrown out”
- “On television, the clothes make the man...or woman”
- “Charity begins at home for Dogs for the Disabled”
- “The silver lining in Trump's and the GOP's clouds”
- “Bill Gates on How Blood Will Soon Tell Us Everything”
- “Taking the Bull called 'Big Data' by the Horn”

Types of Proverbs

From a linguistic perspective, we can say that there are three types of proverbs, depending on the opaqueness of the meaning. Sometimes the meaning is straightforward and direct, while in other cases, the meaning can be either partially or fully concealed.

1. Direct: in this case, the literal meaning is equivalent to the intended meaning. For example, “honesty is the best policy,” “Never too old to learn,” “Wonders will never cease,” “Nothing is lost for asking,” and “There’s no place like home.” One can fully understand what these proverbs are saying without trying to read behind the lines.
2. Rhetorical: In this type, some elements of figures of speech are employed, yet, the meaning can still be gathered directly from the expression. For example, “Speech is silver, silence is golden,” “Hunger is the best sauce,” “Fame is a magnifying glass,” “A lie has no legs,” and “The eye is the mirror of the soul.” Here are a few more examples of rhetorical devices:
 - a. Simile: “Speech is silver, silence is golden;”
 - b. Imagery: “A lie has no legs;”
 - c. Parallelism: “Nothing ventured, nothing gained;”
 - d. Hyperbole: “Money is the root of all evil;”
 - e. Alliteration “Live and learn;”
 - f. Rhyming: “A friend in need is a friend indeed;”
 - g. Personification: “Necessity is the mother of invention;”
 - h. Metaphor: “The pen is mightier than the sword.”
3. Allegorical: In this type the literal meaning is different from, yet analogical to, the intended meaning. Therefore, the message is suggested rather than explicit. Here the proverb identifies a general observation about the world or how things work, and then alludes to the current situation. Understanding such proverbs require the listener to reflect upon the

literal meaning of the proverb, gain a good grasp of it first, and then compare it to the current situation. The figurative meaning of the proverb cannot be established without understanding the literal meaning upfront. This is the most difficult type of proverb to comprehend, as it requires a good skill in analogical reasoning, due to the meaning being carefully concealed. Furthermore, the meaning of these proverbs can be open to different (and sometimes contradictory) interpretations. The reason for this ambiguity is that the meaning depends on a double-sided analogy. For example, "A rolling stone gathers no moss," can either mean: you cannot gain wealth if you don't live a stable life, or: if you keep moving you'll not be tied by liabilities. A few examples of allegorical proverbs include: "Fight fire with fire," "The rotten apple injures its neighbours," "Let sleeping dogs lie," "Every cloud has a silver lining," "After a storm comes a calm," "A cat has nine lives," "Hitch your wagon to a star." and "The squeaky wheel gets the grease."

Truth Value of Proverbs

Proverbs represent cultural and perceived common-sense values of a society at a particular time, but they are not necessarily logical, moral, intuitive, or scientifically correct. They are derived from the groups collective experience of and attitude towards life, environment, and personal interactions and relationships. Proverbs are usually touted as "gems of wisdom." In reality, proverbs, like other language expressions, individual behaviors, and life experiences, contain the good, the bad, and the ugly. Proverbs are not required to be factual, wise, moral, politically-correct, or contain universally-agreed common-sense knowledge to be identified as proverbs. On the contrary, some proverbs are counterfactual, fatuous, unethical, superstitious, self-serving, counter-intuitive, or even contradictory. In essence, proverbs serve as a way to subtly express opinions and attitudes that can be questioned or disputed based on changes in personal or circumstantial factors.

Proverbs are not equally universally acceptable, and some of them may express a transient social attitude that loses its credibility, plausibility, and acceptability over time. Proverbs are pieces of folklore that may not necessarily have any scientific validity. This is evident in the following proverbs: "Dreams go by contraries" (16,600 hits), "Whom the gods love die young" (35,500), "Lightning doesn't strike the same place twice" (24,500), and "Cold hands, warm hearts" (63,800).

The thrust and strength of a proverb in argument is accounted for in three ways. First, when one cites a proverb, they are playing to the band-wagon effect. By saying that so many people have attested to the truth value of this proverb, they are claiming that there must be a ring of truth to it. Second, by saying it is a proverb, your audience is informed that they do not have to argue with it because it is a popular opinion of ancient people. And third, some proverbs are worded in such a nice, eloquent way, that they may pass as a constitutional rule, or even a divine instruction. Therefore, listeners might be diverted by the rhetoric, suspend disbelief and avoid questioning its validity. Although there are apparent truths to proverbs, there are also contradictions worth noting.

Contradictions

We generally don't consider contradictions in proverbs as a bad thing or that one invalidates the other, but we see it as a way to provide the listener/reader with two sides of a story, which can be opposing or conflicting in nature, but at the same time can be equally true.

For example, you can cite several proverbs that encourage taking risks, and find as many that encourage prudence. Eventually, personal judgement is required to assess the situation and decide on the right course of action, whether to take calculated or uncalculated risk, or not to take a risk at all. Let's examine the different types of contradictions among proverbs, which include literal, semantic, and non-scientific contradictions.

These contradictions can be literal: "Clothes make the man," (719,000 hits) and "Clothes don't make the man," (96,300); or semantic: "Life is sweet," (11,100,000) and "Life is a battle," (9,280,000). There could be different opposing aspects of a topic: "Experience is the teacher of fools" (20,600), "Experience is the best teacher" (1,370,000), "Experience is the mother of wisdom" (146,000). To reconcile these points, maybe the answer is in the unpopular proverb: "Experience is good, if not bought too dear" (57). And, although we know that "A cat has nine lives" (62,700), we do not know exactly what killed it: "Curiosity killed the cat" (1,540,000) and "Care killed the cat" (1,790,000). So, by looking at frequency counts, we may conclude that the cat was more likely killed by care than curiosity.

Proverb Popularity

It can be assumed that a proverb is deemed popular if it has a reasonable amount of frequency, familiarity, and acceptance. To some extent, it appears to be relatively simple to estimate the frequency of proverbs objectively in electronic texts. However, it can be challenging to pass a large list of proverbs through non-biased testing measures for familiarity and acceptance by a representative number of speakers, as this significantly varies by age, gender, interests, and level of education. It can also be assumed, with a grain of salt, that frequency is the reflection of both familiarity and acceptance. For example, if a proverb is both familiar and acceptable it will be used more often and it will be discovered in more diverse contexts. However, oral communication is significantly underrepresented in transcribed texts, and proverbs, as a type of folk tradition, are typically transmitted by word of mouth. Nonetheless, in this book, we decided to adhere to frequency as the sole criterion for judging proverb popularity for practicality reasons.

The main problem with other proverb collections is that they attempt to be as comprehensive as possible. They typically hunt for *gems of wisdom*, which results in listing as many sayings as possible. Most include bulk copies from older collections and even translated proverbs from other languages and remote regions. Little was done to ensure that these proverbs are used by the actual speakers and writers of the language.

In the current book, we use a data-driven approach in our selection of proverbs. Using the web as a corpus, we verify the frequency of over 4,000 proverbs proclaimed in older books and dictionaries. We use the Google search engine with exact (quoted) match of the strings of each proverb and set a threshold of 1,000 occurrences as the criterion for inclusion or exclusion from this book. Google indexes 30 trillion web pages, in addition to Google books, which contains 130 million titles. This method allows us to bring the list down to about 1,300 proverbs in current use, while also listing new and emerging proverbs.

The high frequency of a proverb indicates that either that the saying still exists in modern-day usage and conscience or it is comprehensible to modern speakers. However, the frequency of certain proverbs is sometimes inflated due to the fact that they became titles of books, movies,

or were included as lyrics in songs. In other instances, the frequency is highly exaggerated because the wording of the proverb can be part of commonly used sentences, such as, “wait and see.” Unfortunately, Google does not allow sensitive case matching, posing difficulty in determining if the string of words is a stand-alone saying or part of a larger sentence, such as “he wanted to wait and see how things progressed.”

Despite the limitations of the methodology used, we believe it gives a fair and somewhat credible indication of which sayings are still readily used and which have somehow deceased. This will also provide the learners a priority list to quickly become acquainted with important aspects of the English culture and its value system. For the critical reader, we give below more details of the caveats of the methodology used in selecting and sorting proverbs.

Frequency Caveats

When you search for words or phrases on a search engine, such as Google, it gives you a number for the count of results, also known as hits. Although we accept this number for face value and rely on it in selecting and sorting proverbs, we want to point out the caveats and shortcomings of this approach:

- Frequency does not tell us anything about geographical or temporal distribution or diversity in different genres and topics;
- Slightly different wording of a proverb can yield an entirely different frequency count. When we encountered such cases, we did not aggregate the counts, but took the wording with the highest frequency. Here are some examples:
 - “A creaking **door** hangs longest”(91 hits) and “A creaking **gate** hangs long” (45,700).
 - “**Fling** dirt enough and some will stick” (2,660) and “**Throw** dirt enough and some will stick” (75)
 - “The eye is the mirror of the **soul**” (75,600) and “The eye is the mirror of the **heart**” (15)
- Not only different wording, but as search engines rely on string matching, even different inflections, contractions, particles can lead to significantly different counts.
 - “Don't meet **troubles** halfway” (21) and “Don't meet **trouble** halfway” (4,060).
 - “Curiosity killed **the** cat” (1,790,000) and “Curiosity killed **a** cat” (11,600).
 - “If **you are** not paying, you are the product” (70) and “If **you're** not paying, you're the product” (13,400).
 - “Beauty is **only** skin deep” (1,640,000) and “Beauty is **but** skin deep” (33,300)
 - “**Whatever** man has done, man **may** do” (94) and “**What** man has done, man **can** do” (9,380)..
 - “Dogs bark, **but** the caravan moves on” (72,200) and “**The** dogs bark, the caravan goes on” (36).
- Sometimes the frequency does not originate from accurate usage in language representation, but is derived from other collections of proverbs or translations from different languages;
- Occasionally, the frequency number provided by Google considers repeated frequency of documents. However, only a few hit pages appear in search results;
- As Google search is not case sensitive, it's not possible to know whether a proverb is mistakenly a component of a larger sentence or is used simply as a proverb. This can also be unreliable, as case ending sometimes tends to yield different results. For

example, "**Ask** no questions and hear no lies" has 7,030 hits, while "**ask** no questions and hear no lies" has 64,100;

- Google autofill can assist in finding the correct wording. For example, "There is no such thing as bad weather only" it completes as "inappropriate clothing" and gets 16,900 hits, while the wording on ODP (Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs) is "the wrong clothes" has 419 hits;
- Some proverbs acquire modern spelling:
 - "Know **yourself**" (5,170,000) and "Know **thysself**" (1,900,000).
 - "**Cheats** never prosper" has 23,700 hits, while "**Cheaters** never prosper" has 132,000
 - Another example includes, "children and fools cannot lie" with 4,390, and "children and fools tell the truth" with 11,400 hits;
- Unfortunately, there are some nice proverbs that never gained currency, although the sense could be found in many other popular proverbs;
 - "The city for wealth, the country for health" (6).
 - "Don't cry before you are hurt" (98).
 - "The same fire that melts the butter hardens the egg" (80).
 - "It is the first step that is difficult" (82).

Why Proverbs Die Out

Certain proverbs seem to have diminished in current use as they show very low to no occurrence on the web, which is assumed to provide a fair representation of language use. When closely examining these proverbs, we can uncover certain patterns in these sayings that may explain why they fell out of modern taste.

Stereotyping and Discrimination: this includes making assumptions about individuals of a particular group of people and expanding these assumptions to every individual that belongs to this group. Women in particular were the target of old proverb stereotypes. However, there is a good number of discriminatory proverbs promoting prejudice against old people, young children, as well as prejudice against certain people's height or profession or depending on where they come from. We are not saying that the list of proverbs included in our collection are bias and discrimination-free, but we observe that a significant amount of them are deprecated.

- "The cunning wife makes her husband her apron" (49 hits)
- "A woman and a glass are ever in danger" (70)
- "A woman and a ship ever want mending" (92)
- "Choose a wife by your ear, rather than by your eye" (91)
- "He that tells his wife news, is but newly married" (76)
- "He that will thrive must first ask his wife" (62)
- "Three things drive a man out of his house – smoke, rain and a scolding wife" (42)
- "Silence is a woman's best garment" (732)
- "Where there are women and geese, there wants no noise" (51)
- "Tell a woman she is fair and she will soon turn fool" (19)
- "A man is as old as he feels, and a woman is as old as she looks" (55)
- "Young folks think old folks to be fools, but old folks know young folks to be fools" (69)
- "Young saint, old devil" (887)
- "You cannot catch old birds with chaff" (99)
- "You cannot shift an old tree without it dying" (91)
- "A young physician fattens the churchyard" (35)

- “He wrongs not an old man that steals his supper from him” (19)
- “When the Greek meets the Greek, then comes the tug of war,” (4)
- “Yorkshire born and Yorkshire bred, strong in the arm and weak in the head,” (77)

Calling names: People make mistakes, and society is less inclined today to call a person a liar for telling one lie or even many, as people have become more conscious in the choice of their language. Many demeaning adjectives were common in old proverbs, including: knave, fool, liar, ignorant, chatterer, tattler, a coward, covetous, sluggard, and crooked.

- “Once a knave and ever a knave” (18 hits)
- “Avoid a questioner, for he is also a tattler” (98)
- “Every fool likes his own bauble best” (9)
- “Science has no enemy but the ignorant” (41)
- “Liars have short wings” (59)
- “Necessity and opportunity may make a coward valiant” (93)
- “Eavesdroppers never hear any good of themselves” (68)
- “Once a devil, always a devil” (95)
- “Sue a beggar and catch a louse” (78)
- “A poor man wants some things, a covetous man all things” (47)
- “Give knaves an inch and they will take a yard” (749)
- “Every day is holiday with sluggards” (35)

What could be even more offensive is using names of animals to allude to people. These proverbs may include words such as: dog, ass, serpent, sheep, horse, lizard, wolf, fox, ant, wasp, bee, flea, goose, garland, duck, pig, swine, hog, croak, owl, hen, cock, or crow.

- “A dog’s tail is always crooked” (14)
- “Dogs wag their tails no so much in love to you as to your bread” (3)
- “The higher the monkey climbs, the more he shows his tail” (633)
- “Do not call a wolf to help you against the dogs” (48)
- “He who makes himself a ewe, becomes the prey of the wolf” (2)
- “If you deal with a fox, think of his tricks” (62)
- “He that has been bitten by a serpent, is afraid of the rope” (5)
- “If you lie down with dogs, you will get up with fleas” (96)
- “Gossips are frogs, they drink and talk” (50)
- “A bellowing cow soon forgets her calf” (91)

Governance: This refers to the way rules governing the society are structured. These may have died out because they do not relate to the life is organized anymore. Rulers today yield less power and people enjoy more equality. These proverbs typically involve the following words: king, prince, ruler, slave, master, noble, punishment, reward, or gentleman. Here are a few examples:

- “A king's chaff is worth more than other men's corn” (33)
- “Every man is a king in his own house” (22)
- “The servant of a king is a king” (14)
- “Whoever draws his sword against the prince must throw the scabbard away” (65)
- “Every good scholar is not a good master” (6)
- “Give the slave a rod, and he’ll beat his master” (2)
- “An ass must be tied where the master will have him” (32)
- “A falling master makes a standing servant” (18)
- “Manners and money make a gentleman” (53)

Financial relations/habits: Modern societies enjoy a lot more affluence and economic prosperity than older generation. With social welfare systems and banks providing more credit facilities, it is less likely today for people to need to borrow money from each other or go to bed on an empty stomach. These proverbs typically include words such as, lending, borrowing, debt, marrying a rich woman, servant/master, poverty, full purse, empty stomach, rich man/folks, owe, spending, steal, supperless, wealth, or money.

- “An empty belly hears nobody” (99 hits)
- “Better are small fish than an empty dish” (92)
- “Better be an old man’s darling than a young man’s slave” (94)
- “An empty purse fills the face with wrinkles” (72)
- “He that gets out of debt grows rich” (41)
- “He is rich enough, who lacks not bread” (17)
- “He who has good health is young; and he is rich who owes nothing” (403)
- “Better go to bed supperless than to rise in debt” (53)
- “Borrow makes sorrow” (21)
- “Would you know the value of money? Go and borrow some” (9)
- “It is a fraud to borrow what we are not able to repay” (7)
- “Better buy than borrow” (92)
- “The early man never borrows from the late man” (76)

Long and wordy proverbs: In some instances, there may be issues with the way a proverb is structured, rather than its relatability. Proverbs that are too lengthy are more likely die down as they are harder to memorize and they contradict the very essence of a proverb as a pithy and succinct expression.

- “When the last tree is cut down, the last fish eaten and the last stream poisoned, you will realize you cannot eat money,” (48 hits)
- “Learning is an ornament in prosperity, a refuge in adversity and provision in old age” (4)
- “My son is my son, till he has got him a wife; but my daughter is my daughter all the days of her life” (57)
- “Do not all you can; spend not all you have; believe not all you hear; and tell not all you know” (90)
- “Saint Swithun's day, if thou be fair, for forty days it will remain; Saint Swithun's day, if thou bring rain, for forty days it will remain” (27)
- “I am more afraid of an army of a hundred sheep led by a lion than an army of hundred lions led by a sheep” (1)
- “If the lad go to the well against his will, either the can will break or the water will spill” (1)
- “When one sits for examination, one is either treated with honour, or held in low esteem” (2)
- “When the oak is before the ash, then you will only get a splash; when the ask is before the oak, then you may expect a soak,” (458)

Religion: The prominence and dominance of religion in people’s lives have significantly changed, and proverbs that contain religious undertones are more likely die down. These proverbs typically contain the following words such as: god, priest, faith, pope, saint, devil, angel, heaven, gods, sin, church, vice, or virtue. Here’s some examples:

- “It is ill sitting at Rome and striving with the Pope” (70)
- “Where God builds a church, the Devil will build a chapel” (59)
- “God makes the back to the burden” (48)

- “God is high above and the Tsar is far away” (36)
- “God reaches us good things by our own hands” (35)
- “God provides for him that trusts” (28)
- “Man does what he can, and God what he will” (18)
- “God comes at last when we think he is furthest off” (14)
- “Better go to heaven in rags than to hell in embroidery” (628)
- “Crosses are ladders that lead to heaven” (88)
- “Talk of the angel and you will hear his wings” (1)
- “On saint Thomas the Divine kill all turkeys, geese, and swine” (40)
- “If saint Paul's day be fair and clear, it will betide a happy year” (38)
- “To fall into sin is human, to remain in sin is devilish” (26)
- “It's a sin to steal a pin” (87)
- “The first step to virtue is to abstain from vice” (66)
- “Vice makes virtue shine” (47)
- “Good nature is the proper soil upon which virtue grows” (8)

Modern English Proverbs

As we have seen, many proverbs have died out, and as nature abhors a vacuum, many have just emerged in the last century and gained currency in language. They reflect modern lifestyles, attitudes, advertising, contemporary media, and technology. Here are a few examples such proverbs:

- “Life begins at forty,” (108,000)
- “Garbage in, Garbage out,” (689,000)
- “Winning isn't everything,” (333,000)
- “Fake it until you make it,” (347,000)
- “A picture is worth a thousand words,” (10,300,000)
- “There's no such thing as a free lunch,” (305,000)
- “You can't always get what you want,” (2,860,000)
- “If it ain't broke, don't fix it,” (1,630,000)
- “The customer is always right,” (827,000)
- “You are what you eat,” (8,440,000)
- “Money isn't everything,” (701,000)
- “It takes two to tango,” (1,300,000)
- “Success has many fathers,” (36,300)
- “It pays to advertise,” (505,000)
- “Diamonds are a girl's best friend,” (8,150,000)
- “The devil is in the details,” (2,550,000)
- “Different strokes for different folks,” (632,000)
- “Let your dreams come true,” (1,310,000)
- “There is a thin line between genius and insanity,” (12,200)
- “If you're not paying, you're the product,” (13,400)
- “If you don't like the heat, get out of the kitchen,” (16,500)
- “Just do it,” (112,000,000)
- “Last in, first out,” (1,160,000)
- “Think globally, act locally,” (817,000)
- “Que sera, sera,” (294,000)

Finally, I hope the reader will get as much enjoyment from this collection of proverbs as we did in gathering filtering and explaining them.

Mohammed Attia
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1) Wait and see

Be patient for the outcome of a given scenario before jumping to a decision or a conclusion. For example, your friend may have noticed a mutual friend spending time with a person neither of you know very well or much care for. It may be easy to judge the situation, but telling yourself to “wait and see” is a much kinder approach. A more practical example is watching how a new stock does on the market for a few weeks before deciding to invest in it.

2) Less is more

Minimalism can have a bigger impact than complexity. For example, an advertisement with nothing more than a product photo and company logo might draw more attention than a complicated ad that includes multiple images, diagrams, and paragraphs of text.

3) Be all you can be

Exercise your full potential; don't settle for less. For example, if a woman has a natural talent for art, she should spend her time cultivating this ability instead of settling for a boring office job. This was a United States Army recruiting slogan from 1980 to 2001.

4) Live and learn

Life is an opportunity for learning. Throughout your life, you'll find out a lot of surprising facts, solve many mysteries, and learn from mistakes. This is usually said when you have discovered something that you didn't know before.

5) Knowledge is power

Having information and knowing all the facts gives you more control. For example, if a company offers you a job, you may be able to negotiate a better salary if you know what people at competing companies earn for the same job. The origin of this proverb is the Latin phrase “*scientia potentia est.*”

6) Never say never

What you think is impossible today may be realized tomorrow, so never give up hope or make outright assumptions. This can be used in the same sense as “Never is a long time” to remind someone to keep their options open. It can also imply that something highly unlikely, like winning the lottery, does have a small chance of happening.

7) First things first

When carrying out a series of tasks, the most important ones should come first. For example, a group of students met in a cafe to work on a project, but they all agreed that before doing any work, they should eat something as they were all starving.

8) Home is where the heart is

Home is not merely the place where you were brought up; it can be anywhere that you feel most comfortable or serene. For instance, though he was born and raised in the United States, a man made his home in Japan after visiting once and falling in love with the culture.

9) Give and take

It is often necessary to make compromises in order to maintain mutual satisfaction. For instance, if a man likes action movies but his wife prefers romantic films, they may agree to alternate which genre they see when selecting what to watch together.

10) Money talks

Wealth is persuasive. Particularly in politics, giving money is a way to make your voice heard and to influence the way that events happen or decisions are made. This concept dates back as far as the Greek playwright Euripides.

11) First come, first served

People will be taken care of in the order in which they arrive. For example, if a restaurant doesn't accept reservations, customers are simply seated at a table according to their time of arrival.

12) Practice makes perfect

If you repeatedly exercise doing something, you will learn it better, and you will refine your skill more and more. For example, you will probably not learn to ride a bicycle the first time you try. If you are persistent and keep practicing, you will learn how to do it well, and eventually riding a bicycle will become second nature.

13) Time is money

Time is a finite resource, and so it's just as valuable as money, if not more so. In order to earn money, time is required, whether to work or gain a skill. Time spent doing nothing is a lost opportunity for earning more money.

14) Life is sweet

This is used as a way to express and celebrate when your life is going well. For example, if you have a job that pays well, a happy and healthy family, satisfying friendships, and are about to go on a nice vacation, you would say that life is sweet.

15) A picture is worth a thousand words

A photograph speaks louder than any explanation one could offer and gives better evidence than any number of witnesses. When one looks through old childhood photos, certain memories come rushing back that could not possibly be put into words. This saying achieved modern popularity as a maxim for journalists in the early 1900s. However, it was later discovered that Confucius had long ago put the sentiment into words: "Hearing something a hundred times is not better than seeing it once."

16) Enough is enough

One must put a stop to an annoying action that has been going on for too long. For instance, after being mistreated by her manager for weeks, a woman finally decided enough was enough and reported him to human resources.

17) Thought is free

No one can stop you from thinking what you want. A bully may intimidate you or punish you for speaking up or acting out, but they can't read your mind or stop you from having negative thoughts about them. This phrase comes from *The Tempest*, a well-known play from Shakespeare.

18) There is always a first time

Don't be afraid to try something new and unfamiliar, especially if there is some benefit to be gained, whether for pleasure or otherwise. Trying a new activity, such as scuba diving, can be uncomfortable or even a little unnerving at first, but it will soon be rewarding. The next time your friend is nervous about trying something new, you can tell them, "Don't worry, there's always a first time!"

19) Time flies

Time goes quickly. The suggested meaning here is that you should never take a certain period in your life for granted, nor should you despair if it's a difficult one. "Time flies," you could say of being a new parent. "There are joys and struggles, but in any case, it won't last long. Soon your child will grow up."

20) Life is a battle

We must constantly struggle to get through our lives. Annie worked hard to find a well-paying job, and when she got it, she found that her struggles continued as she had to deal with constant challenges to keep her position. She persists because she knows that she has to stay strong and tackle her problems as they come.

21) Laughter is the best medicine

Humor has a wonderful way of releasing stress, resolving conflict, and making difficult situations seem better. In this way, laughter can be considered a kind of cure for a variety of problems, whether they are related to health or other aspects of life.

22) Easier said than done

Some tasks are easy to talk about but difficult to execute. For instance, when a man discovered a squirrel had snuck into his home, his wife begged him to get it out of the house. Unfortunately, this mission was easier said than done, as the man ran around for hours attempting to shoo the animal out the door.

23) You are what you eat

Food has a profound impact on your physical and personal growth, so be thoughtful with what you eat. Healthy food, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, leads to proper nutrition and energy, whereas nutrition-poor foods lead to lack of energy and health problems. The nature of our diet has far-reaching consequences.

24) Diamonds are a girl's best friend

This proverb implies that women value luxurious, superficial beauty above things like love and compassion. It is no wonder that wedding engagement rings are often made with diamonds. This phrase was coined in the 1949 musical *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, but it was made most popular by Marilyn Monroe in her 1953 rendition.

25) Better late than never

Completing a task late is preferable to never finishing it at all. This proverb is commonly called upon when one finally finishes a task after much delay. For instance, a high school student submitted an assignment three weeks late, which to him was "better than never," though his teacher was not very pleased.

26) Never too late to learn

You can always learn something new, no matter how old you are. As children we are constantly learning, but sometimes as adults we feel embarrassed when we have to learn a new skill. This optimistic saying reminds us that we have never missed our chance to gain new knowledge or skills. Another variant of this proverb is “Never too old to learn.”

27) There's no place like home

The best place in the world is home. You may feel drawn to go on adventures to exotic locations all across the world, but after a time don't be surprised if you feel a tugging in your heart to return to what is familiar. Your home is where your loved ones reside and thus is beyond comparison to any other place.

28) Love is blind

We tend to idealize the people we love and fail to see their flaws or misdeeds. This saying can also mean that love is arbitrary, as a reference to Cupid, the classical Roman god of desire. Cupid was said to use golden arrows to make people fall in love, but he was frequently depicted as being blind or blindfolded.

29) Forgive and forget

It is better to let go of a grudge than hold onto it. Even the worst fouls deserve to be forgiven. After his best friend took his car without asking and damaged it in an accident, a man was angry for weeks, despite sincere apologies from the friend. But eventually, he realized that the right thing was to pardon his friend's mistake.

30) Much ado about nothing

A great deal of fuss can be made about something insignificant. This is the title of a William Shakespeare comedy, first performed in 1612, with a plot that is all about the love triangles that form because of meaningless gossip. “Ado” is an old-fashioned word meaning “bother” or “fuss.”

31) What goes around comes around

The consequences of a person's actions will catch up with them eventually. Sooner or later, you'll be rewarded or punished for your actions with the same measure. “Did you hear that Margaret's boyfriend cheated on her?” a gossipy colleague asks you. “Makes sense, since she left her husband for him. What goes around comes around.”

32) Finders keepers

An unclaimed object is freely taken by anyone who happens upon it. When a man found a twenty-dollar bill on the ground with no other people in sight, he gladly put it into his pocket. The proverb often appears in its playful form of “Finders keepers, losers weepers.”

33) Beauty is in the eye of the beholder

Beauty is only a matter of perception. Thus, what one person finds beautiful, another may find downright repulsive. For example, a piece of art valued at \$10,000 by some critics may be viewed as amateur at best by those with different tastes. The same holds true for physical attraction as people tend to be drawn to a certain “type” in a mate.

34) Mind your own business

Do not get involved in other people's affairs. Literally, this saying suggests that instead of paying attention to your neighbor's work or life, you should focus on your own. It is regularly used to suggest that one should not be nosy, or even that one should make an effort to actively ignore irrelevant matters, other people's issues, or even disruptive situations that are going on around you.

35) Like father, like son

Children behave like their parents or mentors. If a parent is an avid reader of books, when their child begins to enjoy reading, people might pay extra attention to that trait and use this saying to connect the child's behavior to the parent's. Another variant of this proverb is "Like mother, like daughter."

36) Seeing is believing

If you are told about something unexpected happening, you may not trust that it is true until you witness it with your own eyes. This proverb suggests that visible evidence is the most convincing. This can be associated with the biblical story of the apostle Thomas, who did not believe that Jesus had returned from death until he saw it for himself.

37) Know thyself

This proverb can be used as a caution that we should know our limits and weaknesses, or as motivation to discover our strengths and hidden talents. It dates to ancient Greece and is sometimes referred to as a Delphic maxim because it was reportedly inscribed at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. In Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, the god Oceanus uses this phrase to remind Prometheus that, as a human, he should know his place in the world and not challenge the gods. Socrates used it as a basis for philosophical inquiry. The saying has been used in both senses since then.

38) Sink or swim

At a critical point, a person must take action to succeed or face certain failure. When a person is thrown into rough water, they must literally start swimming or else they must sink and drown. For example, this proverb could describe when someone enrolls in a language immersion course.

39) Actions speak louder than words

What you do is more important and more impactful than what you say. While one woman spent her time lamenting the prevalence of poverty in the world, her words fell flat. Her friend, on the other hand, chose to make a donation to a charity and, therefore, made a tangible difference in someone's life.

40) Live and let live

Enjoy your life while being respectful of others who choose to live differently. Even if you can't agree with someone about how to behave or what to believe, you should be able to get along respectfully and not try to argue or interfere with each other's lives.

41) Dead men tell no tales

Don't risk doing something you'll regret simply to impress others; you may not live to tell the story at all. One man attempted to dive off a fifty-foot cliff into the ocean; no one knows why. Unfortunately, he didn't realize just how shallow the water below him was.

42) Boys will be boys

This proverb, still common today, is used to justify the foul behavior some people believe to be inherent in the male gender. Though the proverb originally referred to children, it is today used to describe full-grown men as well—for instance, a group of old college friends who drank too much one night and started a fight at the bar.

43) Never say die

Don't give up or even mention the possibility of failure. This saying is used to tell someone to stay positive in the face of near-certain doom because there is always a chance of success, and all you need to do is just keep trying.

44) The more, the merrier

A party or other social situation is always more fun with more people. Your sister may ask you, "Can I also invite my new boyfriend to your wedding?" and you can reply, "Of course, the more, the merrier!" More people at an event means more variety, more opportunities, and a more energetic atmosphere overall.

45) Honesty is the best policy

It is always better to be honest in life, even in difficult or painful situations. Without honesty, it becomes difficult to build trustworthy relationships. For example, a man wasted the money he borrowed from his wife on gambling, but when she asked him what he did with the money, he told her the truth. Although his wife did not like his behavior, she still appreciated his honesty.

46) The good die young

This is a poetic way to lament that someone has died at a young age. Well-liked people die at an early age, and their passing can make a big impact on a community. This saying is a way to provide comfort. It comes from the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, who wrote, "Whom the gods love dies young."

47) Talk is cheap

If you believe in what you are saying, commit to it by taking action. Similar to the saying "Put your money where your mouth is," this proverb is used to goad someone into action if they express a belief in an idea but do not follow through with investment of energy or money.

48) Tomorrow is another day

Even when things don't go well today, there is always tomorrow to do better. For example, when your friend is frustrated that they didn't make many sales at their job, you can tell them, "Some days are like that. Tomorrow is another day." The end of the day is a chance to hit the "reset" button and start all over the next.

49) Patience is a virtue

Patience is a valuable characteristic as it makes us more tolerant and capable of dealing with stressful situations. Rather than demanding what we want now, or blaming others for taking too much time, it is better to learn to accept that life happens at a pace that we cannot control. A parent dealing with a cranky child might find this proverb helpful.

50) Measure for measure

For good or evil, you should reciprocate with a proportionate amount or value and not go overboard. Justice or retribution should be equal to the crime, without being too lenient or too severe. This is the title of a comedic 1604 play by Tudor English playwright William Shakespeare, which challenges the idea that justice should be strict. The concept is an echo of the ancient idea of “an eye for an eye,” which dates back to the Code of Hammurabi.

51) Small is beautiful

In contrast to the idea that “bigger is better,” using appropriate technologies that are scaled to local needs is a more elegant, sustainable solution. This principle comes from twentieth-century economist Leopold Kohr, who believed that small communities and community-scale solutions were the healthiest, most sustainable way to live.

52) You can't always get what you want

Don't expect to have everything your way. It may be nice to be rich, healthy, talented, and famous, but having a stubborn, rigid desire for multiple things will only set you up for disappointment and disillusion. Be prepared to be flexible and make concessions in life.

53) Life is but a dream

Life may be enjoyable, strange, or mysterious, but we have little power to change it. When we look at our lives in retrospect, it can be remarkable how quickly time seems to have passed since we were children. Many people we know will have passed away, and we may have travelled far and been through many strange experiences. These past experiences can seem dreamlike.

54) Use it, or lose it

This is a pithy way of saying that you have to continually exercise a skill if you want to keep it. “I hope I'll still be able to speak fluent Spanish when I visit Guatemala next year,” you tell your friend. To which they reply, “Well, keep studying it then. Use it, or lose it.”

55) Better safe than sorry

If there is any room for doubt, one should take the available precautions. For example, ever since he missed a flight years ago, one man resolved never to let it happen again. To him, arriving five hours early was better rather than repeating that same mistake. The proverb has been traced back to nineteenth-century Irish writer Samuel Lover.

56) To err is human

All people make mistakes, so be patient with others. You have probably forgotten to do something you were assigned to do or said something silly or hurtful. Likewise, other people make similar mistakes, so be forgiving and realistic in your expectations.

57) The devil is in the details

The details are the most difficult parts of a task. An idea might seem easy to implement at first glance, but it may take much longer than anticipated because of the effort needed for fine points and considerations. For example, the difference between an ordinary dress and a couture gown is often in little details like the lining and custom tailoring, which take far more time and effort.

58) When it rains, it pours

Bad and unfortunate things often seem to happen all at once. "Last month my sister passed away," your neighbor tells you. "Shortly after that my cat died. Then just last week I fell and broke my ankle. When it rains, it pours!"

59) Don't judge a book by its cover

Appearance is often not an accurate representation of an object's true value. For instance, although a vintage guitar may look to be in a state of disrepair, it still might produce a sound that far exceeds that of a brand-new instrument.

60) History repeats itself

People tend to make the same mistakes again and again over the course of history. For instance, countless wars have been fought over similar disputes. In the same way, a man may experience a recurring relationship problem throughout his life, although with several different women. The proverb is a companion to the saying by George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

61) Love will find a way

Love will overcome hardships or interference from others. When people in love are separated from each other or come from very different backgrounds, or when their relationship faces disapproval, this saying suggests that their love will find a way to reunite them.

62) Variety is the spice of life

It's good to try different things and get to know different people. Just like food would be bland without any spices or herbs to add flavor, life would be dull if we did all the same things and saw the same people over and over.

63) Business is business

In business transactions there is no place for courtesies, compliments, or consideration of personal feelings. For instance, when one company was faced with a budget problem, they were forced to lay off several employees. Similarly when your wife recommends a friend to work in your company, you tell her that she needs to follow the proper application process.

64) The best things in life are free

The pleasures of nature, spirituality, emotions, and good relationships can be better than anything you could buy. Sunshine, awe, friendship, love, and more cannot be commodified. This is similar to the sayings "Money can't buy happiness" and "Money can't buy love."

65) Prevention is better than cure

It is better and easier to stop a problem from happening or a disease from developing than have to fix or treat it later on. Fixing a problem is always harder and more costly than preventing the issue in the first place. For example, the best way to avoid a hangover is not to drink alcohol to excess.

66) Tomorrow never comes

Don't procrastinate, since you are unlikely to ever actually finish something as soon as you have decided to do it "tomorrow." "Tomorrow," in an existential sense, does not really exist anyway; as soon as the next day comes, it is no longer "tomorrow," but "today."

67) There is always hope

Don't give up because there is always a way. If you have failed to win a role for a part in a TV show or play after many auditions, keep trying until you do. Without hope we would not have the energy or the strength to pursue our goals and work hard toward achieving them.

68) Money is the root of all evil

Many wicked deeds are ultimately about greed for money. This is part of a passage in the Bible, Timothy 6:8, which states, "The love of money is the root of all evil." The original makes it clearer that it is not money itself, but the way people desire money that inspires unethical conduct.

69) Out of sight, out of mind

If something or someone is not directly and regularly visible to you, you will stop thinking about it. This is often used to describe situations where people ignore problems that they should not be ignoring. For example, if you need to repair something, you should keep it out in the open. If it goes into a drawer where you won't see it often, you will forget and never repair it. The proverb is also used to describe people who seem to be forgotten by their friends when they go away for a while.

70) Times change

Culture and customs and social expectations change. For example, in many Western countries it is now common for couples to live together without being married. "Times change" is a statement you will often hear from an older person remarking on the difference they observe in the world now and the world when they were younger.

71) Power corrupts

When people get authority and influence with less accountability, they tend to use that influence in their own interests. Even ethical people will be tempted to use power for personal gain instead of thinking only of the greater good. The British historian Lord Acton described this by saying, "All power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely."

72) Easy does it

Proceed carefully. Be careful not to apply too much force in a situation. For example, a father teaching his son to drive might have to explain that in some situations, finesse is more important than power.

73) Money can't buy happiness

There are limits to what wealth can do for you. We may believe that luxuries and comforts that come with money can make us happy, but happiness itself is not something that we can buy from others. For example, we cannot buy love, friendship, physical health, or emotional stability. This saying is a reminder to prioritize the things that do make us happy.

74) United we stand; divided we fall

The only hope for an important venture to succeed is for everyone who is part of it to support each other and remain committed. For example, a group of people who are hoping to bring about a change in their nation or community must work together and make use of each other's talents and resources; otherwise, they will inevitably be overwhelmed and defeated by an oppositional force.

75) Diamond cut diamond

Diamonds are such a strong substance that they can only be cut by other diamonds. Thus, this proverb describes a situation in which two adversaries who share similar levels of strength or wit inflict equal harm on one another.

76) Divide and rule

This tactic was employed by imperial powers in their control over various subordinate countries. Essentially, it means creating dissent or conflict among the different socioeconomic groups of a nation so that they will not band together to overthrow the imposing government.

77) Money is power

Wealthy people have influence. With money, you can pay others to do work for you, you can get publicity to spread your ideology, and you can gain access to decision makers and put pressure on them.

78) One size does not fit all

People are unique and need unique solutions for their problems. "One size fits all" is a common term used on clothing labels for garments that are supposed to fit a wide variety of people. Those types of garments usually don't fit anyone well and will fail to fit some people at all. In life, it is more common to need options that accommodate different circumstances.

79) No news is good news

If you haven't heard any updates, things are probably going well. People are often eager to share bad news, so if you have not heard anything, the news is probably good. For example, if you go to a doctor to have tests done, they will probably call you quickly if the tests show something concerning. If you don't hear from them for several weeks, there is probably nothing to worry about.

80) Necessity is the mother of invention

People are forced to come up with clever solutions when they are faced with an imperative need or difficult problem. Unless you have a demand for something, there is no driving reason to create anything new. This has been associated with Plato, but the saying was already in use in English when Benjamin Jowett included this phrase in his 1861 translation of Plato's *Republic*.

81) Care killed the cat

Worrying can be just as dangerous as recklessness. When her son first went away to college, one mother spent many sleepless nights wondering if he would be okay so far from home. In reality, her worry only harmed herself, while her son was having fun with his new friends. If stress and worry can kill a cat, which has nine lives, they are sure to harm you as well.

82) All's well that ends well

Though an endeavor may be fraught with mistakes and mishaps, it is the ending that really counts. As long as one finishes strong, everything will be reconciled. For instance, after an entire year of failing tests and skipping classes, one student somehow aced his final exam, thereby passing the course. This final success made up for the errors that had come before.

83) Nothing is forever

Appreciate what exists now, even if it is temporary. We may tend to place less value on temporary things. This proverb reminds us that nothing is permanent because everything naturally comes to an end, and that in itself is part of what makes life precious. Time with our loved ones is important because the people we love will not always be with us. By the same token, we can accept life's painful moments because they too will pass.

84) Easy come, easy go

Whatever is gained without much effort can be just as easily lost. When a man won \$50,000 in the lottery, his friends knew it wouldn't last long due to his penchant for luxury experiences. After only three months, he had spent the entire sum with not much to show for it.

85) Unity is strength

People are stronger in groups than on their own. One person can make a difference by standing up for something important (Rosa Parks is one such famous example), but long-term changes and progress happen when multiple people support each other in an endeavor. This is identical in meaning to the phrase "Union is strength."

86) All that glitters is not gold

Don't be fooled by an attractive appearance; sometimes it is not a reflection of an object's true nature. A man finally bought the fancy sports car he had been wanting for years, but when he realized how much he had to pay to maintain such a vehicle, he started to have regrets. Though the sentiment dates back farther, this version is widely attributed to William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

87) Beauty is only skin deep

Just because a person is beautiful on the outside does not mean their personality matches. A comfort to anyone who isn't a supermodel, this proverb reminds us that true inner beauty transcends physical appearance. It is attributed to Sir Thomas Overbury who wrote in his 1613 poem "The Wife": "All the carnall beauty of my wife is but skin deep."

88) If it ain't broke, don't fix it

If an old machine is still working reasonably well, there is no need to fix or change it. For instance, a man's car had started to rust and make strange noises, but he reasoned that as long as it was still running okay, there was no reason to take it to the repair shop.

89) Curiosity killed the cat

Some things are better left unexplored. An overly curious person may wind up in a situation they regret. For example, while looking through his girlfriend's text messages, a man discovered she had been keeping a secret from him. The proverb refers to the cat's inquisitive nature that sometimes lands it in precarious positions.

90) Give credit where credit is due

Don't take credit for another person's work. When a woman was complimented on the exquisite meal at her dinner party, she had to inform her guests that it was actually her husband who had done all the cooking.

91) Cleanliness is next to godliness

Physical cleanliness goes hand in hand with spiritual well-being. This proverb, first recorded by the English cleric John Wesley, places great importance on the treatment of one's body. The sentiment is shadowed by the popular biblical idea that the body is a temple of God, so one should treat it with the respect it deserves.

92) Fight fire with fire

A person may be justified to retaliate with the same force with which they were attacked. When a woman discovered that a colleague had started a nasty rumor about her, she responded by spreading some gossip about the colleague herself. The proverb refers to an actual fire-fighting technique used mainly in forestry in which people would create controlled fires around the perimeter of an area in order to contain the fire within.

93) The pen is mightier than the sword

Words and ideas are more powerful than weapons. A weapon may be used to fight a war, but the war itself is inspired in the first place by a word in a speech or a book. Likewise, conflicts can be resolved through persuasion, discussion, and negotiation.

94) An apple a day keeps the doctor away

Eating an apple every day keeps the body in good health. Whether or not this medical advice is true has been widely disputed ever since it was popularized in late nineteenth-century Wales. To this day, a green apple is viewed as a symbol for healthy eating and maintaining good weight. The original wording was, "Eat an apple on going to bed, and you'll keep the doctor from earning his bread."

95) Nothing for nothing

Everything has a cost. Even things that appear to be free may end up with hidden costs. For example, if you are given a piece of furniture, you may have to put time and money into moving and repairing it. If you are given a free ride to the airport, you may have to listen to your driver's personal stories.

96) Waste not, want not

Use your money and resources wisely and discreetly. If you don't waste a resource, you will have it when you need it. "Waste not, want not," your mom tells you when she sees you putting too much cocoa powder in the brownie batter. "You only need half a cup, and we may need cocoa powder to make something else later on."

97) Slow and steady wins the race

Being moderate, consistent, and persistent in your efforts enables you to make better use of energy than focusing on speed alone. This proverb is the moral of "The Tortoise and the Hare," a fable from the ancient Greek storyteller Aesop. In that story, the speedy hare mocked the slow tortoise and challenged him to a race. The overly confident hare ran out of sight and lay down to take a nap. The tortoise stayed focused on his goal and slowly completed the race ahead of the hare, despite being slower.

98) Great minds think alike

This proverb is used humorously when two people get the same idea or reach the same conclusion at the same time. For example, after two friends finished dinner, one suggested they go out for ice cream, while the other replied that he was thinking the exact same thing. In British English, the proverb includes a second line: "Fools seldom differ."

99) **A stitch in time saves nine**

It's easier to solve a problem at an early stage than wait until it becomes bigger later on. The proverb literally refers to sewing. For instance, if a small hole is discovered in a sweater, it's better to fix it immediately instead of waiting for it to become larger and need much more stitches.

100) **Let your dreams come true**

Good things will happen if you allow them to happen. The word "let" implies that your dreams will come true and your desires will come to be, but you are somehow preventing them when you lack self-confidence and waste opportunities.

101) **See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil**

Do not pay attention to bad behavior or say bad words. In modern English this refers to the notion of passively neglecting improper conduct, but the original meaning was to not dwell on negative attitudes. In Nikko, Japan, the seventeenth-century mausoleum of Tokugawa Ieyasu at the Toshogu Shrine features three wise monkeys demonstrating this proverb: Mizaru covering his eyes, Kikizaru covering his ears, and Iwazaru covering his mouth.

102) **Misery loves company**

People who are depressed enjoy it when others feel the same way. It can refer to people who want to make others feel bad when they do, like a person in an unhappy marriage who takes it out on employees. It can also refer to the way people can enjoy commiserating about the negative experiences they share—for example, coworkers getting together after work to complain about their boss.

103) **It takes two to tango**

Two people doing something together share the responsibility equally. If the thing they are doing is questionable or unsuccessful, both are at fault. The tango is a famous, intimate style of partner dancing that originated in Argentina. In order for the couple to dance well, both individuals must be closely in sync with each other's movements.

104) **Crocodile tears**

This term has long been used to refer to superficial sympathy or sadness. It comes from an ancient belief that crocodiles shed tears while feasting on their prey, thus fostering irony as the crocodile is generally viewed as such a ferocious, compassionless animal.

105) **Old habits die hard**

When we do activities regularly, they become ingrained and can be difficult to change. For example, if you serve in the military, you may find it hard to readjust to civilian life. The military trains members to act and speak in certain ways that are effective in military life, but not well suited to civilian family and work environments. Saying that those habits "die hard" means that it is hard to "kill" them or stop doing them.

106) **Freedom is not free**

Freedom is not a given; it often must be fought for with a lot of sacrifices. For instance, if the oppressed people of a nation want to overthrow their government, they sometimes must do so by force. This proverb of American origin is often used in support of a country's military forces.

107) **Noblesse oblige**

Those with money or influence are socially obligated to share some of their fortune with others in their community. The French term literally translates as “nobility obliges,” though in English the meaning has extended to include anyone wealthy or famous.

108) **Do as you would be done by**

Treat others the way you yourself would want to be treated. For example, don't insult someone's taste in music or food unless you are prepared to be insulted in return. As a universal law of ethics, this proverb has long been known in many cultures as the “Golden Rule.” Another version of the proverb is “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

109) **Look before you leap**

Take your time to consider options before making a big decision. This is a warning not to be hasty about taking an offer or making a choice that could include a big risk or a major change. For example, if you are offered a well-paying job in another country, you might be tempted to say yes right away. You should probably learn more about the details and take your time to think about it first.

110) **Birds of a feather flock together**

People tend to associate with like-minded people. Those who share similar interests and backgrounds feel most comfortable around each other. This proverb, first appearing in the sixteenth century, refers to the fact that birds of the same species typically fly together.

111) **Last in, first out**

This refers to a policy in accounting where the most recently added inventory are sold first. This philosophy is also applied to employment if the most recently hired staff are the first people to lose their jobs when there is a layoff.

112) **A friend in need is a friend indeed**

A true friend reveals himself when he is needed the most. Although some friends are available only during prosperous times, a true friend will be there even in times of trouble. Although they hadn't spoken in months, a man knew he could call on his old friend when he started having relationship problems. This sentiment is ancient, appearing in Euripides' *Hecuba* (424 BCE).

113) **Monkey see, monkey do**

Someone can copy an action without understanding it. The idea is that a monkey may be able to mimic a human action, but they don't have the same intellect. This saying is frequently used to describe how children repeat things they see or hear from adults.

114) **Spare the rod, and spoil the child**

A child needs discipline and limits. A parent who avoids punishing their child risks raising a spoiled child that knows no boundaries and respects no laws. In the King James version of the Bible, this proverb is phrased as “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes,” which means that a father who avoids punishing his son with a stick is being a bad father, but a good father will chasten, or discipline, his son sometimes.

115) **Justice delayed is justice denied**

Delay in correcting a wrong action or situation is another injustice by itself. In many democratic countries, a person who is accused has a right to a fair and speedy trial. If they prove to be innocent but are subject to a lengthy, grueling process in the meantime, it is as unfair as if that person were actually being punished.

116) **Every picture tells a story**

One can glean a lot of information simply by observing a picture or a scene. For instance, a father came home from work, and his daughter and wife met him with a look of sorrow. When he noticed their beloved dog was nowhere to be seen, he knew immediately that something terrible had happened to him.

117) **Deeds, not words**

One should act instead of making empty promises. For instance, one mother grew tired of hearing her son talk about cleaning his room, as he never seemed to actually follow through on his words. This proverb is another close analogue of “Actions speak louder than words.”

118) **Practice what you preach**

When you advise others how to behave, make sure that you are not behaving differently yourself. This proverb warns people not to be hypocrites. For example, parents who tell their children not to speak foul language should not be caught using bad words themselves.

119) **The end justifies the means**

This saying expresses the view that sometimes you have to do something unpleasant or even questionable for the greater good. Perhaps you have to cancel a plan with a good friend, even though you had promised them long in advance and you know it will hurt their feelings, because you realize you need more time to do a crucial homework assignment. Many people who do things that are ethically or otherwise controversial cite this saying as their rationale.

120) **Two heads are better than one**

It's helpful to have the advice and insight of a second person. Different opinions bring different perspectives that help shed better light on an issue. When you are trying to puzzle out a difficult scenario, your friend may offer help to you, saying, “Two heads are better than one.”

121) **Put up or shut up**

Either take action on what you've been talking about, or stop talking. This is used when someone has been talking in detail about a goal they want to achieve but has not made any progress toward it. For example, this would apply to someone who talks nonstop about becoming a pilot but never even signs up for flying lessons.

122) **Love me, love my dog**

If you truly love someone, you will be willing to accept all aspects of their lives. Someone may have quirks or faults, but love means understanding that those traits are just part of what makes that person a unique individual.

123) **Where there's a will, there's a way**

As long as you have the desire, determination, and willpower to achieve something, there is a way for you to achieve it (though it may be a long, hard road). “I can’t believe you are working a full-time job *and* trying to pass the bar this year!” your friend tells you. To which you can reply, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way!”

124) [No pain, no gain](#)

Great reward comes in return for hard, painful work. This phrase is often used when discussing exercise or physical training. In order to become stronger, you have to endure some discomfort. This can apply to other situations too. For example, if you want to become a doctor, you will have to get through medical school, which may be a difficult experience. Another variant of this proverb is “No gain without pain.”

125) [The course of true love never did run smooth](#)

There will always be problems in relationships, including the best of relationships. The longer you are with someone, after all, the more likely you are to experience ups and downs together. A problem or even an argument is not necessarily a sign that you and your significant other are wrong for each other.

126) [Cherchez la femme](#)

A woman, in many cases, is the root cause of mysterious problems. For example, when a man was arrested for the murder of his colleague, the police discovered that his primary motive was jealousy with regard to a girl. The English translation of this French proverb is, “Look for the woman.”

127) [What doesn't kill you makes you stronger](#)

Painful experiences, physical or otherwise, are good for your personal growth. “I’m not looking forward to boot camp,” you tell your uncle, who is a former military man. “Suck it up,” he replies. “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” Difficulties, hardships, and even traumatic events can lead to enhanced personal development.

128) [A little learning is a dangerous thing](#)

In the pursuit of knowledge, it is sometimes easy to feel like an expert, even at the elementary level. It might not be wise to take medical advice from someone who has only completed one year of medical school. The proverb is attributed to Alexander Pope, appearing in his *An Essay on Criticism* (1709). There, the full line is, “A little learning is a dangerous thing; drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.” The saying is a caution to those looking for a shortcut to mastery.

129) [Put your money where your mouth is](#)

If you have a cause that is close to your heart and which you frequently talk about, you should be willing to designate money and effort to actively support your cause. For example, if a man is a nationalist and talks about the importance of the nation’s military, he should be willing to serve in the military himself or support the military financially.

130) [Well begun is half-done](#)

Doing a good, careful job at the start of a project makes it much easier to finish the rest of the project successfully. For example, setting up a tent can be a bit ponderous; when you take the time to fit the poles into the slots the correct way, however, it becomes much faster to set the rest of the tent up, and you are much less likely to need to undo anything and start over.

131) **Brevity is the soul of wit**

A truly wise person can say a lot with very few words. It takes great intellect and sharpness of mind to know precisely what to say and when to say it. During a job interview, one applicant was praised for his short but accurate responses, while another was passed over due to his long-winded, insubstantial answers. This phrase was coined by Shakespeare in his *Hamlet*.

132) **All good things come to an end**

Enjoy an experience while it lasts; eventually it will come to pass. One family enjoyed an incredible vacation traveling through Europe one winter, but even the best times only last so long. In the end, it was back to work for the parents and back to school for the children.

133) **All roads lead to Rome**

There are many routes one can take to reach a destination. Though the proverb is often employed to refer to literal roads, it can also take on a figurative meaning. For instance, there are many different methods available to achieve a desired goal. Originally, the saying was a comment on the city of ancient Rome, with its relatively large number of roads for that period.

134) **Every little helps**

Even the smallest contribution is helpful in completing a task. A woman was planning a huge dinner for her husband's fortieth birthday, and with so much to do, she enlisted her youngest daughter to help peel potatoes. Though this was a small task, it was still imperative in terms of the dinner's success.

135) **Call a spade a spade**

Don't be vague when it comes to describing the reality of a situation. One man was hesitant to accuse his own brother of stealing from him, even though there was undeniable evidence of the fact. In the end, he realized he had to "call a spade a spade" and confront his brother.

136) **Truth is stranger than fiction**

Life is full of strange events that even the most creative of artists and writers can't conceive. You may be watching a documentary about a group of animals of different species interacting and behaving in surprising ways, at which point you might think to yourself, "Truth is stranger than fiction."

137) **The customer is always right**

This is a customer-service philosophy that gives high priority to customer satisfaction as it maintains the customer's loyalty and the business's reputation. For example, if a customer wants to return a used item without a receipt and claims that the cashier did not give him a receipt when he bought it, the store's manager might know that the customer is wrong, but they will still accept the customer's story and process the return in order to make the customer happy.

138) **Haste makes waste**

If you rush through a task, you are bound to make careless mistakes that will only create further delay. A college student waited until the last minute to write an essay for class, and as a result, the paper was riddled with punctuation and spelling errors. When their teacher made them fix and resubmit the essay, they realized they should have been more diligent in the first place.

139) **Nothing new under the sun**

Anything you can imagine has already been done. This saying comes from Ecclesiastes 11:13 in the Bible, though it is often used in a modern context to say that many current incidents are similar to past events. For example, crimes, revolutions, and wars seem to repeat themselves in the history of human communities.

140) **Think globally, act locally**

When making a change or decision that could help the world, start in your own community. For example, a person who is concerned about ocean pollution could start by raising awareness in their own town and starting a monthly beach cleanup, which can turn into an international movement. All things that happen on a large scale start within a single group, among a few individuals.

141) **What goes up must come down**

Even good things can't last forever. This can apply to both personal and practical matters. A bull market will eventually become a bear market. A string of personal successes will eventually be interrupted by a loss of some kind or another. The proverb comes from the law of gravity. When you throw something in the air, no matter how high it goes, it will eventually come back down.

142) **No cure, no pay**

Compensation is not guaranteed if the work is not performed to satisfaction. It comes from the example that a doctor who does not cure a disease does not deserve payment. This phrase can be extended to all kinds of work.

143) **Share and share alike**

This refers to equally dividing materials between among people. They all share with each other, and they will all get an equal share, or portion, of the prize. For example, a group of friends could have an agreement that if any one of them wins the lottery, they will all split the winnings.

144) **One good turn deserves another**

Gifts and acts of kindness should be reciprocated in kind. A "good turn" in this case refers to a favor or good deed. For example, if a casual acquaintance invites you to his birthday party, you will feel obliged to do the same.

145) **Blood is thicker than water**

The bond forged by family is stronger than any other relationship. In other words, family always comes first. Though two siblings may argue to no end, they will still help each other when it matters most. For instance, though they never quite got along, one brother came to his sister's rescue when she was evicted from her apartment, inviting her to stay with him until she got back on her feet.

146) **Charity begins at home**

One's biggest responsibility is to their own family. If a father spends his days volunteering as a coach for the town soccer league but neglects his own children at home, then his set of priorities is not right.

147) **Leave well enough alone**

It is not always helpful to try to solve a problem if there is no pressing need to fix it. For example, if an old piece of machinery works but makes a constant buzz, you might break the equipment by trying to

fix the buzz. This can also relate to the idea of minding one's own business. For example, if two people are arguing, you may find it's best not to intervene. Your involvement could escalate the situation and make things worse.

148) Clothes make the man

One's attire is a sign of their success in life (or lack thereof). For instance, a man dressed in a three-piece suit would likely be assumed to be wealthy and generally prosperous, while a man with holes in his clothes is more likely to be a vagrant. This proverb pairs nicely with the advice to "dress to impress."

149) You can't please everyone

Trying to make everyone happy only results in compromising everything, so that no one is happy. For example, a filmmaker who tries to address a controversial issue by taking a middle-ground position will alienate many, if not most people, since people by nature tend to be biased and emotional toward one side or another.

150) Man is the measure of all things

Everything in the world is up to human interpretation. The only standard any of us really has is our own judgment. Even when things can be measured empirically, we all experience them differently depending on our own perception, interests, and preferences. This saying is attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras.

151) Third time lucky

After failing the first two times at a game or an exam, you can hope to succeed the third time. If you try twice to make a goal in basketball but fail, your friend may encourage you to try again by saying, "Third time lucky!" This proverb is very similar in meaning to "Third time's a charm."

152) Money isn't everything

Many things are more important than money. Money cannot buy loving relationships, physical health, or emotional well-being. Those experiences and feelings should be higher priorities in our lives than the pursuit of money.

153) There is a time and place for everything

Certain actions and behaviors are appropriate sometimes and inappropriate at other times. It is a wonderful thing to laugh and act silly at a festive party, but it would be incredibly disrespectful to do so at a funeral. Be sensitive to the situation you are in when it comes to your words and actions.

154) Revenge is sweet

This proverb expresses the idea that, for some people, it feels satisfying to retaliate when someone has harmed them. This is a phrase that someone might say after they have caused pain to someone who caused them pain in the past. For example, you may feel happy when you make fun of someone who previously made fun of you.

155) Garbage in, garbage out

The use of poor-quality materials will not make for a worthy product. For example, if one builds a chair using rotting wood, it will not last very long before it falls apart. This proverb is often used in computer

science and other logic-based fields; essentially it implies that meaningless data will produce equally meaningless results.

156) [The first step is the hardest](#)

The most difficult part of any process is the starting point. Going to the gym can be an arduous task, for example. But once you put on your gym clothes and drive there, you realize it's much easier to follow through with your workout. Whenever you are faced with a tough task, remember that things often get easier after the first step.

157) [Rules are made to be broken](#)

This proverb is used as a humorous way to say that it is acceptable to break a rule. On a more serious note, most innovations in art and music come from artists who were willing to break established rules about how to use colors and instruments.

158) [Speech is silver; silence is golden](#)

It is good to speak, but better to be silent. It is valuable to listen to others and sometimes better not to say anything yourself. This proverb relates to another saying, "Silence is golden," which is less specifically about speech but could be used to express appreciation for a calm day in nature, or to wryly comment on the departure of a loud person.

159) [Seek, and ye shall find](#)

If you actively look for something, you will eventually find it. For example, a job will not come your way, but you have to search for work opportunities, fill in application forms, and attend interviews. This proverb is part of a quote from Matthew in the Bible, which claims Christians can have anything they look for or ask for. This is reversed in the similar saying "Nothing seek, nothing find."

160) [Every cloud has a silver lining](#)

Even the most troubling situations can lead one to something positive. When a woman was fired from her job, she was devastated at first. But she eventually realized this was just the motivation she needed to change careers and focus more on her jewelry-making side business. The saying likely originates from the fact that when the sun shines behind a dark cloud, the cloud is outlined in bright light.

161) [Different strokes for different folks](#)

Different people prefer different things. Everyone is entitled to their own taste. Thus, some people like rock music while others prefer to listen to classical, and some people enjoy working with computers while others would rather spend their time interacting with people.

162) [Nothing ventured, nothing gained](#)

If you are not willing to take a risk, you will not get what you want. Sometimes being afraid of change, or uncertainty, or embarrassment, keeps us from even trying to get the things we want. For example, you may want to work as an actor, but if you're unwilling to audition, you will never even have the opportunity.

163) [What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas](#)

Any scandalous activities that occur while traveling abroad, especially to a notorious destination, should be kept confidential. Las Vegas, Nevada, is often known as "Sin City" and is well-known for having

casinos and lots of other adult-only activities. This is a phrase you and your friend may use with each other when you have a shared experience and don't want anyone else to know.

164) **The voice of the people is the voice of God**

Whatever outcome the majority of people in a nation or community desire is the one that is most likely to happen. If most people prefer one type of governance or a certain code of behavior, this popular preference will be the most dominant. This sort of belief supports a more democratic type of government, where the many rather than the few have the power to voice an opinion.

165) **Let sleeping dogs lie**

It is better not to bring up issues that would disturb the peace. For example, if two siblings take DNA tests and find out that they are not biologically related, it might be better to "let sleeping dogs lie" instead of upsetting the family.

166) **No harm, no foul**

A mistake will be forgiven if no damage was done. For example, someone could knock an expensive piece of art off your wall and expect to be in trouble. If you see that the artwork is undamaged, you might use this phrase to reassure the person that everything is fine. "Foul" in this situation refers to a rule-breaking offense in sports; in a football game, a referee might not call a foul if another player was not harmed.

167) **There is no time like the present**

The best time to start something is right now. There's no good reason to procrastinate doing something, if it's really worthwhile—for example, making a plan for getting out of debt or enrolling in a course that will help you find a job.

168) **Do as I say, not as I do**

This proverb comes from the idea that people often do not practice what they preach. Thus, parents often call upon this proverb when giving advice to their children, even though they don't follow it themselves—for example, if a teenage girl catches her mother smoking a cigarette.

169) **Something is better than nothing**

Appreciate what you have, even if it falls short of what you want. We can get so focused on what we desire that we fail to recognize and be thankful for what we get. For example, if you go to the store late at night for bread and they don't have the bread you want, you can get another kind of bread and be glad that you at least have something to eat.

170) **No good deed goes unpunished**

Attempts to help others can end up getting you into trouble. For example, if you worry that your grandparents are lonely, you may want to visit them and take them to dinner. Even though you are trying to do something nice for them, they may complain about the food.

171) **Never is a long time**

You are saying you will "never" do something, but you may actually change your mind. This is a way to suggest to someone that they should consider the possibility of doing something, even if it seems right now like they would never do it.

172) **Blood will tell**

One will likely follow in the footsteps of his ancestors. This proverb is generally used to refer to family characteristics in a negative light. For instance, when a teenager was arrested for vandalism, people in the town were not surprised as his father was also known to break the law in his youth. They thought that things like this just run in the family.

173) **You can have too much of a good thing**

Just because something is good and enjoyable doesn't mean you should have it in unlimited quantities. A piece of chocolate may taste delicious, but the whole box would make you sick. A vacation for a week is very enjoyable, but a vacation of multiple months may leave you bored and longing for home. It's important to keep things in perspective when you find yourself strongly valuing or wanting something.

174) **Another day, another dollar**

This proverb points to the often monotonous day-to-day routine that many people find themselves trapped in just to make a living. Often spoken with a somewhat resigned tone, the proverb reminds us that although work may be unexciting, it is nevertheless necessary in order to make money. The saying is especially used when referring to a low-paying job.

175) **Might is right**

People in power determine what is good or bad in society. This is similar to the concept that "history is written by the victors," suggesting that the people who dominate others set the guidelines for morality. While this phrase can be used to describe a society that is not fair, it has also been used in earnest to voice social Darwinism, which proposes that the strongest people are also the best. In 1860, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln hoped for the opposite: "Let us have faith that right makes might."

176) **Once bitten, twice shy**

A painful experience will make us overcautious. For example, a little girl who hurts herself riding a bike may become overly careful about bicycle safety in the future. Or someone who is stood up for a date may decide it is not worth it to schedule a date with the same person again.

177) **It pays to advertise**

Something that is good or worthy won't get noticed automatically. In business, advertising is a critical way of letting buyers and consumers know about a new product or service. No matter how good the product or service is, it will never become successful if people don't know about it.

178) **Let bygones be bygones**

This is used as a reminder or warning to avoid mentioning past disagreements and not let them spoil current relationships. "Bygone" means "gone by," as in something from the past. If siblings fought bitterly as children, they may decide as adults to let bygones be bygones and start to have more cordial relationships.

179) **There is nothing new under the sun**

Human nature and behavior does not change, no matter what age you live in. If you are reading a history book and come across a story about a person who makes a bad choice very similar to a friend of yours, you might think to yourself, "There is nothing new under the sun." This proverb usually has a negative connotation.

180) [Hobson's choice](#)

Some choices are such that one can take what is offered or take nothing at all. When a man was offered a job, he tried to negotiate the salary, but the company told him he could “take it or leave it,” (to quote a sister expression). This proverb gets its name from Thomas Hobson, a livery stable owner of sixteenth-century England. He was known to offer his customers the horse nearest to the door or none at all.

181) [You win some; you lose some](#)

You can't succeed at everything you try. The stocks you buy won't always be successful, although some will. You may persuade some people to follow your ideas but not others. Life is full of give and take.

182) [Procrastination is the thief of time](#)

When we put off tasks, we are wasting our time with less significant matters. This proverb is a warning not to procrastinate because we rarely make good use of time when we are delaying important tasks. If we complete those tasks right away, we will be more productive as we will have more time for other activities.

183) [Take the bull by the horns](#)

Challenging problems need to be faced directly, decisively, and bravely. For example, instead of complaining for too long about how much you are paid at your job, you could set a meeting with your manager and present the case for why you are worth a higher salary.

184) [A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step](#)

Don't be overwhelmed at the start of a long, arduous endeavor. A student just beginning his PhD may be shaken by the amount of work before him, but he would do well to remember this proverb of ancient Chinese origin, first appearing in the *Tao Te Ching*. This sentiment is echoed in the sister proverb, “Rome wasn't built in a day.”

185) [If you believe, you can achieve](#)

Anyone can be successful if one only believes in oneself. One man decided to devote himself to training for an upcoming marathon. Although he faced moments of doubt in his journey, he persevered and was able to finish the race. Physical ability is one thing, but mental dedication is just as important in accomplishing a goal.

186) [Crime doesn't pay](#)

Committing a crime may give the criminal short-term wealth or relief, but eventually, he will have to suffer serious consequences, and the harm will be greater than the benefit. For instance, a drug dealer may make millions, but at the expense of living a dangerous lifestyle and becoming isolated from respectable society, not to mention the risk of going to prison.

187) [It takes one to know one](#)

A person who has a certain flaw most easily recognizes that flaw in others. This proverb is a classic retort that many people use when they feel insulted. If someone tells you, for example, “You're a bad driver,” you can reply, “Well, it takes one to know one!” A similar proverb is “The pot calls the kettle black.”

188) [Everything has an end](#)

Even the most joyous experiences must come to an end. For instance, no matter how fun and relaxing a vacation was, the time will eventually come when one must return to the regular, boring routine of work or school.

189) [A thing of beauty is a joy forever](#)

True beauty is everlasting; the memory of a beautiful experience rests eternally in the mind. Anyone who has witnessed a breathtaking sunset will understand the essence of this proverb. This proverb is attributed to the English Romantic poet John Keats.

190) [Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery](#)

It's a compliment when someone copies or imitates something you do or say. Even though it may seem annoying or even unfair, people usually copy others not out of negative intent, but because they admire the other person's achievement so much that they wish to recreate it themselves. The next time your child complains that her friend is copying her drawings or ideas you can tell them, "Take it as a compliment. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery!"

191) [Still waters run deep](#)

Someone who appears calm and quiet from the outside could actually be more complex and thoughtful than we might think. It can be easy to fail to notice people who are quiet though they can have great talents and skills. This proverb points out that people who are calm and placid may have a lot going on in their minds, the same way that a body of water that looks smooth could be surprisingly deep.

192) [Walls have ears](#)

Don't talk too loudly or indiscreetly about sensitive matters, even if you can't see anyone else nearby. People are always passing through and sometimes even eavesdropping. If you want to talk about something supremely confidential, make sure you are in a place where it is impossible for others to overhear you.

193) [Love makes the world go round](#)

Love, kindness, and positive interactions are so powerful that they drive the course of action for many people. This is a reminder to prioritize love, or kind and generous behavior, ahead of anything else in your life.

194) [Many hands make light work](#)

A difficult task is easier with the help of others. For example, preparing hundreds of letters for the mail would be a big task for one person, but if a group of people split up the task, it wouldn't be too difficult for any of them. This saying also implies that when a group comes together to do a task, the company will make the task more pleasant, even if it still takes hard work.

195) [Absence makes the heart grow fonder](#)

Having to spend time away from the one you care about creates a deeper longing for that person. This is possibly because people are more likely to remember positive qualities about an absent person than negative ones.

196) [All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy](#)

One should balance work and leisure, lest he become bored with life and boring to others. When one man got a promotion at work, the extra hours took away from his personal life. As a result, even his friends lost interest in seeing him when he was free; he had become a shell of his former fun, carefree self.

197) [God helps those who help themselves](#)

Those who are ambitious in life and take the initiative will be rewarded for their efforts. For example, even though she came from a poor family, one woman managed to pay her own way through college by working two jobs while taking classes. Though she spent many sleepless nights, it was all worth it when she received her diploma. The proverb is often attributed to Benjamin Franklin, but it was recorded earlier in English by Algernon Sidney, a seventeenth-century English politician.

198) [Measure twice, cut once](#)

Plan carefully to avoid wasteful mistakes. This saying is used across many industries as a warning to double-check before starting to cut material. Whether you are trimming boards for a fence or cutting pattern pieces for a dress, you should plan cuts carefully because you will waste time and material if you cut something incorrectly. Another variant of this proverb is “Measure seven times, cut once.”

199) [Ask and it shall be given](#)

If you want something, you must make the effort to get it. One must be determined and direct in seeking what they desire. For instance, if you are looking for a new job, you must go out and find the opportunities instead of waiting for them to be handed to you. This proverb has its origins in Matthew 7:7 in the Bible.

200) [Learn to live, and live to learn](#)

This is a variant of “live and learn,” which poses a philosophical challenge. The first part encourages you to focus on living your life to the fullest, and the second part says to make the pursuit of knowledge your life’s mission. The combination encourages us to balance enjoying life and developing ourselves.

201) [Revenge is a dish best served cold](#)

This proverb expresses the notion that, for some people, it is more satisfying to retaliate for a wrongdoing a long time after an offense than immediately after it happens. For example, if a business rival steals a client of yours, you could say bad things to the client so that your rival loses the contract. Or, following this proverb’s advice, you could spend the next few years focused on building your business so that you can buy out your rival’s company and fire them.

202) [Do one thing at a time](#)

Pace yourself; if you attempt to do too many things at once, you may not finish anything at all, so give every task the attention it deserves. For example, when a high school student began applying to colleges, he didn’t think he could possibly finish them all before the deadline. This proverb serves as reassurance to anyone overwhelmed by a long to-do list.

203) [Fake it until you make it](#)

One who imitates a desired quality with confidence will eventually realize that quality. For instance, when a man was hired into a job position for which he was unqualified, he did his best to “fake it” until his responsibilities became clearer to him.

204) [Be what you would seem to be](#)

Try to live up to people's expectations of you. This paradoxical proverb, found in the witty Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, is a suggestion (made slightly in jest) to simply act as others expect you to act.

205) [All men must die](#)

There is no escaping death. Alluding to the inevitability of death, this proverb is a warning to those feeling invincible after success in life. Even a woman who has lived a healthy, prosperous life must eventually confront the fact that she will die one day just like everyone else.

206) [Beggars can't be choosers](#)

A desperate man does not have the luxury to be picky; he should accept whatever he is given with gratitude. When his wife kicked him out of the house, a man was forced to go stay with a friend. Unfortunately, the only place to sleep was the hardwood floor. Still, the man reminded himself it could have been much worse; he might have had to sleep in his car.

207) [Better the devil you know](#)

Sometimes one must choose the lesser of two evils. For instance, if a woman dislikes her manager at work, she may still choose to stay with him when offered to switch departments. This is because her next manager could end up being even worse, so she would rather remain with what is familiar. The full form of the proverb is, "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't."

208) [A rose by any other name would smell as sweet](#)

The essence of a person or object is not found in its name, as the name is only a reference. Appearing in *Romeo and Juliet*, this Shakespearean proverb speaks to the dangers of passing judgment based simply on one's title. In the play, Juliet is forbidden to see Romeo because of his family's reputation, but she challenges this idea by questioning what a name truly means.

209) [When the going gets tough, the tough get going](#)

When a situation is difficult, people of strength and character will rise to the occasion. A situation where you can witness this is a recent disaster featured in the news; almost without exception there are stories of unusually brave, competent people who come to the forefront and help everyone else. Difficult times reveal the true character and strength of people.

210) [The early bird catches the worm](#)

The person who arrives early at an event has a better advantage to seize an opportunity than others who come late. The next time your friend asks you why you plan to wake up at six on a Saturday morning to go to garage sales looking for furniture you can reply, "The early bird catches the worm!" Being ready to take immediate action or get a head start on others leads to an increased chance of success.

211) [A place for everything, and everything in its place](#)

Things should always be kept in their designated places; a cluttered space means a cluttered mind. For instance, after months of working in a messy office, a man was satisfied when his desk was finally organized in just the right way; everything was precisely where it belonged.

212) [Out of the frying pan into the fire](#)

Sometimes, escaping a difficult situation only leads to a worse situation. This saying refers to a piece of food leaping out of a frying pan, only to end up burning in the cooking fire. For example, if you finish medical school, you may be relieved to be done with your degree, but you will find that starting a medical internship is even more stressful.

213) [The proof of the pudding is in the eating](#)

You can't know if something will be successful until you've tried it. For example, if a politician proposes a new law, even if it is based on research, they can't be sure the law will have the outcome they hope for until it actually goes into effect. In the same way, you can't know how good (or bad) the pudding you cooked is until you actually taste it.

214) [There's no such thing as a free lunch](#)

Nothing in life is given freely without some kind of cost. Even if you acquire something without paying for it, it is paid for indirectly, by you or by someone else. For example, the library where you enjoy checking out books may be free to use, but it is staffed by people who are paid with money from taxes that include your own, your parents', or your children's.

215) [Manners maketh man](#)

Good behavior is the defining feature of humanity and manhood. A man can acquire wealth, social influence, and prestige, but if he is haughty and insolent, he will be disliked. This quote is attributed to the medieval English bishop William of Wykeham, who founded New College at Oxford as well as the Winchester College preparatory school for boys.

216) [Forewarned is forearmed](#)

One who is well-informed will also be well-prepared. Before a big camping trip with his family, a man carefully checked the weather forecast. When he saw an 80 percent chance of thunderstorms, he made sure everyone packed their rain gear.

217) [Make hay while the sun shines](#)

Don't wait to take advantage of opportunities while they are available to you. Agricultural communities live by the weather, which is unpredictable. In order to make hay, you need to spread grain stalks in the sun to dry. If the sun is shining, farmers ought to start making hay instead of taking the risk that it might be raining later. In the same sense, we should take action promptly when conditions are favorable.

218) [No smoke without fire](#)

There is usually some truth behind a rumor or suspicion. For example, if someone suspects his wife is gambling and finds she has been making withdrawals from the bank, he could refer to this saying to claim that she must be gambling. This can be damaging, however, because sometimes the "smoke" is not real evidence. For example, the wife above could have been withdrawing money to support her aging mother or to buy her husband a gift.

219) [Que sera, sera](#)

Do not worry about things you cannot control. This French phrase literally translates as "what will be, will be." In situations where we do not know what will happen, or cannot change what will happen, we should accept life as it is. This phrase was popularized in English due to a 1956 song of the same title sung by Doris Day.

220) **In for a penny, in for a pound**

Once you take a risk or make an investment of some kind, it's best to go all the way to make it worthwhile. In older times, the punishment for stealing a penny was the same for stealing a pound (roughly equivalent to a dollar). Therefore, if a thief wants to steal, it makes sense for them to take the larger sum.

221) **Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me**

A person should know enough not to be tricked twice by the same person or the same trick. For instance, if a man realizes a restaurant purposely cheated him on his bill, he would have to be a fool to consider eating there again, no matter how delicious their food is.

222) **Money makes the world go round**

Money is what drives everything else in our lives. This saying implies that money is the most important element influencing all our interactions, which is a cynical counter to the saying, "Love makes the world go round."

223) **Union is strength**

Individuals can do more to accomplish their goals in a like-minded community than on their own. A person protesting on a certain social issue, for example, will be more effective when they have the support of others. A similar proverb is "There is strength in numbers."

224) **The truth will out**

You can't hide a serious matter forever. A person who is having an affair or is secretly cheating their boss may go undetected for a while, but eventually people will find out. Likewise, you may try to hide something about yourself, good or bad, but at some point people will realize or discover it.

225) **The family that prays together stays together**

A shared religious practice keeps family ties strong as they come together more often and engage in common activities. This saying was written in 1947 by American advertising executive Al Scalpone. It was popularized by Irish Roman Catholic priest Patrick Peyton as part of the Family Rosary Crusade, an evangelical Catholic campaign using mass media.

226) **Let the buyer beware**

Know what you are getting when you make a purchase without a guarantee. Someone who buys something is taking a risk that the item might be defective or not as valuable as it appears to be. This is a translation of the Latin legal phrase "*caveat emptor*."

227) **One man's trash is another man's treasure**

People value things for different reasons, so anything can be a prize to someone who will see a value in it. This phrase is used to encourage people to find new homes for their belongings rather than throwing them away. A collector or even just someone in need might be very happy to receive something that you do not want anymore.

228) **If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again**

Don't give up because something doesn't work out the first time you try it. Almost nothing important in life comes easily, so be prepared to put in a lot of effort. Thomas Edison is a famous example of this kind of persistence: he made 1,000 attempts before producing his first successful light bulb.

229) [Every dog has his day](#)

Everyone will eventually experience good fortune. One man spent years working on film production crews, but his true dream was to be a film director himself. His hope was to one day take the spotlight by meeting the right person. After all, he knew that "every dog has his day."

230) [If you can't beat 'em, join 'em](#)

It is sometimes necessary to surrender one's pride and conform to another person's or group's way of doing things. For instance, a man resisted joining Facebook for years due to his ideological beliefs, but he finally succumbed and created an account when he realized he was being left out of some social gatherings.

231) [Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned](#)

This proverb plays to the stereotype that women can be vengeful and nasty when angered. One woman was usually pleasant and mild-mannered, but her boyfriend saw a different side of her when he forgot her birthday one year. This proverb is found in the 1697 play *The Mourning Bride* by William Congreve, though it is often falsely attributed to Shakespeare.

232) [Strike while the iron is hot](#)

Take action quickly, while the opportunity is available and the conditions are favorable. Many opportunities in life are short-term, such as an offer to attend a school, or a chance to go on a date. Iron workers heat iron to red-hot so that it is soft enough to shape with tools like hammers. Once the metal starts to cool, it is no longer workable, so striking it with a hammer would have no effect.

233) [The love of money is the root of all evil](#)

All evils in this world can be traced back to money. People are naturally motivated by desire for power and possessions, and money is a crucial means to both of these things. The lesson here is not to be greedy or let the desire for material wealth control your life.

234) [Marriages are made in heaven](#)

Matrimony is an important, holy institution. This saying supports a traditional religious view of marriage as a sacred, unbreakable, and even fated bond. The saying sometimes continues, "and are maintained on Earth," as a reminder that it takes effort to keep a relationship healthy. Another meaning of the proverb is that we cannot foretell who will marry whom as, eventually, the divine power will decide the fate of relationships.

235) [Don't get mad, get even](#)

This spiteful proverb encourages one to seek revenge instead of wallowing in anger or self-pity. For instance, when a woman discovered her husband had cheated on her, she figured the only way to truly get even was to cheat on him as well. The proverb was popularized in a political context by Joseph P. Kennedy, father of John F. Kennedy.

236) [Moderation in all things](#)

It is best to seek out balance and not have too much or too little of anything in life, whether food, drink, or even exercise. This is related to the Middle Path in Buddhism, which claims that extreme lifestyles, either restrictive or lavish, cause suffering and distraction. Buddhists believe moderation helps lead to enlightenment.

237) [Rome was not built in a day](#)

Major achievements take a significant amount of time to be realized. This is a saying you could use to remind someone to be patient when they are unsatisfied with the progress being made on a project. For example, writing a reference book can take years to accomplish as it will be developed one chapter at a time, then revised and refined.

238) [No cross, no crown](#)

You cannot be successful in life and reach your goal without going through hardships. This proverb says that Christian salvation depends on suffering in Christian belief. This phrase comes from two biblical passages that describe a Christian's reward in an afterlife with a crown in heaven, which must be earned by "bearing his cross" on Earth.

239) [The road to hell is paved with good intentions](#)

Actions are what matters, not intentions. You may wish and plan to be a helpful, kind friend to others, but you must follow through and put your plan into action; otherwise, you are as guilty as if you hadn't meant to at all. "Intend" is not the same as "try." You can try and fail, but at least you are still acting.

240) [An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth](#)

The punishment must match the crime. According to this law of retaliation, which some governments have been known to follow quite literally, an injured party is within his rights to retaliate in a comparable way.

241) [When in Rome, do as the Romans do](#)

Observe the customs and courtesies of the people around you. It may be polite in your home country to eat with your hands, but in another country you travel to, this may be regarded as very rude. It's nicer and often more practical to live and act the way the locals do.

242) [A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush](#)

Sometimes it's wise to settle for less because, when you hold out for more, you may end up with nothing. A compulsive gambler will likely choose to ignore this proverb. Sometimes abbreviated as simply "a bird in hand," the saying refers to bird trapping. If one had already caught a live bird, they may very well lose it when pursuing others in the forest.

243) [Knowledge is the best medicine](#)

The best way to improve a situation is to fully understand it and learn about the causes of the problem. This phrase is frequently used in preventative medicine because knowing how to stay healthy is better than having to treat a problem after it appears.

244) [A penny saved is a penny earned](#)

Discipline is a virtue when it comes to saving money and reducing costs. It takes serious dedication to stick to a rigid budget, but you will be rewarded in the long run. Although the saying is commonly

attributed to Benjamin Franklin, a close variation appeared in George Herbert's *Outlandish Proverbs* (1633) where the proverb read, "A penny spar'd is twice got."

245) **Life is not a bed of roses**

We normally should not expect an easy life with luxuries and comforts. The real world can be challenging, and we have to face our responsibilities and work for what we want. The fantasy of a soft, sweet-smelling bed of roses is pleasant but unrealistic.

246) **A sound mind in a sound body**

A healthy body is a precursor to a healthy mind. It is no wonder that those who exercise regularly are generally happier and more content in life. The sentiment is reminiscent of the phrase, "You are what you eat," meaning our mental well-being is directly linked with how we treat our bodies. Originally attributed to the poet Juvenal of ancient Rome, this proverb has long been popular in athletic training circles.

247) **Better out than in**

It is better to divulge a secret than to keep it in. Though this figurative meaning is prevalent, the proverb is often called upon when one is suffering from food poisoning, the idea being that it is better to expel the culprit than to keep it inside the body. It is also commonly used to justify breaking wind.

248) **Where there's smoke, there's fire**

Whenever something seems odd or unusual, it could be a sign of a real issue. Rumors may have some substance, and large problems can be indicated by their telling signs. A person might say this of an unfaithful spouse: "I noticed him staring at other women years before I found out he was cheating on me. Where there's smoke, there's fire."

249) **Time and tide wait for no man**

Don't delay in accomplishing your goal, since time will not slow down or stop for you. To your overly cautious friend who wants to examine every possible aspect of a situation before taking advantage of an opportunity, you could say, "Time and tide wait for no man! The opportunity will probably disappear if you wait much longer."

250) **All's fair in love and war**

In a highly contested situation, no action is considered out of bounds for a self-centered person to achieve his goal. This proverb is often used to justify one's foul or conniving behavior in a competition or feud. For example, when two friends fell in love with the same woman, one of them spread a nasty rumor about the other in order to gain the upper hand.

251) **Familiarity breeds contempt**

If you spend enough time getting acquainted with a person, their imperfections will eventually be revealed. When a man first started dating his girlfriend, he was enamored by her and only saw her positive qualities. But after several months, he discovered many things about her that bothered him, such as the fact that she tended to speak negatively about other people.

252) **Turnabout is fair play**

It's fair to do the same thing to someone that they have done to you, including unpleasant things. For example, if someone embarrasses you in front of their friends, it's only fair that you embarrass them in front of your own friends. "Turnabout" means an exact reciprocal action.

253) **If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is**

Don't fall for something that sounds too spectacular, as it is most likely a trick to deceive you. For example, when a woman received a phone call from a man telling her she had just won \$10,000, she wanted to believe it was true, but when he started asking for her personal information, she realized it was a scam.

254) **Kill or cure**

This is said of a desperate solution that will be either a complete success or a sure failure—no in-between. Hiring a controversial new CEO, for example, could either "kill or cure" the struggling company. Using an extreme medical procedure, out of desperation when there is no other option, will literally either cure the patient or kill them.

255) **Poverty is not a crime**

People should not be punished, shamed, or regarded as inferior simply for lacking sufficient means. For example, homeless people are sometimes treated as criminals for sleeping in public places, but they may have no other options. Discriminating against disadvantaged people can keep people in poverty instead of solving their problems.

256) **Appearances are deceptive**

Things are not always as they seem upon first glance. For instance, a man moved into a new apartment in what he had assumed to be a quiet, peaceful neighborhood. However, when he started hearing loud music and shouting every night from his neighbors, he realized he may have misjudged the situation.

257) **My house, my rules**

The owners of a house can dictate what happens in that home. This saying is often used by parents to justify limiting their children's behavior. The implication is that children may not like the rules, but they will be able to set their own rules when they are adults with their own homes.

258) **The way to a man's heart is through his stomach**

If you want to win a man's love, cook tasty food for him. This proverb is based on the old stereotype that women are expected to cook for men, so if a woman wants to showcase herself as an appealing partner, she should do her best to be a good cook. Of course, some people do genuinely feel loved when others cook for them, so the principle still applies in many cases.

259) **Take things as they come**

Focus on current issues instead of worrying about how to handle problems in the future. This is similar to the line "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" from the Sermon on the Mount. This saying could be used to encourage someone to face a long-term problem one piece at a time. Another variant of this proverb is "Take each day as it comes."

260) **The world is a small place**

It is a remarkable fact that we often cross paths with the same people, in spite of how huge the world is. You may have experienced running into an old classmate at a large theme park, many years after last seeing each other, in spite of the remarkable odds against it happening. Because of this, the world seems as though it's smaller than it actually is.

261) **Any port in a storm**

One cannot be too particular in a time of need. For instance, when a boy accidentally left his jacket at home, he had to borrow one from his friend's sister. Thus, he was warm enough, but he was forced to endure endless taunting for wearing a girl's coat. This proverb refers to a ship's desire for a safe place to drop anchor during a storm.

262) **If you want peace, prepare for war**

A person or civilization that is perceived as strong and capable of inflicting great damage is less likely to be attacked or threatened. Throughout history, civilizations that are strong tend to attack and invade civilizations that are weak and can't fight back. So if you want to be left alone in peace, it's important that you are powerful enough that your enemies either lose in battle to you or (ideally) leave you alone.

263) **Treat others how you want to be treated**

Just because other people have less money, power, or authority than you have, this doesn't give you the right to treat them with disrespect. Imagine yourself in their position, and treat them with the same level of respect, patience, and kindness that you would be treated yourself. This principle is often called the "Golden Rule" and can be found across cultures.

264) **You don't get something for nothing**

Nothing in life is free. Whether it's money or other valuables, something is always required of you in order to receive something. Arguably, even birthday gifts are a result of you continuing to be a pleasant, participating friend or member of the family. This phrase is similar in meaning to "There's no such thing as a free lunch."

265) **Speak softly, and carry a big stick**

Negotiate calmly, but show that you have the strength to fight for your cause. This saying was the campaign motto for United States President Theodore Roosevelt in 1900 and the guiding principle of his foreign policy. He claimed that it had a West African origin, but there is no record of this. He may have made it up himself to appear more worldly.

266) **Sweet are the uses of adversity**

Difficulties and misfortunes can turn out to have good benefits, at least by allowing us to appreciate things that we didn't notice before. The English playwright William Shakespeare coined this phrase in his comedy *As You Like It*. The character Duke Senior is banished, but he describes his isolation as an opportunity to get away from hectic public life and appreciate nature.

267) **Penny wise and pound foolish**

This phrase describes someone who is very careful and economical with small amounts of money but wasteful with large sums. It literally means being wise when spending pennies and foolish when spending pounds. For example, a person could track where to buy the cheapest fuel for their car, but when they dine out, they go for an extravagant, expensive restaurant.

268) [Nature abhors a vacuum](#)

Vacant spaces tend to be filled quickly. Similarly, if a company goes out of business or a person quits their job, their places will be filled by another company or employee. This concept is attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. In his *Physics*, Aristotle used thought experiments to explore the concept of the void, or a space without any matter. He believed that a vacuum was not possible in nature because surrounding matter would immediately fill the space.

269) [The enemy of my enemy is my friend](#)

You can ally with someone you don't like when you have a common enemy. This concept is documented in the ancient Sanskrit text on political science *The Arthashastra*. This saying describes the formation of the Allied Powers in World War II, despite an otherwise cold relationship between the Soviet Union and Western Allies.

270) [History is written by the victors](#)

It is the winners who have the power to catalogue historical events. This is because the losers are typically too oppressed (or even dead) to contribute. This proverb was spoken by Winston Churchill, but it has always received criticism. For example, the United States essentially lost the Vietnam War yet still survived to write its history.

271) [A diamond is forever](#)

Pure and original things are everlasting. Diamonds are viewed as a symbol of purity and beauty, and their value lasts forever. This proverb started as a slogan for De Beers Jewellers in the 1940s and led to a renewed interest in diamond wedding rings.

272) [Sell in May and go away](#)

This refers to a business strategy to sell stocks in springtime and buy again in the fall, based on the belief that stock-market returns are lower between those months. This phrase is often followed with a second rhyming line, such as "and don't come back til St. Leger's day." St. Leger's day refers to a horse race that happens on the second Saturday of September.

273) [To the pure, all things are pure](#)

Those who are themselves kind and innocent are much more likely to have a positive, trusting view of the world around them. It is easier to see the best in others when you yourself are a kindhearted person. This proverb originally comes from the Apostle Paul of the New Testament.

274) [Physician, heal thyself](#)

If you consider yourself an expert and start offering advice and support to others, you should be able to solve your own problems. This phrasing comes from the Bible under Luke 23:4, where Jesus refers to it as a proverb. It also appears in earlier Jewish writings, and the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus expressed the same idea in *Prometheus Bound*. As Prometheus is punished for bringing fire to humanity, the chorus sings, "Like an unskilled doctor, fallen ill, you lose heart and cannot discover by which remedies to cure your own disease."

275) [As you sow, so shall you reap](#)

In accordance with the law of karma, everyone must pay the consequences for their own actions. This unsympathetic proverb is sometimes employed when one has done something wrong and must deal

with the repercussions. However, the proverb may also be used in a positive light in that one who makes good decisions in life will be rewarded accordingly. Students often learn this lesson when they see that studying leads to good grades, and neglect leads to poor grades.

276) **Old soldiers never die**

Old soldiers who have survived many wars and dangers will ironically die peacefully of old age, with their past glories being forgotten by most people. This saying comes from a wistful soldiers' folk song by the same title, which explains further that "they simply fade away."

277) **Hope for the best and prepare for the worst**

It is okay to dream, but be prepared if things don't go according to plan. When a high school student was looking at colleges, they set their sights high by applying to Harvard and Princeton. But just in case those schools rejected the student, they also applied to a state college, knowing that they should always have a backup plan.

278) **If you don't know, ask**

Don't assume there's no solution to a problem or answer to a question just because you don't know what the solution or answer is. Someone with better knowledge will have the information or help you need, if you can just find them. It's up to you to take the next step by seeking this information.

279) **Too many cooks spoil the broth**

Too many people involved in a project with no clear definition of roles and responsibilities can cause more problems than solutions. It can be helpful to have an extra person or two when you are involved in a project. However, multiple people can experience conflict with one another as each tries to do things their own way.

280) **Keep your breath to cool your porridge**

Mind your own business, and don't waste your energy meddling in other people's affairs. Porridge, like soup, is a dish that's often served quite hot. It makes more sense to use the energy from your lungs and mouth to blow air on your porridge to cool it down so you can eat it.

281) **A rolling stone gathers no moss**

One who is constantly on the move will not become tied down by responsibilities, or get rusty, stagnant, and sluggish. Though this is the most popular interpretation, a contradictory explanation is that those who refuse to settle in one place are less likely to accumulate wealth or attain stability. The proverb is credited to the Latin writer Publilius Syrus of ancient Rome.

282) **Nothing succeeds like success**

Success builds on itself, so the best way to get ahead in life is to excel at what you are doing. For example, if your goal is to become the CEO of a company, the best thing to do is to work very hard and become the best at your job for the position you are in. From there, you can aim for promotions and keep succeeding in those roles until you reach your goal.

283) **Paddle your own canoe**

We need to be self-reliant and take responsibility for our own lives. For example, a new employee might get training for a short time, but afterwards they will be expected to become independent and self-sufficient. A canoe is a small boat usually propelled by one paddler.

284) [The best things come in small packages](#)

Small gifts can be particularly precious. In a culture that tends to believe that “bigger is better,” this proverb is used to acknowledge how appreciated small gifts can be. This can refer specifically to the fact that gifts of money will be physically small. For example, this proverb could be used to describe an engagement ring, the keys to a car, or a healthy premature baby.

285) [Tastes differ](#)

Everyone has different preferences, and that should be valued and accepted. This saying is used to shut down arguments about matters of opinion, since there is no way to reach an agreement on a topic if it simply relates to personal tastes. It is essentially similar to the saying “Agree to disagree.”

286) [Fools rush in where angels fear to tread](#)

In dangerous situations, fools tend to act rashly, whereas prudent people exercise caution. Witnessing a fight break out between two large gentlemen in a bar, one man thought it best to break it up himself, but instead came out badly bruised. The quote is attributed to Alexander Pope, found in his *An Essay on Criticism*.

287) [Don't put all your eggs in one basket](#)

Don't put all your faith into one risky endeavor. It is better to diversify your resources in case one potential opportunity fails. A man who invests his entire savings in a new stock company would benefit from this proverb's wisdom. Literally, the proverb refers to the fact that putting all the eggs into one basket will risk destroying the eggs if the basket falls.

288) [It's not what you know; it's who you know](#)

Having skills and knowledge is not as important as having a network of personal connections. For example, even if you are a very talented writer, it will probably be extremely difficult for you to publish your book unless you personally know someone in the industry—or at the very least, you know a lot *about* that person so you can make a good impression on them.

289) [No man can serve two masters](#)

A person cannot divide their loyalties or pursue two contradictory goals. This saying is from a section in the Bible (Matthew 6:24) telling Christians to set aside the material world in order to focus on spiritual wellness. The verse later explains, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” “Mammon” is understood to mean money or the promise of wealth.

290) [Business is war](#)

This proverb alludes to the highly competitive nature of the business world where the rivalry between two companies is likened to a battle between nations. In one small town, there were two coffee shops. Thus, despite any personal feelings between the owners, they were naturally forced to compete for customers by offering discounts and specials. This sort of competition is a crucial tenet of capitalist philosophy.

291) [A word is enough to the wise](#)

A simple allusion will suffice in guiding a wise person. One with intelligence and worldly experience can take a hint; he doesn't need to hear a lengthy sermon to learn a lesson. The proverb is often abbreviated as "a word to the wise..." which prefaces a piece of advice.

292) [All men are mortal](#)

Everyone is equal in that no man lives forever. Watch your step; even those who feel invincible will die someday. This proverb can also serve as a comfort to those feeling insignificant in the face of persecution. For instance, an oppressed nation may find solace in the mortality of their tyrannical ruler.

293) [Heads I win, tails you lose](#)

In a dispute or competition, a person might have an advantage from the start. For instance, when a boy challenged his younger brother to a race, it was clear that he would win, being much taller and faster. The proverb refers to the classic scenario of flipping a coin to make a decision.

294) [Per ardua ad astra](#)

This Latin motto for the Royal Air Force is usually translated as "Through adversity to the stars." It was adopted in 1912 after it was proposed by junior officer J. S. Yule. He had read it in Sir Henry Rider Haggard's novel *The People of the Mist*, and Haggard may have borrowed it from the historic family motto of the Mulway family in Ireland.

295) [Every man to his trade](#)

One should not venture outside their particular area of expertise. Thus, a world-class painter need not try his hand at sculpting; instead he should stick to what he knows best. A similar sentiment is found in, "Every man knows his own business best."

296) [The bigger they are, the harder they fall](#)

People with power and influence have the most to lose. The "fall" here is a "fall from grace," when a person loses their position of power or respect. For example, a CEO who is found embezzling may face a greater loss than a shopkeeper who is discovered doing the same thing.

297) [A house divided against itself cannot stand](#)

Internal conflict in a group will only lead to its demise. Sometimes it is necessary to set aside personal differences in order to accomplish something greater. For instance, a high school basketball team might face this very dilemma if the players do not get along with one another, but if they are serious about winning, they will have to focus on the task at hand. This proverb appeared first in Matthew 12:25 in the Bible.

298) [Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all](#)

Love is so precious that it is even worth the pain experienced upon losing it. While traveling abroad, a woman met someone with whom she shared a passionate romance. However, after one week they were forced to go their separate ways, and though her heart was broken at first, the joy she had experienced was enough to last a lifetime.

299) [Christmas comes but once a year](#)

Because it only happens once a year, one should treat Christmas with the caring, compassionate, and generous spirit it deserves. The saying stresses the importance of giving, however little, rather than receiving during the Christmas season. The proverb gained popularity as the title of a 1936 animated short film.

300) [Pride goes before a fall](#)

Someone who is arrogant will soon suffer humiliation. This proverb from the Bible warns against being too pompous. People who are humble are less likely to end up in a disaster, and when they are wrong, they are more willing to admit their fault.

301) [It is never too late to mend](#)

It's never too late to apologize or make amends for something you did wrong, or to change your ways. An outfit with a tear or rip can still be mended years later. Likewise, don't use the excuse of time to keep you from trying to be a better person or from fixing your relationship with a relative or friend.

302) [East or west, home is best](#)

People may travel the world far and wide but will eventually realize that home is the place they truly belong. For example, a woman bored with spending her whole life in a small American town sets out to explore Europe and Asia. But after two months, she is surprised to find she actually misses her hometown. As the famous quote from *The Wizard of Oz* would agree, "There's no place like home."

303) [Time is a great healer](#)

Wounds or hurts that can't be cured now will eventually disappear (at least, for the most part) with time. This is mainly said of emotional and psychological wounds. "Time is a great healer" is what people often say about the loss of a loved one. The sadness never fully goes away, but the pain will mostly heal after some time has passed.

304) [Experience is the best teacher](#)

One learns best not by studying theoretical concepts but by direct experience. After attending business school, one man felt he was ready to start his own small start-up company. But when it failed after only one year, he realized he had learned a much more valuable lesson than any teacher or book had taught him.

305) [Travel broadens the mind](#)

Travel helps you become open-minded. Typically when people travel, they are exposed to different cultures, lifestyles, values, and environments that help them obtain a wider perspective of the world. The next time your family member tells you that travel is too expensive you can reply, "But travel broadens the mind!"

306) [Make haste slowly](#)

In urgent situations act swiftly and carefully. This sounds paradoxical, but it means that you should act quickly while also being mindful not to make mistakes. Rushing without being thoughtful can lead to mistakes or even put someone in danger.

307) [Money makes money](#)

The more money you have, the easier it is to get more money. This is true in many senses. Money can often accrue interest, building up as you save. Money can also be invested in markets that will earn a return. Also, the more money you have, the more likely it is that someone will be willing to extend a loan to you.

308) **The best is the enemy of the good**

Pursuit of perfection can keep you from accomplishing any good job at all. If you only settle for the best, you won't be able to make any progress. For example, this could happen if you had an assignment to produce a report and you focused so much on formatting your report perfectly and finding the right images that you ran out of time to finish writing the text itself.

309) **There is a time to speak and a time to be silent**

Know when to speak up and when to keep your thoughts to yourself. If, for example, your grandmother's harmless friend is making benighted comments about an issue she clearly doesn't understand, it may be better to respectfully say nothing. On a different occasion, if someone personally attacks you (or another person) because of your beliefs, the right thing to do would be to speak out and defend yourself.

310) **Pretty is as pretty does**

Looking good doesn't make you a good person, as your behavior will determine people's opinion of you more than the way you look. Someone might be physically handsome, but if they are rude or unkind or behave in an unacceptable way, they will not be liked by others.

311) **While there is life, there is hope**

As long as you are alive, there is always hope of better times and better things to come, so don't give up trying to improve your circumstances or make positive changes. It's only in death that we truly have an end to everything, and no chance to improve or accomplish something we had hoped to.

312) **A watched pot never boils**

Time appears to move slowly in the heat of anticipation. One should practice patience when waiting for something exciting to happen. For instance, if you are eagerly waiting to receive an acceptance letter from the university you applied to, you will only make things harder by repeatedly checking your email.

313) **Cheaters never prosper**

Though dishonest people may receive short-term rewards, they will never enjoy long-lasting success. One man managed to stay wealthy for many years by evading income tax. But eventually he was audited by the IRS and not only lost his fortune, but he ended up in jail too.

314) **A rising tide lifts all boats**

The effects on the greater whole are visible in each of its parts. The proverb literally means that large and small boats alike will ride the rising and falling of the ocean's tides. John F. Kennedy popularized the phrase in a 1963 speech where it referred to the country's economic growth affecting every member of the economy.

315) **Confession is good for the soul**

There is freedom in admitting one's wrongdoing. Guilt clouds the conscience, and the practice of confession, common especially in the Catholic Church, is believed to make one pure again. This proverb is a more uplifting version of "Confess and be hanged."

316) **The better the day, the better the deed**

This is a way to say that someone will be working on Sunday or a holiday. Sunday is the Christian sabbath day, and observant people are traditionally supposed to refrain from working. This proverb inverts the expectation to respectfully rest on a holy day by saying the special day will make the work better.

317) **Murder will out**

A terrible crime cannot be kept a secret. This phrase dates to at least the fourteenth century, when it appeared in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. In his "Prioress' Tale," a man is murdered but contacts his friend in a dream. The dead man's killers are then found and brought to justice because murder is a crime so offensive to God that it will always eventually be revealed.

318) **Man proposes, God disposes**

People can make plans, but ultimately we are not in control of whether they succeed. This is a reminder to be humble and recognize that we have no control over many aspects and circumstances in our lives. It is a translation of a Latin quotation from *The Imitation of Christ* by medieval German/Dutch priest Thomas à Kempis.

319) **A fool and his money are soon parted**

It is a virtue to handle one's money carefully. Foolish people will recklessly squander their funds and be none the wiser. For example, one man always seemed to amaze his friends in that any money he managed to attain would soon be gambled away at the card table.

320) **Give the devil his due**

Even a generally loathed person deserves recognition for a positive act. For example, even though a bully was disliked by their classmates and teachers alike, they all had to commend the bully when they heroically saved another student from drowning at the lake.

321) **Make the best of a bad job**

We need to look for the positive aspects in unfortunate circumstances. For example, if you get to the airport and learn that your flight is delayed due to weather, you might start a conversation with your fellow travelers and make friends while waiting for the weather to improve. A variant of this proverb is "Make the best of a bad bargain."

322) **One hand washes the other**

Co-conspirators help each other and hide evidence for each other. For example, a drug dealer and a corrupt police officer may collaborate to bring down a rival drug dealer so that both can profit. A variation of the saying continues, "and both wash the face," to suggest that the actions to help each other also protect the reputation of a powerful third party. In the case of our example, the equally corrupt mayor ends up with a "clean face" for appearing to oversee a city that is tough on crime.

323) **It is better to give than to receive**

A lot of joy, satisfaction, and happiness comes from giving to others. While it's nice to receive a present or a thoughtful gesture, it's even more rewarding to do the same for someone else. Also, the act of giving improves your character and goodness, which is far more valuable than any gift you may receive.

324) Judge not, that ye be not judged

If you don't want people judging and thinking badly of you, don't judge or think badly of others. In the New Testament Jesus tells his followers these words, implying that if you judge others harshly, God will judge you harshly. In addition to this, people who like to judge and criticize are more likely to be hated and avoided by others.

325) Lost time is never found again

Be careful how you use your time because you cannot get it back. For example, if you have one week before the exam and you enjoy yourself with the pleasant summer days instead of studying, you'll soon find out that the time has gone and there is no way to make up for it. This is a play on the figurative use of the word "lost" to describe time that passes when one is distracted. Since time is not a tangible object, when you "lose" time, it is simply gone.

326) The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak

There are goals that you aspire to accomplish, but your health or physique don't allow you to. So we should accept and live with our own limitations. For example, you may want to help run a 5k for a good cause, such as raising cancer awareness, but you are currently recovering from a broken ankle. You could tell your friends, "My spirit (heart) is willing, but my flesh is weak right now. Sorry, guys!"

327) Hindsight is always 20/20

We often only see things clearly once we look back on a situation. For instance, when a woman got a new manager at work, she realized her old boss had been mistreating her all along. However, this fact had been difficult to see when she was in the middle of it. A person's normal, accurate vision is often described as 20/20.

328) One man's meat is another man's poison

Different people have different tastes, so what one person loves might be terrible to another. For example, a person who is very social and talkative might love going to busy parties and giving speeches, but someone who is more shy and reserved might be very unhappy in the same situation.

329) A tree is known by its fruit

Do not judge another on the basis of appearance; a person may surprise you with what they have to offer. Nobody expected much when the shy little girl stepped to the microphone to sing a solo in the concert, but when they heard her beautiful voice, they couldn't believe it came from her mouth! This proverb comes directly from Luke 6:43-45 in the Bible.

330) A man is known by the company he keeps

By noting the habits of a person's friends, you can learn a lot about that person. This is because one is most likely to spend their time with like-minded people. For example, although a woman only knew the man by name, she could guess he was not to be trusted after learning who one of his best friends was. This proverb has a close relative in "Birds of a feather flock together."

331) **First thrive and then wive**

As marriage is expensive, don't marry until you are certain you can afford it. Only once a man had worked several years at a well-paying job did he feel ready to settle down and have a family. To have done so beforehand would have been irresponsible in his eyes.

332) **Children should be seen and not heard**

This English proverb from the fifteenth century is still employed today to keep children quiet, though it was originally used mainly with regard to young women. The saying is often uttered in tandem with, "Don't speak unless spoken to," both of which have received some criticism in recent times.

333) **Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof**

Do not worry about the future because today's burdens and troubles are enough to keep us busy. This line from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in the Bible says that worrying about tomorrow only adds to today's suffering, so we should take things one day at a time.

334) **The king can do no wrong**

A supreme sovereign or leader is above the law because of their power. Certain nations have extremely authoritative rulers who are capable of changing or altering the laws in their favor so that they are exempt from any wrongdoing. This can also apply in a less official sense: if your boss seems to use his authority unfairly, for example, to promote his friend.

335) **A woman's place is in the home**

The expression refers to the traditional stereotype that a woman's responsibility lies solely in maintaining the household. Attributed to Greek playwright Aeschylus in 467 BC, the original version is translated, "Let a woman stay at home and hold their peace." However, the proverb has seen much variation over the centuries, including substituting *kitchen* for *home*. In recent times, the feminist movement has criticized the sentiment.

336) **Blood will have blood**

One must suffer the consequences for harm done to others. This proverb was first uttered in *Macbeth*, the classic Shakespearean play. Originally, the sentiment had quite a literal connotation with reference to the murders that take place in the story, but it has since taken on a broader meaning: if you harm others, you will eventually incur harm yourself.

337) **Virtue is its own reward**

It's good to help others and do the right thing for its own sake, not for the ulterior motive of a reward. Helping your friend's child learn to read or returning a lost item to a grateful owner brings feelings of joy and satisfaction that are far superior to any monetary sort of reward.

338) **When the cat's away, the mice will play**

A given group of people will naturally behave inappropriately when their authority figure is absent. A group of kids, for example, might wreak havoc on a garden or other backyard project with no adult attendant, or a group of coworkers may slack off while their boss is on vacation.

339) **A woman's work is never done**

While a man may work long hours at his job, the work required of a mother is never-ending. Even a husband who works a ten-hour day at the office will kick off his shoes and relax once he gets home, but his wife (who has also worked a whole day on various household chores) still has to serve dinner, do the dishes, and give the kids a bath. Like its sister proverb, “A woman’s place is in the home,” this one is having trouble holding its ground in the face of changing gender dynamics.

340) [Life begins at forty](#)

Turning forty can be an entrance into the best time in your life, as you will have more experience and financial stability. This saying challenges the idea that people over the age of forty are past the prime of their life. The phrase originated with a book by this title in 1932 by Walter B. Pitkin. At that time, technology and medical advances meant that life expectancies were going up very quickly.

341) [No man is indispensable](#)

No person is so important that life could not go on without them. An individual may have highly valued talents, but if that person is gone, the group will adjust. This phrase is closely linked to the military, where it is important to prioritize the group over individuals.

342) [There is no smoke without fire](#)

There is always a warning sign before you discover a serious problem. Your sister may date a man who has no friends of his own and does not want to discuss his previous life. When she discovers he is abusive and dishonest, it should come as no surprise, since problematic telltale signs were already in place.

343) [There is safety in numbers](#)

You are more likely to be safe from harm (physical or otherwise) when in a group. A young woman going to a lively nightclub may tell her nervous friend, “Don’t worry, there’s safety in numbers. Nothing bad can happen when we’re around lots of other people.”

344) [Gather ye rosebuds while ye may](#)

One should enjoy life and prosper while they have the opportunity. For example, having just graduated from college, a man decided to spend a year traveling the world, knowing that he may never have the chance again later in life. This proverb is attributed to seventeenth-century poet Robert Herrick, appearing in his “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time.”

345) [A change is as good as a rest](#)

If you’re feeling stuck in a situation, sometimes what you need is an entirely new approach; a change of perspective goes a long way. For instance, if a woman is struggling at a dead-end job, maybe it’s time for a brand-new career instead of taking the same old vacation yet again.

346) [Fortune favors the bold](#)

Determined people decide their own fate. A salesperson who refuses to take “no” for an answer is more likely to succeed than one who lacks basic confidence in their job. This proverb is a direct contradiction to the more cynical “Fortune is blind.”

347) [More haste, less speed](#)

If you do something hastily and without due attention, you'll probably make mistakes and will have to redo it, which is more time-consuming than doing it carefully from the beginning.

348) [Bad news travels fast](#)

People are often more likely to spread unfortunate news than good news. For instance, when the elementary school caught fire one afternoon, it didn't take very long for the entire town to hear about it. When the same school got a better ranking nationwide, only a few families heard of it.

349) [East is East, and West is West](#)

Eastern cultures, such as those of China or India, will always remain distinct from Western cultures like those of Europe or the Americas. The proverb is attributed to Rudyard Kipling as found in his poem "The Ballad of East and West." There, it appears in its full form as, "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet."

350) [Everybody loves a winner](#)

Successful people tend to attract followers, while the less fortunate get left behind. Those who are wealthy, for instance, often have many "friends" who are simply trying to gain something for themselves. The title of a hit song from the 1960s, this proverb points out the superficiality found in human nature.

351) [Rob Peter to pay Paul](#)

This refers to pointlessly satisfying one debt by creating a new one. This proverb refers to the unsustainable situation when one pays a debt to someone by borrowing money from another, leaving the second person at a disadvantage. This kind of solution is not an improvement overall and may end up being worse than the original situation. The Peter and Paul referenced are both Christian apostles.

352) [Take the will for the deed](#)

Appreciate people for their good intentions, even if they did not follow through with action. For example, if someone planned to make a speech to raise money for charity, but they had stage fright and were too nervous to follow through, you should still value their goodwill.

353) [Cowards die many times before their deaths](#)

Each time a man retreats out of cowardice, he loses a piece of his dignity. A hero, on the other hand, becomes stronger with each conflict he overcomes. Spoken by Julius Caesar in the famous Shakespearean play, this proverb urges one to be courageous in the face of danger. This proverb can be used for encouraging warriors on the battlefield.

354) [Clothes don't make the man](#)

One should not judge another solely by his appearance. Some of the greatest people in history, Albert Einstein for example, have been known for their slovenly looks. The proverb begs you to look deeper if you really want to know a person. This proverb serves as a counter to "Clothes make the man."

355) [Make new friends but keep the old](#)

Build new relationships while maintaining existing ones. It is important to make friends with new people throughout your life, but it is also important not to let new relationships take precedence over your existing ones. This is a technique to build a healthy social community.

356) [The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence](#)

Some people are eager to obtain things that belong to others, even if they have things of the same or better quality. This proverb suggests that someone standing in a field of grass and looking at the neighboring field would envy the neighbor's field despite having land that's essentially the same. For example, a doctor and an engineer might envy each other's jobs because they only see the positive aspects and don't recognize how enviable their own lives are.

357) [You cannot have it both ways](#)

There's always a compromise when it comes to a big decision. A politician, for example, must choose to endorse a policy that favors either a greener environment or more jobs for blue-collar workers, even though ideally they would like the votes of people on both sides of the issue.

358) [Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown](#)

A person who holds the most visible power is vulnerable to losing that position. A king or queen wears a crown, making them an apparent symbol of authority, wealth, and status that many in their circle envy. For this reason, some craftier, wiser people in times past preferred to exercise power behind the scenes so as not to draw as much attention to themselves.

359) [Quality is better than quantity](#)

Having a better product or experience is more important than having it in a larger amount or size. For example, a small gourmet meal is more enjoyable than a larger dish made badly, and a well-made short film may tell a story better than a less thoughtful full-length movie.

360) [There is a limit to everything](#)

As some point, a certain situation or event must come to an end, whether good or bad. One spouse may put up with their abusive spouse's behavior for a while, but eventually they will decide they can't take it anymore, saying, "I've reached my limit." Or in a very different example, a person who has had a winning streak at a casino will eventually run out of luck.

361) [Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone](#)

When you are happy, others will want to share in your happiness. In contrast, no one wants to join in someone else's misery. This proverb implies that you will have company as long as you stay positive, and it serves as a reminder not to let sadness isolate you.

362) [Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise](#)

Don't underestimate the power of a good night's sleep. If one does not take their sleep schedule seriously, it will only lead to problems in both their work and personal lives as they will have greater levels of stress and less ability to concentrate. The proverb is widely attributed to Benjamin Franklin.

363) [Marriage is a lottery](#)

When you marry someone, no matter how much you think you know them, you are taking a risk for an uncertain future. It is hard to know what life with someone will be like for years or decades to come, so there is an element of gambling on the relationship as you don't know how the other person will react to different circumstances and stressors.

364) No answer is also an answer

When someone chooses not to respond, that in itself tells you something, whether positive or negative. For example, if you invite friends to a party and someone never tells you whether they will come or not, you can guess that that friend will not be coming. On the other hand, if you ask your child who broke the window and they stay silent, this may imply that they are the one who broke it.

365) He who hesitates is lost

Be decisive in your choices; if you wait too long, you may miss your chance. When a boy asked a girl to the prom, she said she needed some time to consider her answer. A few days later, she came to him and accepted, but by then the boy had already asked someone else.

366) Take the rough with the smooth

Do not complain about difficulties that come alongside positive experiences. Life is not always good, so this proverb reminds us to accept the “rough” or imperfect things along with the “smooth” or pleasant things. For example, raising children is not always easy, but parents accept those challenges along with the joyful parts.

367) Two wrongs do not make a right

Hurting someone who has hurt you does not justify your actions. This applies on a personal as well as global scale. For example, one country committing atrocities against another country’s people in retaliation for that country having attacked them does not neutralize the situation.

368) One swallow does not make a summer

A single sign does not mean that a major change has occurred. A swallow is a type of bird, and the appearance of migratory swallows could be taken as a sure sign that summer has arrived. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote, "One swallow does not a summer make, nor one fine day; similarly one day or brief time of happiness does not make a person entirely happy."

369) All things are difficult before they are easy

In acquiring a new skill, the beginning is often the most challenging part. People must deal with a learning curve whenever they try to acquire a new skill. This is true for something as simple as riding a bicycle or driving a car. The first few times one tries, it may seem impossible, but after some practice it becomes easier and easier.

370) If anything can go wrong, it will

If there is any potential for a problem, it will eventually occur as another proverb agrees, “Toast always falls buttered-side down.” This proverb is commonly referred to as Murphy’s law, and it can be used as a basis for risk assessment and management.

371) Health is better than wealth

One’s physical health is more valuable than mere material wealth. A rich man who gets a disease at an early age may have to avoid a lot of foods and drinks, his mobility may be affected, and therefore, he won’t be able to enjoy life fully. On the other hand, a simple man may live a long, contented life with very little to his name.

372) The child is father of the man

A person's true nature and characteristics are the same from childhood. You may learn and develop in many ways from children to adulthood, but if, for example, you were a very analytical, left-brained thinker as a child, in all likelihood you still are now as an adult. This expression comes from a famous poem by William Wordsworth.

373) **What you don't know can't hurt you**

If you are ignorant of something, you can't be harmed by it, at least in a psychological sense. For example, if you are unaware that your spouse used to date your best friend, it will have no relevant effect on your life whatsoever. People often use this concept and proverb to justify withholding information from others.

374) **You can't erase the past**

There is no use lamenting mistakes you have made in the past. Even though there are things you may regret and that you will never be able to forget, it's much more productive to focus instead on what to do in the present, with the current resources and opportunities that you have.

375) **Fall down seven times, get up eight**

Never give up. Keep on trying and learn from your mistakes until you manage to achieve your goal. A prospective lawyer failed his state's bar exam three times, but that didn't stop him from attempting it a fourth time. To him, it didn't matter how many tries it took; he would keep taking the test until he passed.

376) **There is more than one way to skin a cat**

There's more than one solution to any problem. Even if, for example, you are missing a necessary part to fix your leaking sink, there may well be a way to make the part yourself or find an alternative way to stop the leaking. This is an old proverb with unclear origins, possibly based on the urban legend that in older times, some people used to kill cats by skinning them alive.

377) **Nothing is impossible to a willing heart**

If you have the determination and strong will, you will reach your goal, no matter how hard it could be. This inspirational saying suggests that you can accomplish anything you want as long as you have the willpower, focus, and perseverance to do it.

378) **Love me little, love me long**

Love someone with moderation so that your love can last a lifetime. Intense passion can be a short-term feeling, so this proverb recommends tempering your feelings in order to make a connection last for a long time.

379) **Pleasures of the mighty are the tears of the poor**

The luxuries that wealthy people enjoy are made possible by the suffering of less powerful people. For example, US musician Bobby Darin's 1960 song "Artificial Flowers" tells the story of a poor orphaned girl, Annie, who made decorative flowers "for ladies of fashion to wear ... made out of Annie's despair."

380) **Love begets love**

In accordance with the law of karma, expressing love can inspire more loving behavior in others. For example, a man moved into a new neighborhood and found that his neighbors were often rude to each

other. He began helping his neighbors when he saw them struggling with yard work or chores, and before long, the community members were all behaving kinder toward each other.

381) [Don't bury your head in the sand](#)

Neglecting a risk or threat will not make it disappear. When a woman heard her employer would be laying off several people in her department, she should have started looking for another job, but she chose to ignore the information despite her fear of being unemployed. This proverb alludes to the common belief that ostriches hide their heads in the sand when faced with danger, which ironically exposes them to even greater danger.

382) [No rose without a thorn](#)

No matter how perfect or beautiful a person or object may seem to be, when you look deeper, you'll find they have their own flaws. While roses are beautiful and sweet-smelling and may seem harmless, their stems have thorns that can hurt us. Other aspects of life that seem pleasant may also have secret risks. For example, a very delicious meal might give you indigestion.

383) [There is a tide in the affairs of men](#)

Opportunities and optimal time frames come and go, just as the tides of the sea. Be prepared to take action when there is a good environment for it, or when the "tide is in." For example, if the market is currently at a climb, it may be a good idea to buy more stocks. This phrase comes from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

384) [Money makes a man](#)

Having wealth gives a person prestige and importance. The implication is that without money, a man is not a well-respected person. This saying, originally translated into more poetic, archaic English as "money maketh man," is found in the ancient Greek poet Pindar's *Isthmian Odes*.

385) [The squeaky wheel gets the grease](#)

The person who complains the loudest gets their way. You and your friends, for example, have decided to order a pizza, and most of you would like pepperoni. However, one of your friends doesn't like pepperoni and insists on Hawaiian pizza until the rest of you give in.

386) [Opportunity makes a thief](#)

Lack of supervision, control, and accountability make it easy for people to abuse the system. For example, Janet may be a very moral person, but if she works in an environment where the management does not track company property, and other employees regularly take home company materials, she may find herself believing it's acceptable to steal from her workplace.

387) [Extremes meet](#)

Two opposite extremes can lead to one another or complement each other. For instance, you can be an extremely giving person, but if this charity is taken too far, you may end up with nothing left to give and even nothing for yourself. This can also refer to the partnership between people or organizations with opposite qualities.

388) [An army marches on its stomach](#)

One's energy depends on the satisfaction of their hunger. Although the saying, attributed to the French ruler Napoleon Bonaparte, referred literally to army provisions during a war, it has since taken on a broader meaning. Hunger can be an adversary to any person who requires energy to complete a task.

389) [Any publicity is good publicity](#)

Even negative attention can be valuable in getting one's name into the public eye. A struggling filmmaker released a controversial, offensive movie simply because he knew he would get the media attention he had been seeking, even if he, himself, knew it was not his best work. For him, the publicity was more important than his own self-respect.

390) [Always a bridesmaid, never a bride](#)

Some people are destined to remain in the shadows as their friends take center stage. A man felt dejected when, at age thirty-five, he looked around and realized all his close friends were married with families and good jobs, while he had relatively nothing. This discouraging proverb was the title of a 1917 song by Charles Collins.

391) [Speak well of the dead](#)

Be respectful of people who have died by saying only positive things about them. Don't shame them as they left our world and cannot defend themselves. This is the same meaning as a similar proverb, "Never speak ill of the dead," and can mean the same thing as "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all."

392) [A wonder lasts but nine days](#)

The sense of amazement at and admiration of a new sight or event quickly fades away as people get more familiar with it. For instance, an extravagant wedding, though spectacular in the moment and enjoyed by all, is often forgotten shortly afterward.

393) [Neither a borrower nor a lender be](#)

Try to live within your means, and do not get involved in money loans. This is one of many pieces of advice that Polonius gives his son in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Polonius explains, "For loan oft loses both itself and friend." Similar to the proverb "Lend your money, and lose your friend," this is a warning not to mix money and friendship as the burden associated with the transaction can damage relationships.

394) [Time works wonders](#)

A lot of things can improve or happen in a positive way, given enough time. For example, you may be learning to play a musical instrument and feeling frustrated at your lack of skill. But with consistent practice over time, you will progress until you and your friends are amazed at your own ability.

395) [There is always room at the top](#)

No matter how competitive a field is, there's always a way to achieve success in it. For example, even though the market may be flooded with graphic designers, you can use your talent and interpersonal skills to set yourself apart and have a very prosperous graphic design business. This proverb is attributed to US politician Daniel Webster, who was thought to have said it in reference to becoming a lawyer.

396) [When the wine is in, the wit is out](#)

Drunk people are apt to make silly mistakes and act foolishly. Avoid intoxication in any serious situation that requires prudence, cleverness, or resourcefulness. “Wit” here refers to intellectual ability rather than being witty.

397) [If you can't be good, be careful](#)

If you must indulge in immoral behavior, at least practice caution. For example, when a woman's son was going away to college, she knew she couldn't stop him from drinking and partying, but she still advised him to use his best judgment and avoid dangerous situations.

398) [He that is not with me is against me](#)

Some people take the stand that if someone is not supportive of their cause then they automatically consider them to be against it. This sort of division is especially common in the political domain where the public is often expected to choose between two opposing sides. This proverb is found in the New Testament of the Bible.

399) [The eye is the mirror of the soul](#)

You can tell a lot about a person by looking into their eyes. We show a lot of emotions through our eyes, whether we mean to or not. For example, someone can fake a smile, but if you look into their eyes, you can tell if they are actually happy or unhappy. This proverb is one translation of Matthew 6:22 from the Bible.

400) [If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys](#)

If you want a job done well, you must compensate your employees fairly. For instance, a man had just opened his first restaurant and hired some high school students, knowing he could get away with paying them less. Unfortunately, they ended up being more trouble than they were worth, always arriving late to work and performing poorly.

401) [Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today](#)

Do not procrastinate. If you have the ability to get something done now, do not wait until tomorrow. It is better to do the task sooner; you never know what might happen tomorrow to keep you from following through on your plans—or procrastinating again.

402) [More than enough is too much](#)

When our need is satisfied, anything more could be harmful. Anything less than enough is unsatisfying, but we are generally happy to have more than enough. Instead, this proverb suggests that “too much” is as bad as “too little,” and that moderation is best.

403) [The proper study of mankind is man](#)

We should focus on learning about human nature and behavior rather than metaphysical complexities like God and ultimate reality. Tangible things in the world around us are knowable, whereas the truths of existence are beyond our comprehension. This proverb reflects a common view in the Western world during the eighteenth century and comes from a famous poem by Alexander Pope.

404) [Art is long, life is short](#)

Art has a nature that transcends time and space, as compared to other materialistic objects. Is it any wonder that the works of Michelangelo are still being admired and analyzed five hundred years later? This is reminiscent of the other proverb “A thing of beauty is a joy forever.”

405) [Dogs bark, but the caravan moves on](#)

Move forward despite any criticism you may attract. We must not be disheartened or distracted from our goals by naysayers. For instance, when a man received a big bonus at work, there were rumors that he was receiving special treatment as a result of an old friendship.

406) [A good beginning makes a good ending](#)

Start strong, and you will flourish in the end. In school, making a good first impression with the teachers can lead to better grades at the end of the semester. Likewise, making a good first impression with your boss at a new job can have lasting effects on your standing in the company later on.

407) [Barking dogs seldom bite](#)

Pay no attention to threatening people; often they are only trying to scare you and have no courage to carry out their threats. A landlord had threatened to evict one tenant several times for hosting loud parties on the property. But the tenant, knowing the landlord was “all bark and no bite,” continued to party as he pleased.

408) [You cannot serve God and Mammon](#)

You can't be affiliated with two different causes with opposing agendas. For example, you can't be a devout member of a conservative religion and a “free love” devotee at the same time. “Mammon” is a word from the Bible that refers to worldly wealth and pursuits.

409) [One of these days is none of these days](#)

When we put something off for the future, we are never likely to get around to it. People often say that they will do something “one of these days,” which means “at some point in the future.” This proverb reminds us that procrastinating can lead to work never being finished, so it is better to do the task now or set a specific deadline for accomplishing it.

410) [A friend to everybody is a friend to nobody](#)

A true friendship needs attention and care, things that are not possible to give when one keeps too many friends. After all, there is only so much time in the day. Another interpretation alludes to the suspicious nature of one who does not reveal any negative side in their dealings with others.

411) [People who live in glass houses should not throw stones](#)

Do not be hypocritical. If you are going to criticize someone, make sure that you are not guilty of the same fault. For example, this proverb can be said to someone who gossips about others at work when they start to complain about how another coworker can't keep secrets.

412) [What's good for the goose is good for the gander](#)

What's appropriate for a man to do is also appropriate for a woman and vice versa, specifically in relationships or families. There should be no double standards. For example, if a wife enjoys a “girl's night out” with her friends, a husband may also enjoy a night out with his friends. “Gander” is a term for a male goose.

413) Delays are dangerous

Procrastination is your most dangerous enemy, as it steals your time and puts you at great risks. For example, one man kept putting off the renewal of his driver's license. He was already two weeks late and counting when a police officer pulled him over for speeding and discovered the man was driving illegally.

414) Eagles fly alone

Strong-willed, capable people tend to value their independence; their self-sufficiency and determination enable them to avoid associating much with others. One man was rarely seen speaking to his colleagues at work. He was too focused on climbing the corporate ladder to bother with personal relationships. Eagles are known for their keen eyesight, which enables them to hunt their prey far above the other birds.

415) Better be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion

It is better to be the leader of a less popular group than a mere follower in a prestigious group. For instance, according to this proverb, one is better off heading their own struggling start-up company than simply working as a peon in a Fortune 500 corporation. The idea is that one is apt to lose one's identity in the shuffle of a big organization.

416) Night brings counsel

Wait until morning to make a decision, because a night's rest will help calm your mind and clear your vision. If you have a difficult decision to make, it is easy to get frustrated and stuck while trying to consider options, or to make a hasty choice without thinking it through. Rest, dreams, and sleep itself will enable us to take a fresher look at the issue.

417) The shoemaker's son always goes barefoot

People proficient in certain skills do not use those skills on themselves or their family members, often because they are too busy. For example, a professional chef may not cook for their family, or a repair technician may not fix things around their own home.

418) Don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs

If you are experiencing good fortune, don't spoil it out of greed. Sometimes it is better not to push your luck. For instance, after much hard work at his job, a man is finally promoted with a huge raise. As a result, he becomes arrogant and begins acting too assertively with his managers, which leads to him being fired. This particular proverb comes from one of Aesop's fables, which tells the story of a farmer who had a goose that magically laid a golden egg each day. The farmer asked the goose to lay more eggs, and when it refused, he killed it and was left with nothing.

419) Hitch your wagon to a star

There are two common interpretations of this proverb. The first is that one will be prosperous if they follow closely behind an already successful person. The second is that one should set lofty goals for oneself. The proverb is widely attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson and appeared in his 1862 essay "American Civilization."

420) One nail drives out another

Life is cyclical, new things or people will take the place of old ones, but the state of affairs will stay more or less the same. For example, a city with a self-serving mayor can elect a new mayor, but the problem may not change just because a new person is in that role.

421) **Attack is the best form of defense**

It is best to take the enemy by surprise. A preemptive attack is often the most effective way to protect yourself. If you don't strike first, you remain vulnerable, waiting for your opponent's attack. Essentially, you'll be in a more powerful position if you are on the offensive rather than the defensive.

422) **There is nothing permanent except change**

Accept that life is full of change. Some people have a hard time acknowledging new events in their lives, whether it's a job loss, a move, or a lost relationship. Those who expect life to have changes (including unexpected ones) tend to cope much better. This proverb comes from Heraclitus, an early Greek philosopher.

423) **Comparisons are odious**

Comparison is often an arbitrary measurement. This is because each case may have its own special circumstances. In one family, there were two brothers, one of whom went to Harvard Law School and became a wealthy, successful lawyer. The other dropped out of high school and spent his life as a struggling artist. Yet both were content with their decisions, rendering any comparison unjustified.

424) **He who pays the piper calls the tune**

Only the financial supporters of an event should decide how things are done. When a high school class organized an end-of-the-year party, one vegetarian student objected to any meat being served, but the others decided to ignore that student as they had not contributed any money to the pool. A piper is a flute player, such as the one who appears in the famous German story *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*.

425) **Ask no questions and hear no lies**

It is common for one to withhold information simply because they don't want the inquiring person to know. For example, if a woman gets an ugly haircut, her husband may choose to avoid being honest with her about it. The proverb is attributed to the eighteenth-century Irish playwright Oliver Goldsmith.

426) **Cold hands, warm hearts**

Although they might not show it outwardly, some people are very compassionate and loving deep down. On first impression, one woman was typically viewed as cold and distant. But most people would agree that after getting to know her, they discovered she was one of the most caring people out there. For instance, they might learn that she spends every Saturday volunteering at the local animal shelter.

427) **Coming events cast their shadows before**

One can often predict the future by noticing signs of things to come. This is most noticeable in nature. For instance, one might observe that before a big thunderstorm, all the birds in the area will go silent, retreating into their nests. This proverb is attributed to Thomas Campbell, appearing in his poem "Lochiel's Warning" (1802).

428) **Circumstances alter cases**

One may receive special treatment depending on their circumstances. For example, a man pulled over for speeding may avoid receiving a ticket when the police officer learns that he is rushing to see his father in the hospital. This will not necessarily apply to the next speeding driver, as the circumstances differ.

429) [Every man has a price](#)

Even the most honorable, dignified person may surrender his morals for the right sum of money. For example, an upstanding man normally wouldn't start rumors about a colleague, but if it means he might get the promotion he's been seeking from his boss, he may consider sacrificing his own values for the bigger paycheck.

430) [Forbidden fruit is sweetest](#)

People are most tempted by that which is taboo or prohibited. For instance, when a teenager was grounded for getting poor grades in school, they couldn't resist defying their parents by sneaking out of the house, even though they didn't like going out much. The saying comes from the Bible story in which Adam and Eve are coaxed by a snake to eat forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge.

431) [A cat has nine lives](#)

This proverb is used when someone tends to avoid near-death experiences without suffering much harm. Historically and cross-culturally, cats are known to escape dangerous situations unscathed. It's no wonder that they are also said to "always land on their feet," as a fellow proverb alleges.

432) [A new broom sweeps clean](#)

New leadership in an organization will often make drastic changes. When a new CEO took over a large company, he dissolved an entire department, resulting in several layoffs. One version of the saying includes a second line that says, "but an old broom knows the corners," meaning the old management still has a better understanding of the finer details.

433) [What happens at home stays at home](#)

Personal and family-life matters should be kept private and discreet. An argument or a struggle between you and your spouse, for example, does not need to become the common knowledge of people in your greater community.

434) [Hope deferred makes the heart sick](#)

Hope is what drives people and makes them able to move on, but when the thing they hope for is delayed for too long, they become exhausted. For instance, a person tends to perform better at their occupation when there is hope for upward movement within the company. If the promotion they have been waiting for is repeatedly obstructed, they will be reluctant to give their best to the company.

435) [Bad money drives out good](#)

Undervalued things are often overshadowed by those of lesser quality. For instance, in a large company, it is common for inexperienced, underpaid staff to push out the veterans who are paid more. The proverb is the basic tenant of Gresham's law, which states that if two forms of currency are in circulation at the same time, the more valuable of the two will disappear over time.

436) [There is no disputing about tastes](#)

You can't argue about something subjective. Subjective topics include ones based on emotions and personal responses, such as food and music. You may detest sushi because you find it slimy and unpleasant, but there is no use in persuading your friend who loves it because they find it refreshing and delicious.

437) **Bear and forbear**

Have patience and endure whatever life may throw at you. This sentiment, inherent in the philosophy of Stoicism, advises one to never back down in the face of adversity or opposition. When a man was asked by his boss to work overtime three weeks in a row, he reminded himself of the satisfaction that comes only from enduring a trying situation.

438) **If wishes were horses, beggars would ride**

It's easy to wish for something. If we simply had to wish for something in order to have it, then even beggars would have food, clothes, and all their other needs and wants. Unfortunately, wishes are only fantasy and imagination; if we want something, either for ourselves or for others, then we have to work to achieve it.

439) **Conscience does make cowards of us all**

A guilty conscience can prevent one from doing something they want to do, but which society will not approve. For instance, even though a man and his wife are unhappy in their marriage, they may still be afraid to separate for fear of risking the well-being of their children. This proverb is found in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

440) **Don't put the cart before the horse**

Do things in their proper order; don't get ahead of yourself. A group of teenagers were so excited about their new punk rock band, they decided to play their first gig at a local bar. The only problem was that most of them hadn't yet learned to play their instruments.

441) **Don't do things by halves**

A task half-finished is not finished at all. If you start something, you had better finish it. For example, a man decided to take a painting course for one semester at the local college, but he quit as soon as he felt bored. As a result, he wasted precious money and energy without learning much at all.

442) **A lie has no legs**

Dishonesty will not get you very far as lies are often easily discovered. For instance, a man told his wife he was going to the gym, but instead he went to play cards with his friends. The lie caught up with him when she noticed he hadn't taken his gym bag with him.

443) **The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong**

The people who seem to be the most capable may not win in the end. A person who is lacking in physical ability for a sporting event may use his cleverness or other talents to get ahead of his competitors. Likewise someone who doesn't necessarily look attractive may use her charm and charisma to win a role in an audition.

444) **Enough is as good as a feast**

Satisfaction is found in moderation; excess is simply another form of waste. While some people find it their responsibility to own as many shoes as possible, others are content with one comfortable pair. A companion to the philosophy of minimalism, this proverb suggests that one should avoid acquiring things they don't truly need.

445) [Handsome is as handsome does](#)

One should be judged by their integrity and character, not by their looks. For instance, a person who devotes their energy to charity work will be well respected in their community, regardless of whether they are good-looking or not.

446) [It ain't over till the fat lady sings](#)

Don't be quick to presume a situation (good or bad) is over, when in fact it may still be in progress. Richard Wagner's famous opera the *Ring Cycle* is extremely long. In the very last section, a woman dressed as a mythical Valkyrie sings a song, finally ushering in the end of the story. Traditionally, the singer was rather plump. People attending the opera knew it was finally over when the "fat" lady sang.

447) [The devil is not so black as he is painted](#)

A person is not as evil or vicious as people may describe them. For example, you may have a coworker who your teammates say is a difficult person to get along with, but when you finally have a chance to talk to them privately, you realize they are quite thoughtful and sensitive. It's important not to let other people's judgments cloud our perceptions.

448) [After a storm comes a calm](#)

There is hope for those experiencing turmoil that relief is imminent. After a particularly trying time, one can take solace in the fact that brighter days are certainly just around the corner. For example, when all three of her kids fell ill with the flu, one mother thought she would never see the end of it. One day she woke up to find that all three had fully recovered and peace was finally restored in the house. This proverb comes as a relief when following its sister, "After a calm comes a storm."

449) [Wonders will never cease](#)

Life is full of surprises and the unexpected. Amazing events happened in the past and will continue to happen in the future. "I just saw an incredible nature documentary about the ocean in Antarctica, and how much life is there," your dad tells you. "Wonders never cease!"

450) [Nothing is lost for asking](#)

Pride often keeps us from asking for the things we really want. However, we lose nothing by asking, and we shouldn't be shy to ask, even if the answer is likely to be "no." This proverb encourages us to take our chances and ask, for example, for a raise at work, a discount in price in the shops, or even the way to a certain place in the street.

451) [A miss is as good as a mile](#)

No matter how close you come, a loss is still a loss. After being down by twenty-five points, one high school football team had made a remarkable comeback, but they still came up just short of a win when the final whistle was blown. This sentiment is echoed in the phrase "close, but no cigar."

452) [Don't go near the water until you learn how to swim](#)

Don't attempt a task until you are absolutely ready. A carpenter was excited to have purchased a brand-new electric saw. Unfortunately, he neglected to completely read the instructions before using it and only realized his error once he damaged the saw's blade.

453) **Take time by the forelock**

Take advantage of opportunities by acting promptly and decisively. Do not waste time when you have the chance to do what you want. A "forelock" is the front part of a horse's mane, so to take something "by the forelock" means to hold it and lead it, which makes this proverb very similar to "Seize the day."

454) **Saying and doing are two different things**

Taking action is more difficult and more meaningful than simply talking about plans. For example, someone may have a lot of ideas about politics, but if they do not actively participate in the political process or run for a government office, what they say does not matter much.

455) **Better to die on your feet than to live on your knees**

Stand up and fight for what you believe in; it is better to defend your cause than to simply lie down in submission. This proverb, attributed to Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, serves as a challenge to the oppressed among us to fight back. Thus, it has become a common motto in revolutions and uprisings worldwide.

456) **Fame is a magnifying glass**

Celebrities are subject to greater scrutiny than the average person. Presidential candidates, for instance, undergo intense inspection in order for people to determine their suitability for office. Any error they've committed in the past will surely be revealed sooner or later.

457) **Life is short, and time is swift**

We should prioritize what is most important because we do not have as much time on Earth as we think we do. Not only are our lives limited, but also opportunities will not wait for us if we take too long to make decisions.

458) **They that dance must pay the fiddler**

There is always a price or consequence for a given benefit or advantage. It may be fun to throw a huge party, but it will come at a monetary cost. In a nonmonetary example, you may owe a favor to a friend or acquaintance for allowing them to borrow your sports car for a night on the town.

459) **First think, and then speak**

Consider your words wisely; otherwise, you may say something you'll regret. When a high school class was asked a question, one student rushed to answer, wanting only to impress the teacher. But in their haste, they altogether missed the point of the question and were left humiliated in front of their classmates.

460) **Everything must have a beginning**

Even an enormous endeavor starts with a humble beginning. For instance, if a woman dreams of one day running a marathon, she should understand that her training must begin with shorter-distance runs. As a sister proverb agrees, "Rome wasn't built in a day."

461) You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours

You do me a favor, and I'll do you a favor. If you need your sister to help you with your homework, you can promise in return to help her write her resume and cover letter for a new job. "You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours," you tell her.

462) If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing well

If you are going to put in the effort to do something worthwhile, it makes sense to work harder for a better outcome. If you are going to build a house, for example, you will need to use a lot of energy and resources. Since building a house is so much work already, it would be wise to put in a little extra effort to make your house sturdy and beautiful instead of mediocre.

463) What must be, must be

There is no use worrying about or trying to resist what life has in store. Instead, it's better to accept things as they come, even if it means getting turned down for an opportunity you were hoping for or having to move out of state. A more common version of this phrase is "*que sera sera*."

464) Zeal without knowledge is a runaway horse

Enthusiasm, unaided by skill or knowledge, will cause more harm than good. Just as an unmanageable horse is worse than having no horse, an employee (for example) who tries to get things done but has no idea how to do so only creates additional problems.

465) It is no use crying over spilt milk

There's no point in being upset about something that can't be fixed. Imagine trying to put milk back into the carton from which it spilled; it would be completely impossible, yet people may fuss over things that are impossible to undo. The next time you make a mistake that can't be fixed, such as breaking a vase because you were not paying attention, tell yourself that it doesn't help to be disappointed and just be more careful next time.

466) A cat always lands on its feet

Even the worst predicament can be overcome with grace. A woman filed for divorce and lost her job in the same week, but her friends weren't worried because she always seemed to come out on top. Soon thereafter, she was engaged to marry a millionaire. The proverb refers to the cat's innate ability to right itself when falling to the ground.

467) No living man all things can

Every person has limits. A person may have a lot of accomplishments, but there will always be some skills that they haven't mastered. This proverb might otherwise read as "no living man can do all things," but it is phrased poetically in order to be more memorable.

468) The eye is bigger than the belly

We have limited needs, but unlimited wants. To sustain ourselves we only need a certain amount of food each day, although when looking at a menu, we may wish we could eat everything on it because it all looks tempting. We may also want a much wider number and variety of clothes, cars, and technological devices than we actually need.

469) It's best to be on the safe side

When making a choice, the best option (usually) is the less risky one. People usually say this in a situation when there is a somewhat high risk or danger to begin with. For example, if you decided to hike Mount Fuji and needed to choose between hiking it in the winter when there are snow and ice and a much bigger risk of slipping or freezing, and in the summer when it is much safer, it is “best to be on the safe side” and hike it in the summer, even if that means more crowds and less excitement.

470) [Good wine needs no bush](#)

Quality speaks for itself. A high-caliber product needs no advertisement or showing off in order to be sold. The proverb comes from a time when establishments would hang grape vines and flowers outside in order to let passersby know that wine was sold there.

471) [Youth must be served](#)

Young people must be allowed to follow their inclinations to have fun and enjoy themselves. To your spouse who complains about your teenager’s noisy parties, you could reply, “But kids need to have their fun! Youth must be served.”

472) [Hunger is the best sauce](#)

Everything tastes better when one is hungry. For a person who has been fasting for the whole day, even a peanut butter and jelly sandwich will taste like a gourmet meal. People, and children in particular, are usually fussy about food only because they are not really hungry.

473) [Laugh and grow fat](#)

This is an encouragement to enjoy your life, whatever situation you are in. This saying suggests that remaining cheerful will lead to health. Originally from China, it comes from a time and place in which being fat was associated with health.

474) [No flying from fate](#)

We cannot escape destiny. This proverb supposes that free will has limits, and our actions can’t prevent things “meant to be” that are beyond our control. “Fly” is used here figuratively to mean “flee” or “get away from.”

475) [Experience without learning is better than learning without experience](#)

One learns best by practical training rather than acquiring theoretical knowledge. Many ideas look reasonable on paper, but when they are put to practice, they fail. This is why people with experience are more appreciated than novices who haven’t dealt with the complications of real-life situations.

476) [Better an egg today than a hen tomorrow](#)

It is better to have a sure thing today, however meager, than a mere chance tomorrow. For instance, it is common advice that you should not quit your current job, no matter how much you hate it, until a replacement job is officially secured. Otherwise, you could end up without any job at all.

477) [Wake not a sleeping lion](#)

Don’t get into a situation that risks developing into a problem you can’t handle. For example, a country should not do something that might provoke another country that is equally or even more powerful. Similar phrases are “sleeping giant” and “sleeping tiger.”

478) [A hungry man is an angry man](#)

One becomes unpleasant when they lack such a simple thing as food. This concept has long been ubiquitous in many cultures, so much so that the playful term *hangry* (hungry + angry) has recently made an appearance in colloquial English.

479) [There is no royal road to learning](#)

There is no easy way or shortcut to gaining knowledge. Learning anything important and worthwhile takes time, work, and discipline; otherwise, you will not get to the depth and breadth required to build experience, and it will be soon forgotten. A royal road is a road a king takes to get from one place to another; therefore, it is flat, comfortable, and easy to travel.

480) [The cowl does not make the monk](#)

Outward appearances aren't an indicator of a person's true character. You may meet a person who is very charming and well-dressed, only to later discover they are selfish and unethical. A cowl is a hood that a monk, or a holy man, wears around his head. All monks wear cowls, but that does not mean all of them are necessarily holy and good on the inside.

481) [Bad things come in threes](#)

When something unfortunate has occurred twice, it is likely to happen a third time. For instance, when in the same week a man broke his leg and caught the flu, he found himself waiting for a third misfortune to come his way. This proverb is a counterpoint to the more common, "Good things come in threes," highlighting another superstitious belief found in many different cultures.

482) [Don't change horses in midstream](#)

Choose the appropriate time to make a needed change. For example, a restaurant owner may not want to fire his head chef just before the start of a fully booked evening. This proverb comes from a time in history when most travel and transportation of goods were done on horseback. Thus, it would be quite dangerous to switch horses in the middle of a river.

483) [The apple never falls far from the tree](#)

People are always very similar to their parents, at least in some way. If your mother complains all the time about everything and you find yourself one day complaining about your day at work, your friend who is listening to you may say, "The apple never falls far from the tree, does it?" Typically it is in reference to negative traits, rather than positive ones.

484) [You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink](#)

You can give someone an opportunity, but you can't force them to act on it. You may put your son in soccer classes, hoping it will inspire a love of athletics in him, but ultimately his success in the sport depends on his own interest and willingness to improve and enjoy it.

485) [Great oaks from little acorns grow](#)

Even the most monumental achievements start from humble beginnings. For instance, Apple is now one of the world's most successful businesses, but many people are surprised to learn that it was started by twenty-year-old Steve Jobs in his parents' garage.

486) [Silence gives consent](#)

This proverb suggests that someone's silence can be interpreted as agreement or permission. For example, a neighbor might assume that it is all right to take fruits from your tree if you haven't told him not to. This phrase comes from the Latin maxim "*qui tacet consentiret*," or "The person who is silent agrees." In political or business meetings, an agreement can be adopted when there are no objections, also known as "silence procedure." Unstated agreement, or "tacit silence," usually cannot be a basis for legal contracts.

487) [In wine there is truth](#)

People are often more honest when they are under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol is well-known as a relaxant, causing people to become freer and more open with their thoughts and actions. If you want to know what your friend really thinks of something, pay attention to what they say the next time they are slightly drunk.

488) [Don't make a mountain out of a molehill](#)

Don't overreact and turn a minor problem into something bigger than it actually is. For instance, a woman berated her husband, deeming him irresponsible for being merely ten minutes late to an appointment. A molehill refers to the mound of dirt left by a mole after it has burrowed into the ground.

489) [A jack-of-all-trades is master of none](#)

One who attempts to learn many skills at once will likely not become an expert in any. Although the standalone "jack-of-all-trades" is used in a positive light, the original proverb has a slightly negative connotation. The term "Johnny do-it-all" has also been employed with a negative air.

490) [One must draw the line somewhere](#)

No matter how kind or tolerant you are, you need to set limits with others so that your personal privacy and property are not invaded. For example, someone who has an apple tree might be happy to share some fruit with neighbors who want to pick some. If a neighbor brings crates and a ladder and starts stripping the tree of apples, the tree owner will need to establish a rule about how many apples neighbors can take at a time. This is related to the saying "Draw a line in the sand," meaning to set a metaphorical boundary that someone should not cross.

491) [If the cap fits, wear it](#)

If criticism or blame applies to you, accept it, even if it's unpleasant. For example, if your friend who procrastinates all the time comes to you and says, "My boss is mad at me because I didn't finish my assignment," you can reply, "Well, if the cap fits, wear it." This proverb has the same meaning as "If the shoe fits, wear it."

492) [What is worth doing is worth doing well](#)

If you are going to take the time to do something, you might as well just put in a little bit of extra time and energy to make sure it turns out well so that it becomes worth the overall effort. For example, when baking a cake for the first time, you can choose to rush through the process, hoping it turns out okay, or you can wisely take it a little more slowly, read more recipes, and watch more videos to make sure you have a great result.

493) [They also serve who only stand and wait](#)

Everyone can make a contribution, even if they are somehow disabled or less capable. A person with very limited skills at a large fundraiser can at least stand at the door, smiling and welcoming people. This phrase comes from a poem called "On His Blindness" by the famous poet John Milton.

494) [Never judge by appearance](#)

You can't tell someone's character by looking at them. We may associate goodness with beauty and evil with ugliness, but in reality the way a person looks is not a reflection of their true character. This can also be used in reference to objects. For example, a homemade cake may not be pretty, but it could still be delicious.

495) [Hatred is blind, as well as love](#)

When we have strong feelings, whether positive or negative, about someone, we usually fail to see them in an objective light. For instance, one woman disliked one of her colleagues simply because they had received a promotion when the woman hadn't. The colleague was always kind to her, even buying her a birthday gift, but nothing could make the woman set her resentment aside.

496) [The last straw breaks the camel's back](#)

Everyone and everything has a breaking point. Even though camels are very sturdy animals and a strand of straw is almost weightless, even a camel will buckle under too many pieces of straw. So too should we be careful not to unknowingly overburden ourselves or others with too many obligations and tasks. This proverb is identical in meaning to "The last drop makes the cup run over."

497) [Hope springs eternal in the human breast](#)

It is human nature to maintain hope even in a trying or doubtful situation. For example, a woman was diagnosed with an advanced-stage cancer, but she never gave up hope that she would recover or a new treatment would be discovered. The proverb appears in Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man*.

498) [Honey is sweet, but the bee stings](#)

One must pay the price to enjoy certain pleasures in life. One man was pleased with his new paycheck when he was promoted to manager. However, he was disappointed to find that his former peers in the department treated him differently as their superior. In this case, he had to sacrifice his old friendships for the higher pay.

499) [Better to light one candle than to curse the darkness](#)

Instead of complaining about a problem, take an action, no matter how small, to solve it. For instance, one woman may be prone to whining about Earth's environmental crisis, but if she refuses to contribute with even a small act such as recycling bottles and cans, she has no right to complain. This proverb of ancient Chinese origin is a call to action, however insignificant that action may seem.

500) [Happy is he that is happy in his children](#)

A parent's happiness is dependent on that of their children. When a mother saw the look of joy on her son's face on his wedding day, she was also filled with joy and pride, knowing she had raised him well. On the other hand, a father will likely be disappointed when his daughter becomes a criminal and winds up in prison.

501) [It takes a whole village to raise a child](#)

It takes an entire community to ensure that a child becomes a successful, well-rounded person. In certain cultures, villagers take an active part in spending time, educating, looking out for, and even taking care of each other's children. Even in more urban societies, children still need multiple positive examples and influences in their daily lives.

502) [We soon believe what we desire](#)

We are biased to believe something is true when we are eager for it to happen. If there is a person you don't really like, and you hear rumors of something unfortunate happening to them, it may be tempting to believe they are true. Let objective truth and evidence, not bias, guide your beliefs wherever possible.

503) [Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise](#)

Sometimes it's better to lack the knowledge of something, when knowing can cause undue concern or distraction. For example, the fact that the mayonnaise on your sandwich is one day past its expiration date will probably have no effect on your health, and yet knowing the fact would probably make you upset; not knowing leaves you in blissful ignorance.

504) [None so deaf as those who won't hear](#)

People who obstinately deny the truth are impossible to convince, as opposed to those who are simply unaware of the truth. This proverb warns against trying to change the views of the willfully ignorant, or those who actively avoid knowledge that they do not agree with. For example, you might not have much luck explaining climate science to a climate-change skeptic who works in the petrochemical industry. Another variant of this proverb is "None so blind as those who won't see."

505) [Poverty is no vice](#)

People should not be judged as unworthy simply for not having money. A "vice" is an immoral characteristic or habit. While some vices, like gambling or addiction, can lead to poverty, poverty itself is not a behavior that people can control. This saying may originally come from Tudor English playwright John Florio. In the play *Second Fruits*, Florio wrote, "Never be ashamed of your calling, for poverty is no vice, though it be an inconvenience."

506) [In a calm sea, every man is a pilot](#)

People are ready to lead and take control when things are easy, but as soon as difficulties arise, they quit. A pilot is the person who steers a boat or ship. When the sea is calm, it's very easy to guide and direct a ship, and there's not as much work to do. Being the pilot of a ship becomes much more stressful when storms and other challenges come along.

507) [Soon learnt, soon forgotten](#)

If something is quick and easy to learn, you are likely to forget it quickly, so you need to give yourself enough time to practice a new skill. For example, you might find that it's easy to learn how to fold origami birds, but if you try to do so again in a few months' time, you may find yourself having no idea how to do it and need to learn it again.

508) [The absent are always in the wrong](#)

It's always easy to blame someone for a problem when that person is not there to defend their innocence. For example, in a work meeting, Jack's boss complains about the fact that someone is using too much colored ink to print documents. Instead of blaming himself or someone else in the room and risking a confrontation, Jack finds it easier to divert the blame to a coworker who just left for vacation.

509) [There is no peace for the wicked](#)

Those who do wrong things will always be troubled, even if it's only in their state of mind. A person, for example, who robs others will be psychologically disturbed and miserable even if they are not caught for a long time. This phrase originally comes from the Bible and may also refer to the fact that there will be eternal torment in the afterlife for those who are wicked.

510) [You cannot get blood out of a stone](#)

You can't get help, money, or resources from a person who is unwilling to share, or who has none. A stone, being nonliving, has no blood inside. Likewise an indigent or selfish, miserly person is unwilling and/or unable to give you something you need.

511) [Good fences make good neighbors](#)

Good neighbors should respect one another's privacy. Although two neighbors may be great friends, they must understand that each goes home to his respective household at the end of the day. This proverb is reminiscent of "A hedge between keeps friendship green."

512) [Men make houses; women make homes](#)

Men construct the buildings we live in, but women make them feel welcoming. This is a play on words that supports traditional gender expectations for men to perform physical labor and women to perform emotional labor.

513) [There's a black sheep in every flock](#)

There's always one person in a given social group who is a disgrace or embarrassment. Your brother Jon who dropped out of college and started smoking pot may be considered the black sheep in your own "flock," or family. Traditionally the wool of white sheep is desired and preferred over the wool of black sheep.

514) [You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear](#)

You can't make something beautiful or refined out of something fundamentally ugly or poor in quality. For example, you can't make a fashionable dress using only burlap sackcloth. In an alternative example, you can't use makeup and clothes to make a truly ugly person look attractive. A sow is a female pig.

515) [Don't tell tales out of school](#)

If you are known to gossip, others may not trust you with their private matters. It is best not to reveal confidential information. The saying was originally used among schoolchildren who would often put other students down in order to get in good standing with the teacher.

516) [After dinner sit a while; after supper walk a mile](#)

Dinner is a large meal that deserves a proper rest afterwards, while it's not advisable to go to sleep directly after supper because you need some activity to speed up the digestive system, which tends to slow down during sleep. You might also have trouble getting a good night's sleep when going to bed on a full stomach.

517) [Love sees no faults](#)

When you love someone, you cannot be objective because you ignore that person's flaws. Love is so powerful that it changes how we perceive our loved ones, and we either fail to recognize their negative traits or even reframe flaws as endearing features.

518) [The husband is always the last to know](#)

The husband may be the last person to find out when his wife is having an affair. There is also a proverb that says, "The wife is always the last to know." The indication, in any case, is that a spouse is the last person to discover the other spouse's infidelity because the unfaithful spouse obviously take care to hide it from them.

519) [Lend your money, and lose your friend](#)

This is a warning not to mix money with friendship. If one friend owes another money, this can cause expectations and anxieties that interfere with the relationship. The implication is that you should never lend money to friends. If you do give money to a friend, you should consider it a gift and not a loan.

520) [He that knows nothing, doubts nothing](#)

Ignorant people are typically gullible as well; they do not know enough to even challenge a questionable idea. One man was able to convince a dim-witted person that ice cream is made out of cabbage milk.

521) [Accidents will happen in the best-regulated families](#)

Even the most careful, cautious people experience accidents. Some things are simply out of one's control. Even a man who spends his life obsessing over his physical health can be struck and injured by an oncoming vehicle in the street. Often shortened to simply, "Accidents happen," the sentiment was popularized by Charles Dickens in his *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (1850).

522) [First deserve, and then desire](#)

One must work hard before aspiring to any rewards. For example, an employee looking to be promoted must first prove themselves by performing exemplary work at the expected level and making a noticeable impact at the company.

523) [A creaking gate hangs long](#)

Someone in poor health may survive longer than expected. This proverb is typically employed when a person on their deathbed, perhaps with a terminal illness, continues living day after day, month after month, possibly even outliving healthy people.

524) [In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king](#)

A man who has shortcomings and deficiencies will still feel superior if he surrounds himself with people who are even worse off. If you are blind in one eye, you would be at a disadvantage around people with two good eyes; however, if everyone else is totally blind, then you are clearly at an advantage. Someone who is bad at algebra will feel much more comfortable and even start helping others if everyone else is even worse than they are, for example.

525) [A heavy purse makes a light heart](#)

Those with money in their pockets tend to live carefree lives. Many of the worries plaguing people in daily life are due to a lack of financial security. When one man finally got a big raise at work, his friends noticed that he was suddenly much more pleasant to be around.

526) **The longest day must have an end**

Even the worst or most obnoxious situation will eventually be over. You may be dealing with a stressful upcoming event that keeps you busy day and night, with little time to rest or relax. The next time you feel frustrated about it, you can remind yourself that “the longest day will have an end,” and relax in the belief that soon enough it will be behind you.

527) **You don't know what you've got until it's gone**

It's easy to take something or someone for granted, and we don't really appreciate it until it's no longer there. “I made a mistake by letting my girlfriend go,” your brother tells you. “She was the best person I ever dated. I guess you don't know what you've got until it's gone.”

528) **Advice when most needed is least heeded**

Pride and dogmatism can blind one from useful advice, even when they need it the most. After witnessing his friend's recurring relationship problems for months on end, a man suggested they finally break up for good, but his friend was too stubborn to heed the guidance.

529) **You cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs**

In any important undertaking, some sacrifices must be made. For example, to improve a company of which you are the new CEO, you may have to make some unpleasant decisions, such as firing ineffective employees or making reorganizational changes.

530) **Faith will move mountains**

A strong belief in oneself can often lead to extraordinary achievements. When a marathon runner scratched his leg in the middle of a race, onlookers were unsure whether he would even finish. But his faith was so strong that not only did he finish the race, he came in first place. The proverb is also used in a spiritual context to refer to faith or belief in God.

531) **He that will steal an egg will steal an ox**

A person who is willing to commit a small crime won't hesitate to commit a more serious one. For instance, a thief who starts out as a kid stealing candy from the store will eventually graduate to robbing people's houses. Even the theft of a seemingly insignificant item is still a dishonest act.

532) **Love is without reason**

You can't explain why people fall in love with each other. Your standards in your partner may be totally different from other people's preferences. Love is a feeling that we cannot control, and it is useless to try to rationalize why it happens, even when it seems improbable that certain people would love each other.

533) **A small leak will sink a great ship**

A simple flaw in character can lead to one's downfall. Even the wisest person can fail due to a seemingly minor error. Another interpretation is attributed to Benjamin Franklin, who cautions one to “beware of little expenses; a small leak will sink a great ship.” In other words, miniscule expenses still add up over time. In today's world, people who spend only \$2.50 on a coffee every morning may not realize that this amounts to over \$900 yearly.

534) [Half a loaf is better than no bread](#)

It is better to accept less of something than to receive nothing at all. When a man heard that his favorite band was playing a sold-out concert nearby, he was desperate to find a ticket. He eventually found one, and even though it was one of the worst seats in the venue, he was still grateful that he made it inside.

535) [Fine feathers make fine birds](#)

A handsome appearance will make you look impressive. If you present yourself in an attractive way, your character will also be judged as such. This superficial proverb stands in contrast to those like “Don’t judge a book by its cover,” which warn against taking one’s appearance too seriously. It refers to the fact that a bird’s worth is typically judged by its plumage.

536) [Discretion is the better part of valor](#)

Avoid unnecessary risks; sometimes it is better, and even more courageous, to play it safe. Though one may desire to be a hero, it may be wise to err on the side of caution. When a man discovered a bear roaming around outside his house, he considered running out to chase it away, but thinking again, he realized this would only be a foolish, futile act.

537) [The exception proves the rule](#)

The existence of a small number of individual instances that do not follow a rule establishes the rule, rather than negates it. This often is the case with stereotypes. For example, your sister tells you, “Cities are noisy places,” and you immediately respond, “But Zurich is a quiet city.” The fact you mentioned just one exception may implicitly mean that you are accepting the rule.

538) [Two blacks do not make a white](#)

You cannot justify your wrong action by the actions of others. If your friend cheats on the exam, rides the bus without a ticket, or steals from shops, this is not a valid excuse for you to do the same, and when you are caught, you’ll get punished.

539) [Don't care was made to care](#)

Apathy will get you nowhere. Those without purpose or gumption will meet with a lot of trouble because of their negligence and will be forced to care. Thus, it is a worthy response to a teenager’s classic indifference.

540) [There is an exception to every rule](#)

No rule or principle is perfectly inflexible, permanent, or unchanging. For example, while cold-calling is generally a poor way to make sales, a particularly charismatic person may be able to find a lot of success doing this. Or a teacher who normally doesn’t allow snacks in their classroom may make an exception because there is a special occasion at school.

541) [Hoist your sail when the wind is fair](#)

Wait for an opportune moment to make an important decision. A young boy wanted to ask his parents for a new bicycle, but he felt it best to wait until they were in a good mood to improve his chances. Sailors have to wait for the wind to blow in the right direction before spreading their sails.

542) [You never know what you can do until you try](#)

You can't be sure that you will fail or succeed at something until you try it. In fact, you may be surprised at your own abilities and talents. For example, starting your own business may sound intimidating, but in the process you may quickly learn you have the capacity to develop and utilize all the skills necessary.

543) **He that will lie will steal**

Theft is simply another form of dishonesty; if one is comfortable lying, one probably won't mind stealing as well. For example, if a mother notices that her son has already formed a habit of lying by age ten, she will be disappointed, but not surprised, when he grows up to become a car thief.

544) **Injuries may be forgiven but not forgotten**

When someone hurts you, it's best to treat them with caution in the future; otherwise, you could get hurt all over again. Forgiving an injury is good because it helps us to let go of the pain and move on, but trust is very difficult to repair. A very similar proverb is "If we are bound to forgive an enemy, we cannot trust him."

545) **Second thoughts are best**

Think twice before making a decision because you will come up with better solutions after reflection. For example, you might be tempted to say yes immediately when you are offered a free lunch, but if you thought about it more, you'd realize that you will have to sit with a group you don't like.

546) **Between two stools you fall to the ground**

Make up your mind! When faced with a choice between two options, one should pick one and stick with it rather than attempting to do both. One man was offered two jobs but couldn't decide which one to accept, so he attempted to do both. But working the night shift for one and day shift for the other, he realized he had not performed well in either and finally lost both jobs.

547) **A cat may look at a king**

Even the lowest people in society retain basic human rights. For instance, a homeless person in the street deserves common decency and respect just as much as a wealthy businessman. Integrity and respect should not be reserved solely for those with a higher status.

548) **Custom reconciles us to everything**

Given enough time, one will adapt to any circumstance. When he first moved from Florida to Maine, one man thought he would never get used to the frigid winters, but after two years of dealing with the cold, he actually came to appreciate the charm of winter in the Northeast.

549) **Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater**

Be careful not to eliminate something positive when dealing with a problem. When a teacher discovered a few students had committed plagiarism in their papers, she punished the entire class, not only the guilty persons. Therefore, the innocent students had to suffer as a result of the teacher's overreaction.

550) **The greatest talkers are the least doers**

People who complain the most about a problem often do the least to fix it. Because talking is easier than taking action, someone who is afraid or too lazy to take action will often stall or fill the space by merely talking. You may know someone who spends a lot of time reading the news and going on about what a terrible place the world is, instead of going out into the community and helping in some way.

551) **The face is the index of the mind**

A person's expression will reveal what they're thinking. If a friend of yours says they are happy, but you see that there are no crinkles near their eyes when they smile, you can tell they are actually feeling sad or discouraged. An index in this case means a "sign" or an indication of something.

552) **Set a thief to catch a thief**

The best person to bring down a thief is another thief who is familiar with their way of thinking and their tricks. This is similar to the phrase "It takes one to know one." For example, some animal reserves hire former poachers in security roles because they will be able to identify entrances that poachers would use and see weaknesses in the park's security.

553) **Diligence is the mother of good luck**

One's hard work and perseverance will be rewarded with good fortune. We shouldn't expect benefits to come to us without any effort on our part. For example, when a young lawyer won his first big case, he knew it wasn't a matter of luck, but a result of his hard work and determination

554) **Of two evils choose the lesser**

When you have a choice to make and neither option is attractive, choose the one that is less damaging or costly. This quote comes from the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. As an example, the British philosopher Philippa Foot came up with the "trolley problem" in 1967. Imagine you see a runaway trolley headed toward five people who are tied to the track. You could pull a lever to switch the train to another track, but there is one person tied to that track. Would it be less evil to pull the lever and kill one person?

555) **As a man lives, so shall he die**

The way in which one dies is typically a reflection of the way he lived his life. Thus, a man who lived a calm, reserved life is apt to die peacefully of natural causes in old age. On the other hand, a man who is reckless and risk-taking in his affairs is more likely to die in an accident, possibly even of his own doing. The proverb is also a comment on the inevitability of death in general.

556) **All cats are grey in the dark**

In darkness, physical appearances that normally distinguish one from the other becomes irrelevant. Similarly, if you buy a speedy car but live in a busy city with slow traffic, it becomes no different from any other car.

557) **Self-preservation is the first law of nature**

All living creatures struggle to ensure their survival, even at the expense of others. This is a philosophical or political view that egoism, or concern for one's self, is more important than altruism, or concern for others. This phrase is found in English agriculturalist Charles Varlo's 1796 book *Floating Ideas of Nature, suited to the Philosopher, Farmer, and Mechanic*. Varlo said that "no one can be blamed for doing the best he can for himself and family."

558) **An aim in life is the only fortune worth finding**

Having a sense of purpose in one's life is more valuable than material wealth. Many people become depressed late in life when they realize they have simply been following the masses without an inner purpose. The quote is attributed to nineteenth-century Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson.

559) **It is a sad house where the hen crows louder than the cock**

In many traditional cultures, the man is expected to have more authority and leadership in the family, just as a cock typically makes louder crowing noises than a hen does. According to these cultures, it's an unfortunate home where the woman enjoys more authority and control than the man.

560) **It takes two to make a quarrel**

When two people get into a fight, they both share blame. Even if your friend or loved one did something to provoke you, you still have the responsibility of how to react. You can choose to argue or have a more controlled response instead, even though the latter is often more difficult.

561) **Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's**

People who live under a government are obligated to pay any taxes that they owe to that government. In this line from the Bible (Matthew 22:21), Jesus tells his followers that even if they do not agree with their ruler, they should give him the tribute money he expects.

562) **Nothing is certain but death and taxes**

We can rarely be sure of what will happen in the future. This humorous quote is often attributed to United States founding statesman Benjamin Franklin, who used a similar phrase in a 1789 letter.

563) **He who begins many things finishes but few**

If you attempt too many projects at once, you will not have the energy or time to complete them all. A greedy house painter agreed to take on four contracts at one time, thinking they could accomplish it all on schedule. However, as a result of being overloaded with work, they couldn't finish a single job on time.

564) **There are two sides to every question**

There is more than one valid opinion in a given issue, especially an important issue. One person may support the idea of minimum wage as an effective way to maintain living expenses, while another person may argue that wage limits could hurt small businesses. Both sides of the issue have their own reasons and experiences for thinking the way they do.

565) **Big fish eat little fish**

Powerful people or organizations tend to devour those who are weaker. For example, when Apple's iPod was first released, it quickly became the new standard for mp3 players, sending most of its competitors into the shadows. This centuries-old proverb literally refers to the food chain in general, in which bigger, stronger animals normally eat smaller ones.

566) **Words cut more than swords**

Words cause more lasting hurt than physical damage. Psychological harm leaves a lasting impact that can take years, if not a lifetime, to recover from. Be very careful in how you treat and speak to others, and be considerate of their feelings.

567) **One beats the bush, and another catches the bird**

One person performs the labor, and another gets the reward. This proverb describes a type of bird hunting in which one partner scares a bird out of a bush, a process called "thrushing," and someone

else catches the bird as it tries to escape. Hunting like this was typically a leisure activity for wealthy people, and the thrushing was done by an assistant who did not get credit for participating in the hunt.

568) [Don't quarrel with your bread and butter](#)

Don't argue with a person you depend on. Often used in a work environment, this proverb implies that one should not create unnecessary problems with their employer lest they be fired. A similar sentiment exists in, "Don't bite the hand that feeds you."

569) [The greatest hate springs from the greatest love](#)

The more we love someone, the deeper will be our frustration with them when they let us down. A stranger cannot betray you or even hurt you as easily as a loved one can. Feeling strong love for another person makes us more vulnerable to being hurt, and therefore experiencing more powerful negative emotions than we would otherwise.

570) [Politics makes strange bedfellows](#)

People or groups with different ideologies, and who would normally disagree with each other, will work together when they share a common goal. For example, environmentalists and oil companies are traditionally enemies, but they could join forces to fight against a new, less-green energy technology. The term "strange bedfellows" comes from English playwright William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and it means that people you would not expect to get along are "getting in bed" with each other.

571) [Be content with your lot, one cannot be first in everything](#)

Instead of longing for the things they don't have, one should be grateful for the things they do have. This age-old sentiment is advice to those unwilling to accept their circumstances in life. For instance, one man found himself jealous of a friend with a big house, a beautiful wife, and adorable kids. What he failed to notice were the positive gifts in his own life, such as freedom and good physical health.

572) [Talk of the devil, and he is sure to appear](#)

Someone has appeared right after they were mentioned in conversation. In casual use this is often shortened to "speak of the devil." This proverb comes from medieval European superstition that mentioning the devil would summon him.

573) [After us, the deluge](#)

This is said by the reckless speaker who doesn't care what happens after his time has passed. For instance, if a person is leaving his job, he might not mind if he makes some mistakes in his last days that will negatively affect the rest of the company. This proverb is translated directly from the French, "*Après nous, le déluge*," spoken by Madame de Pompadour, the lover of King Louis XV.

574) [Give a thief enough rope and he'll hang himself](#)

A wrongdoer will work for their own demise if they feel they are not being watched. For example, when a bank teller was suspected of stealing money from the bank, their manager commended their performance and gave them even higher access in the security system. After this, all the manager had to do was wait to catch the thief in the act.

575) [You cannot make a crab walk straight](#)

You can't change the inherent nature of a person (or thing). Just as it would be frustrating for both you and the crab to try to force it to walk straight, it would be equally useless and even damaging to try to change the nature of a person you know.

576) **Hide not your light under a bushel**

Do not keep your talents and positive qualities to yourself; share them with the world. For example, a woman with a stunningly beautiful voice should not limit herself to singing in the shower. The proverb comes from the Bible's Sermon on the Mount where Jesus advises one not to hide his faith in God. A bushel is a unit of measure equal to about eight gallons, but it can also refer to a container that holds a bushel's worth, as it does in this proverb.

577) **A tale never loses in the telling**

People tend to exaggerate when telling a story. One boy's grandfather would always tell the same story about the time he fell through the ice when skating as a kid. He usually tells the story with the same enthusiasm and detail as he did the first time he related it.

578) **Money opens all doors**

Wealth gives you access to anywhere. This saying suggests that when you have money, you can buy or influence your way into any place or any person's company. This can also refer to metaphorical doors opening—for example, opportunities for schools, jobs, or exclusive social groups.

579) **Little strokes fell great oaks**

With patience and endurance, small actions can have large effects. Oaks are very large trees with hard wood, but "little strokes" from an axe will eventually bring down even an oak tree. This proverb uses "great" in the sense of "large."

580) **Everyone to his taste**

Every person is entitled to their own likes and dislikes. The diversity of personal preference is what makes the world an interesting place. The sentiment is especially obvious when it comes to food, but it is also true for things such as music, literature, and even romantic partners.

581) **Never let the sun go down on your anger**

Resolve conflicts before you go to sleep. If you spend a night upset with someone, you probably won't rest well, and the problem will probably only be worse the next day. A related saying, "Never go to bed angry," is more specifically about sleep. This is usually used in the context of a married couple fighting.

582) **What's everybody's business is nobody's business**

A task that is not assigned or delegated to any particular person will not receive attention from anyone. For example, if no one in your office is in charge of refilling the copy machine, the copy machine will almost certainly be running chronically short of paper. If something important needs to be done, it's important that a specific person is in charge of doing it.

583) **Patience is the best remedy**

Some inconvenient situations are beyond our control and will only get better with time. This is similar to the concept "Time heals all wounds." Whether it is a broken leg or a broken heart, in many circumstances there is not much to do but wait for things to improve gradually over time.

584) [Feed a cold, starve a fever](#)

When experiencing a cold, one should eat warm foods to generate heat in the body. On the other hand, during a fever one should abstain from eating to help the body cool down. The message of this traditional proverb has since been questioned by doctors, concluding that in cases of both cold and fever, one should keep hydrated and not be afraid to eat, provided one has an appetite.

585) [Nature does nothing in vain](#)

Everything in nature has a role to play. This quote comes from the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who is considered one of the first scientists in history. His observations of nature led him to believe in teleology, or the concept that things exist for a purpose.

586) [The tongue ever turns to the aching tooth](#)

People tend to return to the same worries and complaints that occupy their minds. You may have a relative who is always talking about the awful state of affairs in the government or in a neighboring nation. Just like it's hard to ignore a tooth that hurts, it's difficult not to think or talk about something that worries and concerns us.

587) [A door must be either shut or open](#)

Be decisive when making a choice that is simply black and white. For instance, if a woman has spent months complaining about her job but refuses to quit, a firm decision must finally be made. After all, the energy spent complaining would be better directed at looking for a new job.

588) [God made the country and man made the town](#)

The beauty and grandeur of nature far exceeds that of any man-made object. While man has created some amazing things throughout history, we can never recreate something like a beautiful sunrise or a sunset over the mountains.

589) [Learn to walk before you run](#)

In the pursuit of your goal, you should be willing to put effort into learning the fundamentals, even if they aren't as exciting. It is a reminder that knowledge builds on existing knowledge, and you have to master basic skills before moving on to harder ones.

590) [Don't cross a bridge till you come to it](#)

Don't worry about a problem before the appropriate time; instead, focus on more pressing matters. For instance, when his first son was born, one father was already worried about how he would afford his college tuition. His wife reminded him that they would deal with this issue when the time came.

591) [The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world](#)

World events are formed by individual people, and a person's character is formed from childhood. Alexander the Great may have conquered most of the known world, but his mother who rocked his cradle when he was a baby was the first person to influence him. Never underestimate the power of those who teach and care for children from a young age.

592) [What is a workman without his tools](#)

Ideas, knowledge, and experience are not enough; we need the means to accomplish our goals. Just as it would be nonsensical to expect a workman to get their work done without the help of their tools, it is folly on our end to jump into a project without the necessary resources to do so, even if they are not “tools” in the most literal sense.

593) [Every cock crows on his own dunghill](#)

Confidence comes easy in a person’s own territory where his alleged courage is not likely to be tested. For example, the high school basketball team was full of enthusiasm and boldness in their own gymnasium, but their egos were deflated when they arrived on the other team’s court. The proverb literally refers to a rooster’s tendency to perch atop piles of animal dung.

594) [Through obedience learn to command](#)

One cannot be a good leader if they are not a good follower first. A good leader is compassionate, wise, empathetic, and can put themselves in the shoes of those who follow. Learn to be disciplined and compliant if you one day wish to lead.

595) [All’s fish that comes to the net](#)

Skilled people are able to use anything available to their advantage. The proverb lauds the resourcefulness of a person when solving a problem. For instance, one carpenter was known for his creativity in his craft; it seemed that no matter how unusual the materials he had to work with (e.g., a log or a reed), he still managed to build something incredible.

596) [Cut your coat according to your cloth](#)

Don’t try to undertake more than your ability allows; accept your own limitations. It was one teenage boy’s dream to play football for the high school team, but when he showed up for the first practice, he realized he was much too small in stature to compete. Instead, he joined the swimming team as this suited his physique better.

597) [Friendship is a plant which must be often watered](#)

A close bond must be cultivated in order to survive. For example, if you want to maintain a friendship with a person, you must make the effort to get to know them by arranging meetings, calling them, etc. Otherwise, the friend will become merely an acquaintance.

598) [Every Jack must have his Jill](#)

Every person, no matter how handsome or ugly, rich or poor, will eventually find a romantic partner. At age forty, one woman started to wonder if she would ever find her match, but just one year later, she was happily married.

599) [Everybody’s business is nobody’s business](#)

Proper delegation of responsibility is imperative in a group setting. Some college students were assigned to do a project together. They met several times in preparation, but when the day of the presentation came, they realized no one had made the photocopies they needed. It turns out that each person in the group had assumed someone else would carry out this simple task.

600) [What’s done cannot be undone](#)

There's no point in lamenting or bemoaning something that has already happened. "I feel terrible that I forgot to invite Alex to our Christmas party last year," your mom tells you. "What's done can't be undone," you reply. "We'll just continue being the best neighbor to him that we can be and invite him this year."

601) [You cannot sell the cow and drink the milk](#)

You can't enjoy both the utility of a thing and earn money from selling or renting it as well. Either you sell it for money or keep it for yourself to use and enjoy, whether it's jewelry, a gift card, or a brand-new boat.

602) [Many a little makes a mickle](#)

If you save a little bit often enough, it will accumulate into a considerable amount of money, so don't underestimate the small savings you make. This phrase is originally Scottish, where the word "mickle" can mean either "a small amount" or "a large amount." In this case, "mickle" means "a lot." A variant is "many a mickle makes a muckle," in which "mickle" means "a little" and "muckle" means "a large amount."

603) [Least said, soonest mended](#)

You can resolve a dispute more quickly if you stop talking about the problem. Sometimes trying to prove your side of a disagreement only extends the argument, and in the heat of the moment, you can say something that further offends the other person. Therefore, it can be better to stop talking about the dispute altogether.

604) [Like will to like](#)

People tend to associate with others who share similar characteristics, and in nature it is common to find similar materials grouped together. For example, Jamie started a board-game group and found that the people who came had a lot of personality traits in common with each other.

605) [Truth is the first casualty of war](#)

In order to justify war or other controversial measures, a government or leader will often lie about the situation in order to convince the people. At the time when war or other extreme events occur, there are often conflicting narratives and excuses, and the truth can be hard to find. This quote has been attributed to several people, including US politician Hiram Warren Johnson.

606) [He laughs best, who laughs last](#)

Although the winner of a competition might appear obvious early on, it is the eventual winner who takes the prize. In a high school baseball game, one team was far in the lead at the start of the last inning. They had already started to celebrate their victory when the other team came back to win.

607) [First catch your hare](#)

Make sure you actually have an object in your possession before making plans for it. If a man is expecting a big end-of-the-year bonus at work, he should wait until he actually receives the check before planning an expensive vacation for his family. Interestingly, this proverb is actually a humorous misquotation from Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery, Made Plain and Easy* (1747). There, instead of "catch," she uses the word "case," meaning "to skin."

608) [March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb](#)

Springtime weather in the month of March starts out stormy and ends calmly. This saying is a reminder that March begins with winter weather and is the turning point into spring. The combination of the lion and the lamb is also related to classic Christian iconography symbolizing peace and redemption.

609) [Success has many fathers, but failure is an orphan](#)

Many people will claim credit for something that goes well, but no one wants to take responsibility for something that fails. This phrase was popularized by United States President John F Kennedy. He likely adapted it from Italian diplomat Count Galeazzo Ciano who wrote in 1942, "Victory has a hundred fathers, and no one acknowledges a failure."

610) [The fairest rose is at last withered](#)

Beauty does not last. Even the youngest, liveliest, most beautiful people will eventually become old and feeble. Remembering this helps you to keep a more modest perspective, whether you envy another person's looks or are conceited about your own.

611) [If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem](#)

Passive inactivity is no better than outright troublemaking. For instance, it is not enough to simply be aware of global warming and its negative effects on our planet; one should also make the effort to contribute in some way, such as by planting trees or driving a hybrid vehicle.

612) [The crow thinks her own birds fairest](#)

A person thinks their own spouse and/or children are superior in some way to everyone else's. By nature, we are biased toward what is familiar and what we love. Don't take it personally if your friend thinks their child is the brightest, most gifted student in their whole school.

613) [Every man has his faults](#)

Even those who appear flawless have faults of their own; nobody is perfect. For instance, a soccer coach in a small town was generally respected by his peers and looked up to by the children. Only those closest to him knew that he had a penchant for gambling.

614) [Man cannot live by bread alone](#)

People require more than the bare necessities of life. While it may not take much to keep our bodies alive, people also need companionship, art, music, and other aspects of life that "feed" us spiritually. This originally comes from the book of Matthew in the Bible, in a passage in which the devil tries to tempt Jesus away from his spiritual path.

615) [If you play with fire, you get burnt](#)

You will suffer the consequences if you partake in risky behavior. For example, if a man has a penchant for speeding in his car, he should not be surprised when he one day experiences a horrible car accident.

616) [Don't count your chickens before they are hatched](#)

Don't plan ahead for something that may not actually happen. For example, a woman who is trying to get pregnant should probably wait to purchase a crib and clothes for the would-be baby. The proverb refers to the fact that some chicken eggs are unfertilized and thus won't produce a chick.

617) Opportunity seldom knocks twice

You need to be ready to take full advantage of an opportunity when it comes your way because you may not get the chance again. For example, if you are offered a prestigious board membership, it is worth considering taking it, even if you are very busy, because you may never get that offer again.

618) Whom the gods love die young

Virtuous and uniquely gifted people often die young. In reality most people live to a normal age, but when someone dies young, the unexpectedness is quite striking and tragic, leading many people to think there must be some mystical reason for it. Jimi Hendrix, Jean Michel Basquiat, and James Dean are all examples of talented, remarkable people who died young, and they are all the more famous for it.

619) A burnt child dreads the fire

Those who have experienced trauma from a mistake are less likely to repeat it. For instance, a farmer who goes hungry when his yield suffers after a late planting of corn will not make the same mistake again. This proverb dates back to 1320 when it appeared in a collection called *The Proverbs of Hendyng*.

620) You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar

It's easier to get what you want by being pleasant and persuasive than by complaining or using force. If you want your boss to give you a raise, for example, you are much more likely to be successful by being patient, diplomatic, and gracious than by acting entitled or plaintive.

621) The laborer is worthy of his hire

A person deserves to be paid for the work they do. If your friend's daughter agrees to babysit your children, the right thing to do is to pay her or otherwise reward her for her efforts, even if she hasn't asked for it. Be fair and generous to those who work for you.

622) Fields have eyes, and woods have ears

Be careful; someone might be listening in on your conversation when you least expect it. Seated in a cafe, a man was quietly sharing with his friend about his secret plans to leave his job, but unbeknownst to him, one of his superiors was seated just behind him. The proverb alludes to the fact that one shouldn't feel safe from eavesdroppers in the middle of a field or the woods.

623) One law for the rich and another for the poor

A corrupt justice system will be more lenient on people with wealth and harsher for people without money. For example, drug policies may be written to punish people using street drugs with long jail sentences, but let people using party drugs get off with a small fine.

624) It takes two to make a bargain

In any venture involving two people there must be compromise and mutual respect. When you are entering into negotiation with someone else, it's natural to think of how to gain an advantage and the most benefit possible. However, for a successful outcome, it is important to understand the other person's needs and to be agreeable and willing to concede.

625) A bad workman always blames his tools

Take responsibility for your own shortcomings, and don't try to find excuses. This advice would be valuable to the man who, after losing a cycling race, blames the tires on his bicycle rather than his own lack of preparation.

626) **Money has no smell**

People will accept money even if it comes from unethical deeds. Even if money is connected to activities that "stink," the money itself is untainted. For example, a charity that needs support may accept a donation even if it comes from someone who has profited from crime.

627) **Curses, like chickens, come home to roost**

Negative words or deeds will come back to haunt you eventually. One student learned this lesson when he posted an offensive remark about a teacher on what he thought was a private webpage, only to discover later that the teacher had found out. Roosting is what chickens do when they settle down to sleep each night, usually perched in a position above the ground. No matter where a chicken roams during the day, it always returns to the coop each night to roost.

628) **Failure teaches success**

Every mistake is simply a chance for personal growth and strength. Don't be discouraged by failure, as it is simply a learning opportunity. When a man's marriage ended in divorce, he was taught some valuable lessons that he could then apply to his future relationships.

629) **Footprints on the sands of time are not made by sitting down**

One must work hard if one wants to leave behind a great legacy; sitting idle will accomplish nothing. For example, when a woman noticed the homeless population growing in her town, she decided to open a shelter, which demanded a huge amount of effort and money from her side. The phrase "footprints on the sands of time" comes from a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow entitled "A Psalm of Life."

630) **No man is infallible**

Every person can have a weakness or make a mistake. You may trust someone deeply, but people are only human and will sometimes fail. For example, a surgeon might excel at their job and have years of experience but one day make a mistake that causes someone's death.

631) **Ill news travels fast**

People are more interested in bad news than good news. This is an interesting quirk in human nature; perhaps it's because we instinctively are trying to stay safe, so we pay more attention to things that are potentially harmful. Or perhaps we just take a morbid interest in the misfortune of others so that we feel better about our own lives. Whatever the case, bad news continues to be more popular in the news and media than good news, and there's little reason to imagine it changing.

632) **Example is better than precept**

The best leaders lead by example. For instance, if a manager wishes to make a point to his employees about the importance of arriving to work on time, the manager should arrive early each day also. As a fellow proverb states, "Practice what you preach."

633) **The wish is father to the thought**

We tend to believe what we want to believe. For example, some say that the reason many people believe in magic is because they prefer an easy explanation to complex phenomena or issues. Or we may think that our own country is superior to other countries because we are biased and uncomfortable with the thought of being wrong.

634) [Distance lends enchantment to the view](#)

Things often look better from far away. This is due to one's tendency to imagine objects greater than they actually are. This may also refer to one's distorted memory of the past. For instance, people tend to remember the good things about a past romance, forgetting the problems and challenges that were also present.

635) [Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die](#)

Enjoy the pleasures of the present moment as you never know what could happen tomorrow. Like hedonism, this central tenet of Epicurean philosophy implies that because one could very well die tomorrow, they might as well relish and savor all that life has to offer.

636) [If "ifs" and "ans" were pots and pans](#)

One should not be too wishful; instead, one should accept the reality of a situation. For instance, a man felt he deserved a raise at his job, but all his hoping and wishing did nothing for him. The full form of the proverb is, "If 'ifs' and 'ans' were pots and pans, there'd be no work for tinkers' hands." Here, "if" and "and" refer to expectant conditional statements, and a tinker is a tinsmith who specializes in mending pots and pans.

637) [Nothing seek, nothing find](#)

If you don't have a goal in life and if you are not actively looking for ways to realize it, time will pass, and you will have achieved nothing. For example, if you want to have close friends, it will not help to wait for friends to come to you. You will need to go out and meet people, and share conversations and experiences that help to form trust and friendship.

638) [A dog is for life, not just for Christmas](#)

Don't underestimate something with long-lasting potential. The slogan was first used by the charity Dogs Trust to address the number of dogs abandoned every year. People who decide to own a dog must fulfill their duties and responsibilities toward them.

639) [Everything comes to him who waits](#)

One's patience is often rewarded in due time. For instance, a wealthy man divorced his wife and took their children, leaving her with nothing. However, when he died a few years later, she got her children back along with all his wealth. As a fellow expression agrees, "Patience is a virtue."

640) [Misfortunes never come singly](#)

Unlucky events seem to happen in multiples. This may be an example of confirmation bias, where we are more likely to notice negative events happening when we have just experienced something negative. For example, if you just drop your toast in the morning, you might forget about it by lunchtime. If you drop your toast, and then spill your coffee, and then miss your bus, you would be very aware of all of these incidents and would anticipate having bad luck for the rest of the day.

641) **You break it, you pay for it**

You need to take responsibility for any damage you have caused. Typically, if someone breaks an item in a store, they are expected to pay for the cost of the item, since the item is now useless to the owner. Even where the law is not concerned, it is important to take ownership of your actions.

642) **Learn wisdom by the follies of others**

When someone makes a foolish mistake, you should learn from it and avoid making the same mistake yourself. This saying plays on the notion that people often learn by making their own errors, and it says that it is wise and less costly to learn by watching others instead. For example, younger siblings who watch their older siblings take risks can make better decisions for themselves.

643) **When in doubt, do without**

If you're not sure you need something, the more sensible thing is to go without it. For example, you may or may not need new furniture this year since you are possibly going to be moving out of state next year. Doing without when you don't need something saves both money and energy.

644) **Every man is the architect of his own fortune**

Your life is in your hands. Every person has the potential to change their life for the better if they so choose. For example, a man had grown up in a poor, uneducated family, but not all was lost. With determination and perseverance, he not only became the first member of his family to graduate college, but he went on to complete his doctorate as well.

645) **For want of a nail the shoe was lost**

A seemingly trivial detail may cause grave problems in the future. For instance, a neglectful man failed to change his tires long after they were due, an error which blew up in his face when one of them burst while driving to an important meeting. The proverb refers to the practice of using nails to attach a horseshoe to a horse's hoof. In its full form, it describes a series of interconnected events that begins with a simple lack of a horseshoe nail, but ends with the destruction of a kingdom. For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; For want of the shoe, the horse was lost; For want of the horse, the rider was lost; For want of the rider, the battle was lost; For want of the battle, the kingdom was lost; And all from the want of a horseshoe nail.

646) **No sweet without sweat**

You have to work hard to achieve your goal. Success makes you happy, but it doesn't come freely or easily. If you have great objectives, you have to put in the effort to make them happen. This is similar to the proverb "No pain, no gain."

647) **Money is a good servant but a bad master**

You can use money to accomplish goals, but do not let the desire for money control your life. This implies that if you have money, it can make your life easier, but if you do not have money, you will struggle. When you have money, it is also a reminder not to let money direct your actions.

648) **No effect without a cause**

The law of causation says that everything happening in nature is produced by some cause. This statement has been used by religious thinkers to explain a divine "first cause" and by philosophers to rationalize scientific inquiry. In the first case, the meaning is that all things begin with the divine. In the second case, the meaning is that there is always a deeper fundamental truth to investigate and discover.

649) *There's no fool like an old fool*

The most embarrassing mistake is the one coming from an older person, since older people are expected to be wiser. If your five-year-old niece does something foolish, it's hardly noticed. But if your great-uncle makes a poor choice and finds himself in a compromising situation, then you might find it totally unexpected.

650) *You pays your money, and you takes your choice*

Make your decision, take responsibility for it, and accept the outcome of your choice. This phrase is humorous and colloquial in nature. "You can rent a sedan, an SUV, or a four-wheel drive for your cross-country road trip. It's up to you what you think is worth it. You pays your money, and you takes your choice."

651) *Every difficulty slurred over will be a ghost to disturb your repose later on*

If you don't handle a problem appropriately now, it will grow and cause you much trouble later on. For instance, if a mother ignores her son mixing with the wrong crowd at school, she may be forced to deal with his substance-abuse problems when he gets older. This proverb is attributed to the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore.

652) *No foot, no horse*

A horse has no value unless it has healthy hooves. People used to rely on horses for riding, racing, hauling carts, and pulling carriages. Everything that horses do for us depends on them having full use of their feet. Damage to a horse's hooves is akin to totalling a car.

653) *There is no accounting for tastes*

People's tastes and personal opinions defy logic and expectation. Your friend may be an extremely attractive person who receives attention from many other attractive people, but they decide to marry someone who is less attractive. Your other friend may love something you find repulsive, such as green tea ice cream or horror movies. The things we are drawn to are subjective and differ with each of us.

654) *If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*

A person who leads or instructs others needs to know what they are doing. Just as it would be folly for a blind person to rely on another blind person to get to their destination, it would likewise be folly for someone who wants to learn French to study under someone who doesn't know French. Always seek knowledge or guidance from someone who is qualified.

655) *Men are not angels*

People's egos and self-interest can lead them to behave immorally when the opportunity arises. James Madison, a founding United States statesman and the fourth U.S. president, argued for the importance of government controls "because men are not angels." He wanted to limit the risk from inevitable human ambition and greed.

656) *Three may keep a secret if two of them are dead*

Be very careful about sharing secrets with anyone. It's all but impossible to keep a secret when it goes beyond two. If you share a confidential matter with two other people, there is always a risk of more people finding out, and it's hard to know which one leaked the information.

657) **A man's house is his castle**

Privacy and security are of utmost importance when it comes to the home. For instance, it is common to feel a sense of violation when one's house is broken into, even if nothing of value is stolen. This sentiment is ancient, going back to Cicero of Roman times who said, "What more sacred, what more strongly guarded by every holy feeling, than a man's own home?"

658) **It takes all sorts to make a world**

The world is made up of many different people with varying backgrounds, so be tolerant toward those with opinions, outlooks, and cultures that are different from yours. If everyone was just like you, the world would be a bit boring, after all. Diversity and variety make the world a more interesting place.

659) **A chain is no stronger than its weakest link**

No matter how strong a group is, the weakest member will still hold the others back. For example, it only takes one inexperienced cook to spoil an entire restaurant kitchen, even if the head chef is the best in the business.

660) **If you don't make mistakes, you don't make anything**

We often learn the most through our own mistakes because they show us the areas in which we can improve. For instance, when a woman was arrested for driving while intoxicated, it was just the motivation she needed to stop drinking and turn her life around.

661) **Time tries truth**

Time will test and determine the truth of anything. For example, if you are not sure about the character of your friend's new boyfriend, wait a while and observe him in different situations. Eventually, you will know the truth about what kind of a person he really is.

662) **A hedge between keeps friendship green**

Privacy should be respected in a friendship; one who gets too close may step on the other's toes. Two longtime friends decided to rent an apartment together, but within one month they came to despise each other due to the lack of personal space. Thus, it is advisable to keep your friends at a healthy distance if you want the friendship to last.

663) **Dog does not eat dog**

Wicked people generally leave those alone who act like them. There is a level of mutual respect among the nefarious. This saying is the counter version of the proverb, "Dog eat dog," which implies that unethical people will hurt each other and do whatever necessary to reach their goal.

664) **What you've never had, you never miss**

It's impossible to miss something if you never had it to begin with. For example, if you have no brothers and only have sisters, you can't "miss" not having a brother. The idea here is to take solace in lack of knowledge or experience in something. The more luxuries you enjoy, the more you'll feel deprived when they are no longer available.

665) **A nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse**

Don't waste your time trying to make a stubborn, illogical person understand your point; it will likely go over their head anyway. Often, the proverb stands alone as, "A nod is as good as a wink," which is similar in meaning to, "A word to the wise is enough."

666) **Health is not valued till sickness comes**

Don't take things for granted. One man had never been very close with his siblings. It wasn't until his younger brother was diagnosed with cancer that he realized he had failed to give their relationship the attention and care it deserved. This proverb is reminiscent of "You don't know what you've got until it's gone."

667) **Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth**

Do not brag about doing good deeds. This is part of a verse from the Christian Bible (Matthew 6:3), in which Jesus tells his followers that when they give money to the church, called alms, they should do it privately and without drawing attention to themselves.

668) **An old man is twice a child**

In old age, a person often reverts back to a childish state. The proverb is two-sided. In one sense it has a positive tone as the elderly get to experience the worry-free joys of childhood twice in life. On the other hand, the saying alludes to the deterioration of the aging mind, which is often difficult for loved ones to cope with. A similar proverb is "Once a man, twice a child."

669) **Little fish are sweet**

Even small gifts or payments are welcome. This is a way of saying that anything you receive is appreciated, whether it is large or small. For example, if a couple is getting married but don't expect large gifts, they may use this phrase to express that sentiment in case anyone feels obligated to get them a gift.

670) **Gratitude is the sign of noble souls**

One who lives their life with gratitude is never disappointed, even by severe hardship. For instance, when he was diagnosed with cancer at age forty, a man still remained grateful for his loving family and the life he had been able to live until then.

671) **Little by little the bird builds its nest**

Significant projects are the result of a lot of small tasks. This saying from France is a reminder to be patient because actions that are worth doing take time and effort. A bird does not build its nest at once, but has to gather twigs one by one.

672) **Make your enemy your friend**

Turn a negative relationship into a positive one. The best way to defeat your enemy may not be to destroy or part ways with them, but to form an alliance instead. It takes strength of character and hard work to befriend someone whom you consider an enemy.

673) **The third time pays for all**

After two failed attempts, the third time trying to accomplish something may be successful. Three is considered in some cultures to be a lucky number. A very similar proverb is "The third time's a charm."

674) [When one door shuts, another opens](#)

If one opportunity doesn't work out, another one will, so don't lose hope. You may be disappointed to be rejected for an exciting unpaid internship, but in a few weeks' time you just may have another opportunity for an internship that is almost as exciting *and* is paid. Don't be discouraged when things don't work out, as there will always be more opportunities in life than you could ever imagine.

675) [Appetite comes with eating](#)

A simple taste of something is enough to incite a craving. A man was categorically opposed to anything electronic his entire life until he finally bought his first smartphone. After that, he couldn't help but succumb to all the latest technology. This proverb also has an alternative meaning in that a task often becomes easier or more appealing with practice.

676) [Fine words butter no parsnips](#)

Flattery and empty words will not accomplish anything of real value or satisfy anyone's needs. For instance, when a man and his girlfriend got into an argument, he tried to patch things up by complimenting her on her new dress, but this did nothing to improve the mood of his angry partner.

677) [Do not cast your pearls before swine](#)

Don't present something valuable to one who won't appreciate it. For instance, if you are explaining to someone the importance of recycling and they start mocking you, then it's better not to waste your time with them. This proverb has a biblical origin, as Jesus spoke it in his "Sermon on the Mount".

678) [A good name is better than riches](#)

One's own integrity and reputation are more important than material wealth. A man who is respected and trusted by those around him is better off than a wealthy miser, for the honest man will be supported in his time of need while the miser will not. This is because honor runs deeper than any material object one may acquire. The proverb is found in the Bible: "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold." – Proverbs 22:1

679) [Give a dog a bad name and hang him](#)

If a person's reputation is blackened, their career or business will suffer significantly, even if they are innocent. When a mechanic in a small town was defamed by a competitor, people started to lose trust in them, and within months they were out of business.

680) [Never speak ill of the dead](#)

It is wrong to say bad things about people who have died as they cannot defend themselves. It is disrespectful to say negative things about dead people, whether or not those things are true, as they have left our world and need to rest in peace in the afterlife.

681) [The only good Indian is a dead Indian](#)

This extremist view that American Indians are better off dead than alive was held by many American settlers in the past centuries, as they constantly fought with Native Americans over land and other assets. This unfortunate proverb is actually a quote from American General Philip Sheridan, who said it in response to his experiences warring with Native American tribes.

682) [Things are seldom what they seem](#)

Don't judge a person or situation at face value. The charming young man who seems so polite and funny may actually be a cruel, self-interested person, or your lonely, awkward neighbor may actually be very kind and intelligent once you get to know them.

683) *It is easy to be wise after the event*

It's easy to understand why something went wrong once it's all over, and much harder to understand the problem while still in development. For example, if someone you are dating is cheating on you, you may not notice the symptoms at first because of infatuation, but once the relationship is over, you will be able to understand more clearly what happened and why. A very similar proverb is "Hindsight is 20/20."

684) *Everything is good in its season*

Every experience has its proper place and time in one's life. For instance, a man who spent his college days partying and playing in a rock band should not be surprised when one day he ends up working a mundane job. It literally refers to the four changing seasons of the year, which each have a distinct feeling of their own.

685) *Hatch, match, and dispatch*

Life consists of three prominent events: birth, marriage, and death. The proverb is sometimes used in a religious context where it humorously refers to someone who only attends church for baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

686) *Life is not all beer and skittles*

There is more to life than fun and games. This is a reminder that we all have responsibilities and cannot spend all our time enjoying ourselves. "Skittles" is the name for a popular tabletop parlor game, which is typically played at pubs while drinking beer.

687) *A clear conscience is a soft pillow*

One rests easy when there is no guilt on the mind. For example, if a boy accidentally damages his father's car while playing outside, he will sleep much better that night if he is honest with his father about what happened.

688) *There is no rose without a thorn*

No one person or object, regardless of how outwardly desirable, comes without some kind of flaw or problem. For example, your cousin may date many people but perpetually be single because they eventually find some kind of negative trait in each one. The next time they lament this, you can say, "Well, there *is* no rose without a thorn."

689) *Little things please little minds*

People who are uneducated or uncultured can find satisfaction in trivial sources of entertainment. This can suggest people who let themselves be distracted from important matters are unintelligent. It can also be used as a criticism of people who are amused by lowbrow humor.

690) *In peace prepare for war*

To maintain peace, you must be ready and able to fight anyone who can potentially attack you. Other nations (and individuals) are less likely to attack those who can fight back. This proverb is nearly synonymous with the proverb “If you want peace, prepare for war.”

691) [Little by little and bit by bit](#)

If you are patient, small actions will eventually accomplish what you want. This is an encouraging statement to keep in mind when small actions seem futile. “Bit” used to be an informal term for an eighth of a Spanish real. “Two bits” became American slang for one quarter, or twenty-five cents.

692) [Lightning doesn't strike the same place twice](#)

Very rare events do not repeat themselves. For example, if someone wins the lottery and then enters a raffle, people might use this saying to express skepticism that one person could be lucky enough to win a big prize twice.

693) [The grapes are sour](#)

This is what someone says when they are bitter about something they want but cannot have. For example, your friend who was rejected from admission to Harvard may tell you, “It’s not that great of a school anyway,” even though you know they are actually very disappointed. In an old fable, a fox that failed several times to reach a cluster of juicy-looking grapes finally skulked off and muttered, “They looked sour anyway.”

694) [Love and a cough cannot be hid](#)

This is a way to say that you can tell when someone is in love. While people may be able to hide some symptoms of illness, a cough is loud, involuntary, and impossible to ignore or hide. In the same way, the infatuation that comes with being in love is obvious, even if one means to keep it a secret.

695) [A still tongue makes a wise head](#)

Those who speak little are often the wisest of all. A truly knowledgeable person knows when it is time to speak and when it is better to stay silent. In high school, one student was viewed as slow-witted as he never spoke much, choosing instead to observe most of the time. When he was accepted to Harvard, his classmates realized their error in judgment.

696) [Fortune is blind](#)

Fortune is random in that it treats both the good and bad among us equally. One may live a perfectly dignified lifestyle and yet die young of a horrible disease. On the other hand, a despicable man may enjoy great success in life. This proverb has its origin in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, where it refers to “Lady Fortuna,” a Roman goddess of luck.

697) [Out of debt, out of danger](#)

Borrowing can damage your financial health and affect the quality of your life. If you take on a large mortgage to buy a house, you’ll find yourself dealing with a huge monthly cost paying for principal, interest, insurance, and property tax, in addition to maintenance expenses. If you lose your job, you will not be able to keep up with the payments, and you risk losing your house. Once you pay off debts, you are safe and secure.

698) [A mill cannot grind with the water that is past](#)

Don't dwell on the past and regret what has already happened. Life has a fleeting nature, so one should focus on the present moment and not get caught up in what was. A woman struggled with the empty nest when her only son went away to college, but in time, she came to accept the change as a new phase in her life. A water mill is a device that uses the power of flowing water to operate machinery, for instance to grind corn and other grains. Obviously it used the water coming toward it, while it has no use for the water behind it.

699) [Where there's muck, there's brass](#)

Dirty jobs may pay well. Certain jobs, such as sewage control and oil mining, are by nature quite dirty and demanding. Because they are unappealing, there is often a shortage of people for these jobs, and therefore the jobs pay quite well. "Brass" a slang term referring to money.

700) [Exchange is no robbery](#)

There is nothing wrong with trading two things, as long as the items being swapped are of comparable value. For example, if a man is looking to trade in his vehicle for something smaller, he should be careful not to be taken advantage of by the dealership.

701) [Punctuality is the politeness of kings](#)

Being on time is respectful and noble as it shows others that you value their time. This quote is attributed to King Louis XVIII of France. At the time, most court behavior was focused on how to show respect to the king, so it was meaningful for the king to arrive on time as a way to show respect to them.

702) [He who plants a tree plants a hope](#)

We should perform acts that will benefit others in the future, not only ourselves. It is quite possible that by the time a tree comes to its full fruition, the person who planted it will be dead and gone. If a tree grows well, it will be enjoyed by many generations to come.

703) [The devil finds work for idle hands](#)

If you don't have something to keep you busy and productive, you are more likely to get into trouble. People who have no jobs or goals often gravitate toward addictive behavior and destructive actions, including crime. It's important to have something useful to do if you want to be a safe, productive, successful person.

704) [Fools for luck](#)

Only an ignorant person lets luck decide their future. Instead, a person should use proper care and precautions before taking an important step in their life. For instance, a man who accepts a random job offer without investigating the company at all is likely leaving too much to chance.

705) [Lookers-on see most of the game](#)

People who are not directly involved in a situation may have a better perspective. For example, people participating in a game of poker are going to be limited to their own point of view, while people who are watching the players will know who is bluffing and who has winning cards.

706) [The best of friends must part](#)

No matter how close you and a friend may be, your circumstances will eventually separate you. Jobs, school, midlife crises, relationships, and changes in moods and attitudes are just some of the many

reasons why friends go their separate ways. If nothing else, you and your friend will at some point be separated by physical distance.

707) **Nothing hurts like the truth**

People are sensitive to criticism or mention of their own flaws or failings. For example, comments about a person's weaknesses can be very hurtful. As another example, it can be painful to take responsibility for decisions that turned out to be wrong.

708) **A guilty conscience needs no accuser**

One's own guilt is punishment enough for any wrongdoing. Consider a teenager who decides to shoplift for the first time. Even though he gets away with the crime, he is tormented by his own guilty conscience. For a famous literary instance, look to Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* in which a man struggles with maddening guilt after committing a murder.

709) **Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed**

One who expects little will be pleasantly surprised no matter what happens. On the other hand, one with high expectations will often be let down. Attributed to the great eighteenth-century poet Alexander Pope, this proverb recommends humility and gratitude for one's lot in life.

710) **What can't be cured must be endured**

If there's no solution for a problem, you have to put up with the problem until it runs its course. A crippling disease, for example, is something that anyone would wish to be rid of with the help of medicine and other treatments. But when there is no cure available, you have no choice but to suffer through your condition with the best attitude possible.

711) **A live dog is better than a dead lion**

It is better to play it safe than to suffer in vain. For instance, a man is at the beach and notices a child calling for help in the water. As the man is not a great swimmer himself, he would do better to find a lifeguard instead of risking his own life. The proverb is found in the Bible passage Ecclesiastes 9:4. It alludes to the fact that dogs are generally cowardly and lions prideful.

712) **It is a long lane that has no turning**

A bad situation can't last forever. Just as a lane or road eventually turns one way or another, a situation (including a bad one) has to change at some point. Things will go from bad to good (or even better) eventually.

713) **The used key is always bright**

Something that is put to regular use remains in good shape. For example, if you do logic puzzles and other mental activities, your brain will stay active and healthy. By contrast, anything you fail to utilize will lead to decay, just as a key becomes rusty after a while of disuse. This proverb comes from a quote by Benjamin Franklin in a book he wrote about wealth and personal success.

714) **Love makes all hard hearts gentle**

Even someone with a stern personality will behave with tenderness when they are in love. For example, someone can be a strict store owner who does not hesitate to criticize their employees, but when they are with their favorite granddaughter, they become kind and loving.

715) **No names, no pack-drill**

If a group of people all cover for each other, they can all avoid punishment. For example, some classmates in a college lab could break a piece of equipment and think that if the names of the students who broke it are not reported, everyone will be safe. This phrase comes from a military context, where a “pack-drill” is a form of punishment in which soldiers were forced to perform exercises, or “drills,” wearing their full uniform and carrying a heavy pack.

716) **Truth is mighty and will prevail**

This is an ironic way of saying, “Truth does not necessarily prevail.” In a black mood, when you are frustrated by someone who is being overly optimistic about an injustice that has happened to you, you can retort, “Yes, because truth is mighty and will prevail!” This phrase comes from a quote by Mark Twain: “Truth is mighty and will prevail. There is nothing wrong with this, except it ain’t so.”

717) **The mills of God grind slowly**

Fate and retribution come slowly but are inevitable. Sometimes it may seem unfair that so many people in the world get away with bad things. To comfort yourself you can remember that one day their reckoning will come, even if it takes a while, because “the mills of God grind slowly.”

718) **Work expands to fill the time available**

It is human nature to take the full space of time allotted in order to complete a task, even when the task can be completed in less time. People have a remarkable way of filling their time and often distracting themselves. When they feel no pressure or urgency to finish a task, they will procrastinate until the last minute.

719) **A good husband makes a good wife**

If you care for your wife, she will care for you in return. This proverb highlights the balanced nature of an ideal relationship where both parties respect and support each other equally. Even a bad person, when treated well, will be indirectly influenced to reciprocate the kind treatment. “A good wife makes a good husband” is another variant of this proverb.

720) **Death is the great leveller**

No man can escape death; it is therefore the one thing that makes us truly equal. This proverb can be employed to remind an arrogant person of their mortality, or to comfort one who is jealous of those more fortunate than them. Everyone from the wealthy businessman to the homeless beggar must eventually meet their doom.

721) **Confess and be hanged**

The only way to be rid of guilt is to confess and face whatever punishment awaits you. When a man cheated on his girlfriend, he was overwhelmed with feelings of guilt and remorse. After much deliberation, he realized the sole solution was to tell her exactly what happened and accept his fate, even if it meant the end of the relationship.

722) **Experience is the teacher of fools**

It can be very costly to always learn through one’s own mistakes. Instead, it is better to learn by observing the errors of others and using your best judgment to avoid the same problems. For instance, one man only learned that his car needed regular maintenance when it broke down one day on his way

to work. He would have been better off if he had paid attention to his father's car maintenance practices when he was growing up.

723) [Nothing comes of nothing](#)

People have to take action in order to have an effect on the world. The phrase originally comes from the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides, who used it to express the view that the physical world must have always existed in some form. This is similar to the philosophical concept "No effect without a cause." Physicists use this phrase to express the law of conservation of energy.

724) [When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out of the window](#)

People who are in love think they will be happy and secure without money until they are actually in a financially difficult situation. It's easy to feel secure and affectionate when all your important needs are met. But when you are struggling to have enough money to pay bills, then romance takes a backseat to a more stressful reality.

725) [Black will take no other hue](#)

Evil may cloak itself in various disguises, but its essence will always remain. One boy at school happened to be loved by the teachers, but he was a pure bully to the other students on the playground. Although he could present himself as pleasant when necessary, the other kids knew he was a bad apple deep down. A hue is another word for a shade of color.

726) [First impressions are the most lasting](#)

Your first interaction with another person tends to stick in the mind, so it's important to appear and behave your best when you meet someone for the first time. On a first date at a restaurant, one woman was shocked at how rude her date was to the waiter. Even though he was generally kind after this incident, she could never get this initial impression out of her head.

727) [Anger is a short madness](#)

Anger leads one to act impulsively and irrationally. For instance, when a boy received a bad grade on his test, he took his anger out on the teacher by throwing eggs at his house one night. When he was caught red-handed, he ended up in much worse trouble than a bad grade would have brought. This proverb is attributed to the ancient Latin poet Horace.

728) [Better to wear out than to rust out](#)

Always live your life to the fullest, even in old age. This proverb encourages one not to succumb to laziness or indolence later in life. For example, a man in his seventies will feel better about himself if he remains physically active and pursues his hobbies as long as his body allows him, rather than surrendering to old age.

729) [Better to marry than to burn with passion](#)

It's better to get married than suffer while trying to control the urge of sexual desires. Taken from 1 Corinthians 7:9 in the Bible, this proverb is typically used in a religious context to discourage premarital affairs.

730) [Evil be to him who evil thinks](#)

One should not maintain ungrounded, bad thoughts about other people. One should think well of others and avoid negativity that may affect one's own life. This proverb, translated from the French "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*," is the motto of the British Order of the Garter, dating back to the fourteenth century.

731) **He who can, does; he who cannot, teaches**

This proverb claims that those who are able to perform a task will not be bothered to teach others the way. For example, many professional artists would prefer to spend their energy perfecting their craft rather than teaching. This proverb is often criticized by teachers due to the negative light it casts on them.

732) **Help a lame dog over a stile**

One who is capable should always help a person in need. While on his morning commute to work, a man saw that an old woman had pulled over on the side of the road. Noticing that she had a flat tire, he did the right thing and stopped to change it for her. A stile is a type of staircase designed so that humans, but not animals, can climb over a fence or wall.

733) **Idleness is the root of all evil**

Boredom often leads one to succumb to temptation. As long as a person stays busy with useful, meaningful work, their mind will not wander into dangerous territory. The proverb's sentiment is echoed in "The devil finds work for idle hands."

734) **Speak the truth, and shame the devil**

Be honest, even when doing so feels difficult. The idea behind this proverb is that the devil, being evil, wants us to lie, and so we should be honest and let him have no influence on us. English playwright William Shakespeare used a variant of this in his 1548 history *Henry IV*: "Tell the truth and shame the devil."

735) **If you want a thing well done, do it yourself**

It's a better idea to rely on yourself than on someone else for a job or task that is very important and specific. You could hire a maid to arrange your shelves and spend a lot of time explaining to her what needs to be done, but ultimately it's not done exactly the way you want it. It makes more sense to do something yourself when the outcome is critical to you and you can't risk having another person do it incorrectly.

736) **The mountains are high, and the emperor is far away**

A central government has little authority over the regions that are farther away. This is an old Chinese proverb, and traditionally the seat of power, Beijing, struggled to control its outlying territories. Local, petty leaders would get away with corruption and other mischief because they weren't as easily seen or noticed by the emperor.

737) **Don't have too many irons in the fire**

Don't commit yourself to too many activities at once. Otherwise, you will not be able to devote the proper energy to each task. For instance, a man who already has two part-time jobs should probably think twice before taking on a third. The proverb refers to a blacksmith heating irons in an oven; to heat too many at once would mean an inferior product.

738) **Better bend than break**

One needs to be humble and flexible in the face of tough circumstances. For instance, when a man got into an argument with his girlfriend about where they should take their vacation, he realized that in this case, it was better to surrender his own desires in order to make her happy. This proverb is reminiscent of the mighty oak tree and the humble reed in the wind.

739) **He is lifeless that is faultless**

No one is completely free of character defects and weaknesses; thus, making mistakes is a natural part of being human. For example, a woman would sometimes become annoyed by her husband's short temper, but she always reminded herself of his many positive traits, such as kindness, generosity, and a good sense of humor.

740) **In union is strength**

You can achieve a lot more as a group than as an individual. Moreover, for a group to succeed, each person must be willing to put in their own share of effort. The most successful organizations in the world are the ones in which people work well as a team, rather than compete against each other, because a project usually involves many components that no single person can manage on their own.

741) **Sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind**

If you start trouble, you will suffer from much more severe consequences. The words "sow" and "reap" are agricultural terms meaning "spread seeds" and "harvest," which is a poetic way of suggesting cause and effect. The type of seed the farmer spreads in the field will determine the type of plant that will grow in multiplication.

742) **A fish rots from the head down**

Corruption within an organization always starts with the leadership, either by setting a bad example or failing to effectively manage. For example, if a low-ranking government official demands bribes, it may be a sign that bribery or embezzlement is accepted by people in higher levels of government.

743) **Don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs**

Don't waste your energy teaching someone a lesson they already know. For example, it would be futile to lecture a lifelong farmer about the importance of fertilizer to his crops. The saying comes from a time when it was common practice to poke holes in a raw egg and suck out its contents; one's grandmother was naturally assumed to be an expert in the task.

744) **Nothing is easy to the unwilling**

Your reluctance and lack of motivation can be the main obstacles when you try something new. For example, if you are resistant to the idea of cooking for yourself, learning to make meals will feel very difficult. Your attitude is what makes it easy or hard.

745) **Do right and fear no man**

If one is acting with integrity and honesty, they have nothing to fear. For instance, a man sees another person getting robbed in the street. The police come and look for witnesses. Although he realizes that giving a statement may jeopardize his own safety, his fear subsides because he knows it is the right thing to do.

746) [A golden key can open every door](#)

Anything is possible with enough money and resources at your disposal. For instance, coming from a prestigious, wealthy family, a woman had grown up to discover she could accomplish anything simply because of the power bought by her money. Essentially the proverb suggests that nothing is beyond the reach of the wealthy.

747) [Lies have short legs](#)

Liars will soon be exposed, and the truth will be revealed. This saying suggests that lies are weak and cannot “walk” very far, perhaps because it does not take very long for the truth to contradict a lie.

748) [A great ship asks deep water](#)

One's potential should not be wasted. If you have the capacity to perform, don't sell yourself short. For example, if a woman is a gifted fiction writer, she should exercise her talent writing novels rather than settling for writing blog posts. The proverb comes from the fact that a ship with a large hull will easily run aground in shallow waters.

749) [He that is down needs fear no fall](#)

If one is at a low point, the only way to go is up. When a criminal is finally arrested and sent to prison, they may actually be filled with a feeling of relief because things cannot get any worse. This proverb, commonly used in a Christian context, comes from a seventeenth-century song by John Bunyan.

750) [You can't eat your cake and have it too](#)

Life is full of trade-offs, and you can't have everything your way. If you want to have cake in your possession, you must not eat it. If you want to eat it, you will no longer have it. Similarly, it would be folly to hope to make a lot of money at your job without working more than a few hours a week.

751) [If you want something done, ask a busy person](#)

Typically, busy people are better at managing their time and executing a task, while those with little to do are more likely to procrastinate on a project. This paradoxical proverb is attributed to both Elbert Hubbard and Benjamin Franklin.

752) [As well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb](#)

One who has already committed a minor offense may feel justified in committing an even greater one. The logic here is that the offender will be punished either way, so he might as well make the most of his eventual punishment. In the proverb's literal terms, a fully grown sheep is considered more valuable than a lamb. Additionally, death by hanging was a common punishment for theft at one time in history.

753) [The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose](#)

Even good or neutral things can be used or twisted for evil purposes. The Bible has many teachings in it that have led people to do good. However, other people may use passages from the Bible to push or defend their own harmful agendas.

754) [Trade follows the flag](#)

Colonies promote the trade of their mother country. For example, the spice trade in Indonesia became very active once Indonesia (the East Indies) was colonized by the Dutch. This proverb refers to the historic fact that a country usually plants a flag in the ground of another country that it colonizes.

755) [What's yours is mine, and what's mine is my own](#)

Everything belongs to me. This is a jocular way of expressing the selfishness of some people when they allow themselves to use others' property while denying others the use of their own. For example, Paul frequently borrows Jack's sports car but never lends him his motorbike.

756) [No man is a hero to his valet](#)

A personal servant knows too much about their master to hold them in high regard. A "valet," sometimes called a "manservant," was a male servant who helped his employer get dressed and therefore knew all his secrets.

757) [A bully is always a coward](#)

Don't be afraid to stand up to an oppressor; those who seem tough on the outside are typically weak on the inside. This paradoxical proverb points out the human tendency to overcompensate for one's own flaws. It is attributed to Charles Lamb's nineteenth-century *Essays of Elia*.

758) [All lay loads on a willing horse](#)

One is likely to make full use of a willing worker. For example, a newly hired employee at an office job is often so eager to please their new colleagues that they are willing to take on extra work simply to prove themselves. The proverb comes from the days of old when goods were often transported on a horse's back.

759) [An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening](#)

One is typically more productive in the morning than in the evening. This Chinese proverb alludes to the common belief that one has the most energy and ability to focus and concentrate upon first rising in the morning. After a long day, one is more likely to be exhausted; thus, tasks will take longer to complete.

760) [Great hopes make great men](#)

An optimist is often more successful than their self-defeating peers. For example, one man grew up in an unsupportive family but never stopped believing in himself. This perseverance eventually led to him making great achievements in life, including securing his dream job and even a happy family of his own. This proverb is attributed to seventeenth-century English historian Thomas Fuller.

761) [What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over](#)

If you are ignorant about something awkward, unpleasant, or stressful happening, you will be spared the uncomfortable feelings of knowing and distressing yourself about it. For example, if you have no idea that one of your coworkers is having a terrible time and plans to quit, you are unlikely to be distracted in your work or question your own work experience. A very similar proverb is "Ignorance is bliss."

762) [Care and diligence bring luck](#)

One who is thorough and persistent will reap the rewards of his work. The carpenter who rushes through his work and ends up with a wobbly table would be wise to heed this proverb. People might think that celebrities became successful by mere strokes of luck, but in reality it took hard work and patience to achieve their goals. Attributed to seventeenth-century English writer Thomas Fuller, the saying praises the fastidious among us.

763) [Love laughs at locksmiths](#)

Obstacles can't stop love. Even if they are separated, people who love each other will continue to feel the same way and will find a way to overcome any barriers in their way. For example, a parent put their twin toddlers to bed in separate rooms, only to find them in the same crib every morning.

764) [It takes three generations to make a gentleman](#)

Having money and a title is not enough to make you aristocracy. To be considered truly so, both your father and grandfather must have been gentlemen as well. Nowadays nobility and titles are much less regarded (at least in the Western world), but in Europe a few hundred years ago, class and ranking were extremely important aspects of society.

765) [Fear of death is worse than death itself](#)

Death is inevitable and therefore need not be feared. Worrying about it can often cause a person more distress than death itself. For instance, a man was so afraid of dying that he refused to travel by plane, thus preventing himself from exploring and experiencing the world at large.

766) [Hard words break no bones](#)

One should not worry about abusive words as they cannot cause physical harm. For instance, a child was often teased at school due to their scrawny appearance, but they didn't let it bother them. The proverb echoes another expression, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me."

767) [There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing](#)

There is no excuse for not spending some time outside. If it's a cold, snowy day, then you can wear a heavy jacket and gloves. If it's a hot, sunny day, then you can wear a hat and loose clothing. It's good to spend time in nature, and there are clothes for every type of weather and occasion.

768) [Admonish your friends in private, praise them in public](#)

Practice discretion when criticizing another person; it is best to avoid the chance of humiliating them as criticism can be a difficult thing to process. For instance, when one boy made an error in his baseball game, his coach chose to let him know in private rather than in front of the whole team. Praise, on the other hand, is welcome in the public eye.

769) [Even Homer sometimes nods](#)

No one is perfect; even experts are bound to make mistakes. This proverb refers to the Greek epic poet Homer, who, although regarded as one of the greatest writers in history, was still not immune to allowing plot holes in his stories. Thus the saying is often used when an especially skilled writer or artist makes an error in his work.

770) [Every man is his own worst enemy](#)

People often create their own problems for themselves. This can even come in the form of self-doubt. For instance, if a woman has low self-esteem, she may find it difficult to apply for a high-paying job for fear of being rejected. If she simply overcame her fears, she might find that she was more than qualified for the job.

771) **One father is more than a hundred schoolmasters**

Parents are more influential in forming their children's behavior, habits, and way of thinking than all the teachers they meet in school. This proverb reminds parents to be careful what they teach their children as it will have a lifelong impact on them. Even the best teachers, or "schoolmasters," will not develop the long, deep relationships that parents can.

772) **A clean hand wants no washing**

An honest man does not need to spend time refuting groundless accusations. During his campaign for mayor, one man was subject to many accusations from his opponents, but as he was confident in his political platform, he simply ignored these baseless attacks.

773) **Give us the tools, and we will finish the job**

Any task can be accomplished, but one must be provided the necessary resources. For example, when a mother asked her son to cook dinner for the family one night, he agreed but requested use of her credit card to purchase the necessary ingredients. This proverb is taken from a quote by Winston Churchill in an address to the United States during the Second World War. It was effectively a plea for the U.S. to provide England with the supplies and weaponry needed to face Germany.

774) **He who rides a tiger is afraid to dismount**

A person who begins a dangerous activity will be so involved and so implicated that carrying on with the endeavor will seem safer than quitting. This is the feeling of a person who joins a criminal gang and is unable to abandon them. The proverb describes the image of someone who manages to ride a tiger and holds their place tightly, as they are so afraid of being attacked by the tiger if they get off.

775) **Kings have long arms**

Be careful when dealing with powerful people because they can have far-reaching influence. For example, if someone opposes a ruler, that ruler can make sure the person is found and punished even if that person flees to another country.

776) **Life has many ups and downs**

We all experience positive and negative experiences in our lives. While Martin is sad today because he lost his job, he should remember that he has gotten through difficult situations in the past, and that positive things do happen to him regularly. He might get a new opportunity soon.

777) **The day has eyes**

Since daytime is light, thanks to the sun, it's easier to see things. If you are thinking of doing something risky at night, such as running across a lawn of freshly manicured grass, it may be a good idea to wait until daytime since you'll have better visibility and more people will be around to help when needed.

778) **Dreams go by contraries**

This proverb is often employed to comfort someone who has experienced a bad dream. It implies that dreams often manifest as their opposites in reality. Thus, if one dreams of a funeral, he might hear of a marriage in his waking state. In the same vein, if one dreams of becoming destitute, they may wake up to find they've received a large inheritance.

779) **A little neglect may breed great mischief**

Pay attention to detail; a minor misstep can cause a big problem. For instance, a man had been hearing a strange clicking noise coming from his car for weeks, but he chose to ignore it until one day the car broke down. When he brought it to the mechanic, he learned that he could have saved a significant sum of money if he had simply brought it in sooner. This proverb is widely attributed to Benjamin Franklin.

780) [April showers bring forth May flowers](#)

Be patient; a difficult time may blossom into something positive. After a bout of depression brought on by a painful divorce, a man decided to start attending a yoga class where he happened to meet the love of his life. In many climates, it is traditionally understood that April is a rainy month, which ideally leads to the blooming of flowers in May.

781) [If you don't like the heat, get out of the kitchen](#)

It's best to stay away from high-pressure situations if you can't handle the risk involved. Looking for a new sport to play, one high school student tried out for the wrestling team, but when they realized how competitive and even dangerous it was, they decided it was best to stick to something like volleyball.

782) [Take heed of the snake in the grass](#)

Beware of a traitor who is pretending to be your ally. It is hard to see a poisonous snake in green grass. The ancient Roman poet Virgil used this metaphor to describe a person who is hiding their treachery by acting like a friend. For example, your friends are supportive when you submit art to a contest, but one of them has secretly joined the competition and has been giving you bad advice in order to beat you.

783) [The dog returns to his vomit](#)

A foolish person will repeat the same mistakes they made before. For example, a recovering addict can easily fall back into abusing the same type of drug. In biblical times, dogs were considered unclean animals that had disgusting habits.

784) [Possession is nine points of the law](#)

In property disputes, the person who has physical possession of an item is at a clear advantage. For example, if you find a bird on your doorstep in an unmarked birdcage and decide to keep it, and someone later argues that the bird belongs to them, a judge would likely agree that it now belongs to you.

785) [The best fish swim near the bottom](#)

The things that are most worthwhile take the most effort to achieve. Graduating college, for example, is a very meaningful decision that will have a positive lifelong impact, but it requires a lot of time, effort, money, and discipline to accomplish. Dating is another example. Finding a high-quality person with similar values can take a lot of effort, since there are a lot of people in this world and most of them will be very different from your needs and standards.

786) [When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail](#)

If your set skills or knowledge is too narrow, you may develop a limited worldview in which you apply your skills and knowledge as the solution to every issue you see. For example, a software developer who is only comfortable with one computer script will seek to use it in all his projects, when in reality he would do a better job by learning how to program using a more advanced programming language.

787) **First up, best dressed**

Being early has its advantages. For example, if one is the first to arrive at a bakery in the morning, they will have their choice of the best loaf of bread in the case. Reminiscent of “The early bird catches the worm,” this proverb comes from a time when, in big families, the first child awake would get to wear the best clothing.

788) **Marry in haste, repent at leisure**

If you get married quickly, without making an effort to really know your future partner, you will have a long time to regret your decision. Marriage is expected to last a lifetime, so it is not a decision that should be taken lightly. It is better to take your time before marrying so that you are sure you will enjoy being married.

789) **No garden without its weeds**

Every situation, however nice, has some downsides. We cannot expect everything to be perfect, and we need to accept the bad along with the good. For example, if you get a new job with a great boss and comfortable salary, but a coworker is not nice to you, maybe you should put up with this little inconvenience.

790) **Self-praise is no recommendation**

If someone proclaims that they have positive qualities or made great achievements, people will tend not to trust them. Reputations are built on what people say about each other. When people brag about themselves or their skills or accomplishments, it does not give us an objective opinion, and it tells us that the person is not humble.

791) **If it were not for hope, the heart would break**

Hope is necessary for us to get through struggles. An unfulfilled desire, such as being in a happy relationship, can be emotionally very hard to endure. Without hope and a positive outlook, it would be too mentally difficult to sustain day-to-day living.

792) **Birds in their little nests agree**

People living in close quarters would do well to get along; any tension could cause a serious problem. Two college freshmen sharing a dorm room were not considerate of each other when one preferred to stay up late at night while the other valued his sleep. It didn't take long for an argument to break out, and after that, the friendship was never the same. If several birds can manage to live peacefully in a nest, people should be able to do the same in a small living space. This proverb is attributed to Isaac Watts, having appeared in his *Divine Songs Attempted in the Easy Language of Children* (1715).

793) **A good name is sooner lost than won**

While it may take years to build a trusted reputation, it takes only one mistake to tear it all down. After the publication of her memoir, a woman grew to world-renowned fame, but when it was discovered that she had fabricated most of her own story, her reputation was immediately tarnished.

794) **Better be alone than in bad company**

As people are known by the company they keep, it is better to be a loner than to associate with ill-mannered people. One teenager should have followed this advice when he found himself pressured by his misfit friends to vandalize the school. When he was caught by the police, he realized he would have been better off staying home alone.

795) **The more laws, the less justice**

More laws means it takes longer to process a court case, and so both the victim and the accused must wait longer for justice. A simplified legal system is fairer for everyone. This proverb is actually a quote from the famous ancient Roman orator Marcus Tullius Cicero, who was very concerned with the political affairs of his time.

796) **If you run after two hares, you will catch neither**

Don't try to do two demanding pursuits at the same time. For example, don't work a full-time job as a doctor while trying to write a novel. Hares have strong hind legs and are one of the fastest land animals. Imagine trying to chase after two hares and catch both of them. It would be impossible!

797) **It is not work that kills, but worry**

Working isn't bad for your health; stress and anxiety are. Some people associate work with stress or an unpleasant experience, but this isn't necessarily the case. Work can be enjoyable if you are adapted to it and find a way to enjoy it, while some people could easily sit at home doing nothing and still feel stressed and unhappy.

798) **The darkest hour is that before the dawn**

Things are always worst right before they get better. If you are having a really difficult time with unemployment and have just reached a new low, it may signal that your fortunes may change soon with a new job or another opportunity. Typically the hours before dawn are at their darkest because the moon has set.

799) **Every law has a loophole**

If one tries hard enough, they can find their way around any law or rule. For instance, a high school student decided to come to school without any shoes. Despite the school's strict policy, he was able to get away with it by claiming it was for religious reasons.

800) **Full of courtesy, full of craft**

One who is exceedingly polite is often a con artist. For example, one elegantly dressed lady charmed a man into letting her borrow a hundred dollars in a store, claiming she had forgotten her purse at home. But when the man realized the borrower had given a fake phone number, he knew he had been deceived.

801) **Gluttony kills more than the sword**

Overindulgence is often the cause of one's own destruction. For example, a man with a sweet tooth had more than his fair share of sugar over the years, so much so that he developed a severe case of diabetes at an early age.

802) **A man can only die once**

There is no reason to fret over death as it can only happen once. The saying offers consolation to those who fear death while also alluding to its finality. For instance, the man who lives his life being overly cautious would do well to heed this proverb's advice. It can also be used as an encouragement to take a brave stand.

803) **Confidence is the companion of success**

In order to accomplish something, you first must believe in yourself. Without confidence, any obstacle will be met with fear and doubt. Presenting yourself as self-assured in an interview is a sure way to get the job. Those who appear timid or shy will likely not receive a second look, even if their resume is impressive.

804) [Even a worm will turn](#)

If pushed far enough, even the most reserved, patient person will fight back. For example, a shy boy at school had become used to the constant teasing from older students; one day, however, the bullies went too far, and the boy retaliated by telling the school principal about his tormentors, which opened the door for serious investigation. The proverb dates back to the sixteenth century where it appears in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*.

805) [Good advice is beyond all price](#)

Words of wisdom are invaluable, especially when it prevents someone from making a foolish decision. For instance, when a man's business was in danger of going bankrupt, his father gave him some useful marketing tips that enabled the man to turn the company into a thriving, profitable entity.

806) [There's small choice in rotten apples](#)

If you have a lot of options, but they are all bad, it is the same as having few or no options at all. You may, for example, discover that you are seriously behind on a bill you can't afford. You have several choices that include paying it, defaulting on it, or getting a loan with a high interest rate, none of which are optimal and at least one of which is not even possible.

807) [Wise men learn by other men's mistakes, fools by their own](#)

Wise people are observant so that they can learn by example rather than through the time and energy wasted in their own failed experiences. Foolish people fail to do this, and so they must suffer the consequences of their own poor decisions over and over again.

808) [You have to crawl before you walk](#)

You have to make great accomplishments one step at a time. Just as it would be absurd to expect a baby to start walking before they learn to crawl, it would be unfair to expect yourself or someone else to master a sophisticated skill (such as playing the violin) without first learning it at a basic level.

809) [He who lives by the sword dies by the sword](#)

One who is aggressive or violent toward others will likely suffer in a similar attitude. For instance, a school bully was used to teasing and picking on their classmates until a bigger, stronger kid joined the class. This proverb has a wide historical scope, being found in ancient Greek, Chinese, and Latin texts.

810) [Bees that have honey in their mouths have stings in their tails](#)

Be careful with those who speak sweetly; they are often the most dangerous. This Scottish proverb of foreboding warns of the fact that some people use their charisma and charm to deceive and cause harm.

811) [Believe not all that you see nor half what you hear](#)

Even one's own experience cannot always be trusted. Objects and events can be different from what they seem to be. This proverb, attributed to Edgar Allan Poe, is not only a caution to be skeptical of another's opinion; it is also a suggestion to question even one's own beliefs.

812) *Never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you*

Don't try to fix imaginary problems as they may never happen, but face them when they actually come to you. Our fear might lead us to take actions that instigate a problem that was unlikely to happen. This is a play on words using "trouble" as a verb meaning "to bother" and as a noun meaning "problems." It is likely that trouble will one day come to you, so until then there is no need to go looking for trouble.

813) *The frog in the well knows nothing of the great ocean*

Our imagination is limited by our experiences. It is advisable to explore and learn about the world to live a richer life. For example, someone who has never left their country of birth will have a smaller perspective on the world than someone who has studied or traveled abroad.

814) *Don't wash your dirty linen in public*

Personal matters are better dealt with in private. One couple was known for getting into colossal arguments in the local coffee shop, where the entire town was forced to listen to their relationship problems. These types of conversations should be kept behind closed doors.

815) *Evil communication corrupts good manners*

A wholesome person should surround themselves with like-minded individuals, lest they be influenced negatively. One man normally abstained from drinking, but when he became friends with a group of colleagues who had a habit of going to the pub after work, he soon developed an affinity for alcohol. This proverb has its origins in 1 Corinthians 15:33 in the Bible.

816) *None but the brave deserves the fair*

Only those who act courageously will get the rewards they are looking for. This is a line from English Poet Laureate John Dryden's "Alexander's Feast," written in 1697. "The fair" here is a reference to a "fair maiden," a common cliché for an attractive, unmarried woman.

817) *Knowledge is a treasure, but practice is the key to it*

Learning is only the first step toward expertise. Putting your knowledge into action is more important than knowing something in the abstract. For example, it is valuable for a cook to know many techniques, but in order to be a great chef, you must also get a lot of experience in the kitchen.

818) *Old sins cast long shadows*

The bad deeds that people do will have long-lasting effects. For example, people who kill others, abuse children, or commit other serious crimes will probably have to face consequences eventually, even if the crime is not known or punished when it first occurs.

819) *It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good*

It's a truly bad situation if there is absolutely no benefit or "silver lining" in it. The assumption here is that most misfortunes have a silver lining, or something good that comes out of it. For example, you may wreck your old car, but you can at least collect insurance and use the money toward a better car. But a truly bad situation is one in which there is no positive side effect at all.

820) *There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip*

Things can always go unexpectedly wrong at the last minute. You probably don't expect to accidentally drop your cup in the few seconds it takes to raise it to your mouth, yet you have probably had this happen to you or someone else. Likewise, even when something you are working on seems to be going smoothly, never assume in the last few days or hours that there won't be a problem of some kind. Always be alert to the very last moment.

821) [When you are in a hole, stop digging](#)

If you are in an unfortunate situation, stop doing anything that might exacerbate it. For example, if your jokes at a party are making people feel uncomfortable, it's better to stop trying to be funny than to continue and risk offending more people and making yourself even more unwelcome.

822) [A little pot is soon hot](#)

This proverb plays to the stereotype that people with a short stature tend to have a short temper as well. The literal meaning refers to the fact that a small kettle will boil sooner than a large one.

823) [A stumble may prevent a fall](#)

A small mistake may be a warning sign of something worse to come. At his annual medical checkup, a man learned he had gained twenty pounds. Realizing the direction in which he was headed, he vowed to eat healthier and exercise more, thereby avoiding more serious health problems later in life.

824) [Faint heart ne'er won fair lady](#)

Apprehension and self-doubt never yield success; you must be bold and assertive in order to attain what you desire. For instance, if a woman feels she deserves a promotion, she should not be afraid to ask her manager directly for it. The proverb refers to the confidence needed for a man to approach a beautiful woman.

825) [Adversity makes a man wise, not rich](#)

One gains valuable life experience when facing difficult times head-on. In dealing with his father's battle with cancer, one man broke down emotionally at first. However, in time he came to learn important lessons about life, death, and being a son—things he would never have learned had he refused to face his fears in the situation.

826) [Books and friends should be few but good](#)

One with too many friends won't be able to find time for all. The same holds true for books, in that one with too many books will never be able to read them all. Therefore, quality should come before quantity in both cases. It is better to have just one good friendship, or book, than ten lackluster ones.

827) [Every bullet has its billet](#)

Everything follows its proper course and ends where it should. An allusion to the role of fate in one's life, this proverb implies that regardless of one's intentions, things have a way of working out. It literally means that each bullet will hit a specific target. A "billet" is a military term for a soldier's temporary lodging, most often in a civilian's home.

828) [Extremes are dangerous](#)

A person should only do things in moderation. Having too little of something can be as damaging as having too much. For instance, one man realized he was gaining weight and became completely

obsessed with his diet. But when he fell unconscious one day as a result of malnutrition, he realized he had taken things a little too far.

829) [Pity is akin to love](#)

Feeling sympathy for someone involves a tenderness that is like love. There are no clear boundaries between human emotions, but it is tempting to call some emotions positive and others negative. This old saying tells us that pity, which we may have trouble accepting, is actually similar to love. “Akin to” means “related to.”

830) [Today you, tomorrow me](#)

This is a pithy way of saying, “I am helping you, since one day I may need help.” For example, if you help a stranger who is having car troubles and they express their gratitude, you could respond, “No problem. Today you, tomorrow me.” It’s good to be humble and help others, since we never know when we may need a favor from them. This phrase is a variant of the concept of “paying it forward.”

831) [Punctuality is the soul of business](#)

Respecting deadlines is critical to success in business. Punctuality is a sign of respect for the people you are working with, whether that means arriving to a meeting on time or completing a task by its due date. Punctuality will build trust and confidence, which are crucial to business interactions. On the other hand, repeated delays will damage business relations.

832) [Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves](#)

If you are careful every time you spend a small amount of money, in the long run, your savings will add up. For example, if you make a habit of shopping for items on sale when you buy groceries, you will notice that your monthly spending has been significantly reduced.

833) [There are wheels within wheels](#)

There are forces at work beyond what we can see that affect what happens in our lives. If you can’t seem to get a good grade in a certain class no matter how hard you study, there may be “wheels within wheels”—a cause, such as lack of background, that is beyond your ability or talent. This phrase comes from *The Crucible*, a famous play by Arthur Miller.

834) [Jealousy is the root of all evil](#)

Many evil behaviors are motivated by jealousy. For example, a king who decides to go to war against another country may say it’s because of honor or riches or another cause, but the real reason is because he resents the king of the other country and wants to feel superior to him. Just as you can’t always see the roots of the tree, you may not see at first the jealous motive behind someone’s evil actions.

835) [Man's extremity is God's opportunity](#)

God’s mercy appears when a person’s circumstances are most dire, with no friend or helper coming to their rescue. This quote is from seventeenth-century English Puritan John Flavel, who saw suffering as a key part of a personal revelation of Christianity. “Extremity” is here used to mean “an extreme situation,” such as a natural disaster or other life-or-death situation.

836) [A friend is easier lost than found](#)

A true friendship takes time and effort to build, but it can be torn down in an instant. For example, two friends who had grown to be inseparable over the years suddenly had a falling-out when one borrowed money from the other and failed to pay it back in time.

837) **Never spend your money before you have it**

It is not wise to spend money that you don't already have in hand. Counting on future income can lead to problems. For example, if you go shopping because you expect to receive a bonus at work soon, you may find yourself in debt if you don't end up getting that bonus.

838) **A father is a treasure, a brother is a comfort, but a friend is both**

Friendship is very valuable and important in our lives. A friend will give you the advice and support you would expect from a father, and the good company you'd expect from a brother. So you need to maintain good relationships with your friends.

839) **Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me**

Don't worry about insults and ridicule because even if they may hurt your feelings, you'll get over it, and they won't cause you any real injury. This saying is frequently used to remind children to ignore people who call them names, and it is used by bullied children to tell bullies that their taunts will not affect them.

840) **There will be sleeping enough in the grave**

Life is short, so it's best to spend it doing as much as possible to realize our goals. To your colleague who is feeling exhausted with the home business you started together, you could reply, "We've got to keep going until it takes off." This phrase is first mentioned by Benjamin Franklin in his well-known autobiography.

841) **Through hardship to the stars**

One is willing to endure difficulties to reach a goal, such as winning a contest or being accepted into a competitive program. "The stars" is a poetic way of describing a high, lofty achievement. This phrase is translated from Latin, and in its native form is more succinct: "*as astra per aspera*."

842) **As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined**

The experiences of childhood determine one's character as an adult. For instance, a boy who grew up with a neglectful father may very well grow up to become the same type of parent, despite his best intentions to change. The proverb literally refers to the growth of a tree from its early stages as a small twig, where any disturbance will have lasting effects.

843) **Better be envied than pitied**

It is preferable to be fortunate and envied instead of unfortunate and pitied. The sentiment speaks to isolation that good fortune can cause, as to be envied is essentially to be alone. This cynical proverb is attributed to the ancient Greek Herodotus.

844) **Discontent is the first step in progress**

Every solution starts with a problem. For example, a man who is uncomfortable with his weight takes it as a sign that he needs to exercise and eat healthier foods. In the same way, a school principal who is not satisfied with the quality of the teachers will make the appropriate, necessary changes. This proverb

is attributed to Oscar Wilde, with the full version saying, "Discontent is the first step in the progress of a man or nation." A similar sentiment is found in "Necessity is the mother of invention."

845) **There is honor among thieves**

Even criminals, such as thieves, have their own sort of honor. Thieves, for example, may steal from everyone else, but not from each other. They can also make promises and trust each other's words. While a criminal's code of honor may not look like yours, they have one nonetheless.

846) **To know all is to forgive all**

If we know enough about the personal struggles of someone, even someone who has harmed us or others, it is much easier to have kind, understanding feelings toward that person. For example, you may initially feel grudgingly toward a person in your community who is grumpy and rude to you. However, once you learn about the difficult, sad life they have had, you are likely to feel compassion, see their behavior in a better perspective, and forgive their flaws.

847) **Good clothes open all doors**

One will improve their chances of being successful if they dress in respectable attire. For instance, in some job interviews an employer will likely take an applicant wearing a suit and tie more seriously than one wearing only jeans and a T-shirt.

848) **Innocent until proven guilty**

It's not fair to say someone is guilty unless you have proof. In certain cultures, especially in older times, the accused person was presumed guilty, making it harder for them to defend themselves. By contrast, in the Byzantine Empire, the law was designed so that the accused person was presumed innocent until evidence proved otherwise. Even outside the courtroom it's a good idea to assume goodwill in others until there is a good reason to believe otherwise.

849) **You cannot burn the candle at both ends**

You will exhaust yourself if you try to do too much. "Burning the candle at both ends" means working both early in the morning and late at night, times during which you may need the assistance of a light. A person who tries to get more done by working at all hours will ultimately burn out and become less productive than if they kept more reasonable hours.

850) **No man is born wise or learned**

Wisdom must be gained over time, and even people who seem very smart had to work at learning what they know. "No man is born wise" can be found in Miguel Cervantes' early seventeenth-century novel *Don Quixote*.

851) **A fault confessed is half redressed**

One who takes responsibility for his own flaws is respected more than those who refuse to admit their mistakes. A mother and father were pleased when their son confessed his responsibility for the graffiti that was found on school property. To them, the remorse he showed for his wrongdoing was a respectable trait, even if the action itself was reproachable.

852) **Soon ripe, soon rotten**

Children who develop an extraordinary skill very young will become spoiled as they age. Child prodigies, or very talented children, are impressive in contrast to other children. However, as they grow and their peers catch up with them, their abilities tend to seem less and less special. Former child prodigies may continue to expect special treatment that they got used to while they were growing up.

853) [The greater the sinner, the greater the saint](#)

The worse your behavior was in the past, the more impressive it is when you become a better person. It takes great willpower to change your ways, and this proverb points out that the more someone changes to be a good person, the more respect we should have for them. For example, converts are more zealous to practice the ritual of a religion than those born into it.

854) [Fear gives wings](#)

Fear often enables one to perform incredible feats. For instance, when his house caught fire, a man suddenly realized his cat was still trapped inside. Knowing he had no choice, he channeled his fear into adrenaline and rushed back into the house to rescue the beloved feline.

855) [Hunger breaks stone walls](#)

A person will do anything to satiate an intense hunger. For instance, a man who was lost in the woods for three nights without food was propelled onward only by the thought of his next meal. The proverb has also been rendered as "Love like to hunger'll break through stone walls."

856) [Once a priest, always a priest](#)

In Catholic belief, someone who has been ordained as a priest is spiritually and characteristically changed and cannot ever stop being a priest. Catechism of the Catholic Church #1538 states, "It is true that someone validly ordained can, for a just reason, be discharged ... but he cannot become a layman again in the strict sense, because the character imprinted by ordination is for ever."

857) [Promise is debt](#)

When you make a promise, you owe it to the other person to keep your promise. This proverb is a reminder that until you fulfill your commitment, you are in debt to the person to whom you made the promise. For example, if you tell your neighbor that you will feed their cat while they are on vacation, you owe it to them to actually feed their cat.

858) [Queen Anne is dead](#)

This is a sarcastic way to say that information someone has told you is not news but common knowledge. Queen Anne of Great Britain and Scotland had been in chronic poor health, and by the time that her death was officially announced, many rumors about her death had been circulated.

859) [The end crowns the work](#)

The final touches are the details that people pay attention to. For example, a lot of work goes into a wedding cake, from the size to the flavors to the fillings and frosting. No matter what the quality of those elements may be, it is the final decoration that determines how it is all judged as a wedding cake.

860) [A good face is a letter of recommendation](#)

Good-looking people tend to get along better than others in society. This is likely because the face is normally the first impression one has when meeting a person. This proverb was first recorded in English by T. Shelton in a seventeenth-century translation of *Don Quixote*.

861) **A disease known is half cured**

Knowing the cause of a problem makes it easy to find a workable solution. For example, if a boy suddenly starts suffering from severe headaches, his mother would likely be worried. However, she will be relieved when she visits the doctor and learns the boy simply needs eyeglasses. The element of mystery can add unnecessary anxiety to a situation.

862) **Despair gives courage to a coward**

Dire circumstances tend to bring out the best in people. One might even discover qualities they thought they never had when faced with a dangerous situation. For example, when a group of hikers got lost in the woods, one unlikely member stepped up, defended them against wild dogs, and led them to safety. This proverb is widely attributed to seventeenth-century English historian Thomas Fuller.

863) **If you're not paying, you're the product**

Nothing is for free. If you're not careful, you'll be taken advantage of, sometimes in very subtle ways. The proverb originated in the 1970s and typically refers to the culture of advertising in which products are often subliminally marketed to consumers unbeknownst to them.

864) **A liar is worse than a thief**

Lying can be more damaging than theft. This is because lying can lead to a betrayal of trust, which can destroy a relationship, while theft of a material possession is a comparatively "lighter" sin. Of course, theft is also a form of dishonesty, but it comes from strangers, while lying comes from people you know and trust.

865) **The eyes have one language everywhere**

Facial expressions are the same in every culture. Languages may vary across the world, but you can tell if another person is angry, happy, or sad, even if you don't understand the language they speak. Humans are united by a common repository of emotions and feelings.

866) **A good example is the best sermon**

Words are limited in how far they can go in teaching a moral lesson. People learn better by seeing with their own eyes. For example, a woman talking to her son about the value of kindness and goodwill toward others can teach him more by being an example of charitable action herself.

867) **A word spoken is past recalling**

Be careful what you say; once uttered, words cannot be erased. For instance, if you insult a person once, it is unlikely that they will ever forget the incident, no matter how kind you are toward them afterward.

868) **Be just before you are generous**

Make sure your own debts are paid before lending to others. For example, taking your significant other out for a nice dinner is wonderful, but if you still owe \$100 to a friend, he may wonder if you are taking advantage of his loan.

869) **Sow an act, and you reap a habit**

In order to form a habit, you have to start performing the action. The words “sow” and “reap” are agricultural terms meaning “spread seeds” and “harvest,” which is a poetic way of suggesting cause and effect. For example, if you want to be a person who gets up early, you have to start by regularly getting out of bed early in the morning. This is part of a quotation by Ralph Waldo Emerson, which says, “Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.”

870) **Time cures all things**

All hurts and frustrations eventually soften or disappear with time. Anything that you can't resolve now through your thoughts, actions, or decisions will be taken care of once enough time passes. Another version of this proverb is “Time cures all wounds.”

871) **Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost**

One should only act for their own benefit, lest others take advantage of them. This becomes especially apparent in times of crisis when man's instinct for self-preservation shows itself. For instance, when Hurricane Katrina destroyed parts of New Orleans in 2005, many people were seen breaking into stores to get food to survive.

872) **There is no pleasure without pain**

There is always give and take in things. The pleasure of skiing down a slope of perfectly fluffy snow with the wind in your hair is preceded by the pain of journeying to the top of the hill, and may yet be followed by the pain of tumbling near the bottom. Things that are enjoyable often come with risks and side effects, or may take hard work to achieve.

873) **You cannot teach an old dog new tricks**

You can't expect to change someone who is so accustomed to their ways. Some people have a rigid way of thinking and living and are not open to new ideas or experiences. Stereotypically this is especially assumed of older people, though of course there are plenty of open-minded older folks and close-minded younger ones.

874) **A constant guest is never welcome**

Don't take advantage of another's hospitality; you might just overstay your welcome. If one has a friend who always seems to invite himself over, this proverb may be just the hint he needs that some friends are better kept at a distance.

875) **He gives twice, who gives quickly**

One should give without hesitation. When a man was walking home on a cold winter night, he noticed a homeless man wearing only a T-shirt. Knowing he had plenty of warm clothes at home, he immediately removed his coat and handed it to the man.

876) **One lie makes many**

When we tell a lie, we are usually forced to tell other lies to support or hide the first one, and so we become more deeply involved. For example, Alice skips school to go to the movies. When her mother asks if she has homework, she will have to lie because she wasn't at school, and if her family goes to the same movie, she will have to lie about the fact that she's already seen that movie.

877) **A bad penny always comes back**

A dishonest deed will eventually return to bother you. For instance, a boy who cheated his way through chemistry class in high school found himself completely lost in his college chemistry course years later. The proverb refers to the days when counterfeit coins were more common.

878) **Like people, like priest**

People will follow and behave like someone with whom they can identify. This originally comes from a biblical verse (Hosea 4:9) that describes a disobedient group of Israelites following a disobedient priest.

879) **So many men, so many opinions**

People are entitled to have their own opinions, and each opinion will represent one side of the truth. This saying comes from the play *Phormio* by the ancient Roman comic playwright Publius Terentius Afer, or Terence. The original quote is *Quot homines tot sententiae: suus cuique mos*, which can be translated as "There are as many opinions as there are people: each has his own correct way."

880) **All are not thieves that dogs bark at**

Don't judge a person by the rumors circulated around him. Many high school students were afraid of one teacher because they heard he was so difficult, but on the first day of class they were surprised to find he wasn't as strict and mean as they had heard.

881) **Caesar's wife must be above suspicion**

An important person's close associates must meet high expectations and take care not to injure their reputations. This proverb refers to Julius Caesar, the famed Roman leader who divorced his own wife, Pompeia, when she was caught in a scandal.

882) **Praise makes good men better and bad men worse**

People respond differently to compliments; motivated people will take them as encouragement to keep improving, and lazy people will take them as a sign they can stop trying so hard. This is an interesting point to consider when you give praise, and when you see how people respond to it. This proverb warns us against praising undeserving people.

883) **Shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in three generations**

Families that become wealthy quickly will lose that money within three generations. For example, a poor couple works hard to buy a corner market and grow it into a grocery chain. Their children take over the company. The couple's grandchildren, who grew up with wealth, will not be as motivated to work hard, and they will waste their inheritance and lose the family's money. "Shirtsleeves" here suggests working-class clothing as opposed to the business attire of a wealthy professional.

884) **Lightly come, lightly go**

Items that are easy to get are easy to let go of. This is an older variant of "Easy come, easy go." For example, you might not normally buy fancy coffee, but if you found some money in a coat pocket this morning, you might be more willing to treat yourself this afternoon. Another variant of this proverb is "Quickly come, quickly go."

885) **It's better to travel hopefully than to arrive**

The joyful anticipation of reaching a desired goal can be better than the goal itself. Some people, for example, spend weeks in a festive mood preparing for Christmas, only to find the actual holiday a bit anticlimactic and over all too quickly. True enjoyment in life comes when we embrace the process and enjoy the present, rather than simply wait for a future event.

886) The leopard cannot change his spots

A person can't change their fundamental nature. Some people believe in giving a second chance to people who have done wrong, while others say, "A leopard can't change its spots." Even if someone you know who has a bad character says they will change, it may not be a good idea to trust them.

887) Who keeps company with the wolf will learn to howl

You are influenced by the people you spend your time with. If you spend time with someone who is cynical and judgmental and uses bad language, it is likely you will pick up the same qualities. On the other hand, if you keep company with a person who is kind and generous, you are likely to in turn be a kinder, more generous person.

888) A cat in gloves catches no mice

Don't be afraid to be assertive and direct to get what you want. For instance, if you're seeking a promotion at work, it may be wise to bypass the standard courtesies and just ask for it, instead of waiting around for the boss to notice you.

889) A man without a smiling face must not open a shop

A successful person always presents a positive, cheerful attitude to the world; he won't have much luck with a sour demeanor. This Chinese proverb of old is an ideal motto for any customer-service position. No matter how great your product is, you will not sell a thing if you aren't nice to your customers.

890) Empty vessels make the greatest sound

It is often the least intelligent people who are the loudest and most talkative. In other words, people will sometimes try to assert themselves in a conversation even though they have no real knowledge about the topic at hand.

891) No man is wise at all times

Everyone makes mistakes. We all have our weaknesses, and even the people whom we see as faultless—or who see themselves that way—will sometimes get something wrong. For example, someone could be a university professor but make a wrong turn down a one-way street.

892) Half the truth is often a great lie

Telling only part of the truth is still a form of lying. When a boy broke one of his windows while playing with friends outside the house, he told his parents vaguely what had happened, but he neglected to mention that he was actually the culprit.

893) Safe bind, safe find

If you securely lock something up, it will be there when you come back to it later. This proverb suggests that belongings that are not carefully locked away may be moved or stolen. If you want to find your objects in the same condition that you left them, you should put them in a safe place and not leave them lying around.

894) [Good company on the road is the shortest cut](#)

A long journey seems to go much faster when in the company of pleasant people. Though not very common anymore, it was once a regular practice for long-distance truck drivers to pick up hitchhikers along the way, simply so they would have a companion with whom to pass the time.

895) [Little pitchers have long ears](#)

Be careful what you say near children because they can hear and understand more than you might think. This is a playful reference to the fact that water pitchers have handles that are shaped like the outline of large ears.

896) [Only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches](#)

We can never fully understand what someone else is going through, and often we have no outward sign of what may be affecting them. We have to trust other people when it comes to their own experiences. This proverb reminds us not to make fun of people in trouble, to have empathy for the challenges they are facing, and not to assume that we can provide easy solutions for sufferings we don't fully understand.

897) [Every tub must stand on its own bottom](#)

An individual or group should be independent and self-supporting, without relying on the resources of others. This sentiment is stressed by many parents as they watch their children grow up to become adults.

898) [There is a thin line between genius and insanity](#)

Often the most brilliant people do, think, or say things the rest of us might find inconceivable or crazy. They are also willing to try things and take risks that we may consider as over the edge. A prominent example is the artist Van Gogh: his original, creative mind led him to develop a type of art that was very new to the world at the time, but he also was very emotional and mentally unstable. Some experts believe that genius and insanity actually share a common gene.

899) [Tread on a worm and it will turn](#)

Even the weakest of creatures will defend themselves when truly provoked or pushed into a corner. An employee, for example, who is browbeaten and taken advantage of will eventually reach their limit and stand up to their boss. Be respectful to all, whether strong or weak.

900) [A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country](#)

People are more likely to believe in a foreign expert than one from their own kin. A man may become a recognized scientist in his field, but his family still regards him as an ordinary person. This concept was first illustrated when Jesus preached to the people of Nazareth, his hometown. They viewed him as one of their own and, therefore, without the proper authority to guide them.

901) [Custom makes all things easy](#)

With enough experience and repetition, any task or habit will become like second nature. Even a challenging endeavor like flying a plane can be mastered with enough training and dedication. This proverb is a close relative of "Practice makes perfect."

902) [Fingers were made before forks](#)

You may feel free to use your fingers instead of a fork when eating. After all, fingers were the primary tool for eating before utensils were invented. The proverb is often used as justification by children who would much rather eat with their hands, much to their parents' chagrin.

903) [Four eyes see more than two](#)

The judgment of two people is better than only one. This is because the second person will look at the topic from a different angle and see something that the first person missed. In school, for example, it is always best to have another person revise an important essay or assignment before submitting it. This sentiment is echoed in the proverb, "Two heads are better than one."

904) [Idleness is the key of beggary](#)

Those who do not earn their own keep will be forced to beg or borrow from others. For instance, a man's slothful brother had been unemployed for months. Despite the fact that he made no attempt to find work, he seemed to have no problem asking his brother for money.

905) [So many countries, so many customs](#)

Each nation has its own culture. This proverb suggests cultural relativism, or the idea that we should accept the variety of customs in the world and judge people based on the rules of their own culture. This is a variation of the quote from ancient Roman playwright Terence's *Phormio*, which says, "So many men, so many opinions: to each his own way."

906) [Faults are thick where love is thin](#)

When you don't truly like a person, their shortcomings become magnified. For instance, a woman realized she couldn't stand to eat meals with her boyfriend as he would speak with food in his mouth. In a loving relationship, this tendency could be viewed as a small blemish, but in this case it only led to contempt.

907) [Love cannot be compelled](#)

There is no way to make someone care for someone else. As implied by the similar saying "Love is without reason," we can't rationalize why people love one another, and therefore we can't make it happen. For example, if a widow remarries, there is no way to force her children to love her new spouse.

908) [Truth lies at the bottom of a well](#)

The truth can be hard to reach or figure out. You may have a tricky time telling how honest your boss is. A more literal, dramatic example is the Malaysian flight 370 that disappeared in the Indian Ocean in March 2014. No one has been able to figure out why or how exactly the plane crashed, since the plane and the black boxes are too deep down to find and retrieve.

909) [A man is known by the books he reads](#)

One can learn a lot about a person by observing his interests. For instance, if you are looking through a woman's bookshelf and come across many books on Eastern philosophy and religion, you can safely conclude that she is a spiritual person.

910) [Much cry and little wool](#)

A big fuss can be made about something with little gain or effect. For example, a product receives a lot of coverage and marketing but doesn't sell well because it has little actual value. This comes from a

medieval reference to shearing a hog. When you shear a sheep, you will get wool. If you shear a pig, it will squeal, and you won't get much wool.

911) **A fool at forty is a fool indeed**

If you haven't matured by middle age, you never will. A man who is still receiving speeding tickets in his forties will probably receive them the rest of his life. Some people will simply never learn, despite their age and experience.

912) **What everybody says must be true**

If you hear multiple people from differing environments all saying the same thing about a given subject, it is likely to be true. For example, if a family member, an acquaintance, a coworker, a friend, and a stranger all tell you that the new restaurant in town is overpriced, then in all likelihood they are all right.

913) **An empty sack cannot stand upright**

One must eat in order to function properly. As all people derive energy from the food they eat, it is important to keep a full stomach when doing work. It is no wonder that many cultures take their lunch break very seriously. This proverb likely refers to a sack of flour, which will not be able to stand upright without enough flour inside.

914) **Charity covers a multitude of sins**

Goodwill makes up for one's sins. According to this proverb, even one who acquires vast wealth by dishonest means will be absolved of their sins if they donate their money to a good cause. This Biblical proverb is often translated as "Love covers a multitude of sins." Another meaning of the proverb is that some wealthy people may give money in charity to soothe their guilty conscience.

915) **If you are not the lead dog, the view never changes**

A leader has more freedom and power and a larger view than his followers. For example, if given the choice between running for president and vice president, most politicians would choose the former. This proverb humorously alludes to the fact that in a dog-sled team, only the first dog gets a nice view of the scenery while all the others only get to stare at another dog's behind.

916) **A drowning man will clutch at a straw**

A person in dire straits will attempt anything, no matter how feeble, to relieve themselves. After being unemployed for an entire year, a man finally resorted to small manual jobs to pay his bills. This notion is reminiscent of the popular "Beggars can't be choosers."

917) **Short reckonings make long friends**

Settle disagreements quickly to maintain friendships as prolonged arguments can damage relationships. For example, if two friends have different opinions on politics, they could decide to simply not discuss politics in order to avoid arguments. The word "reckoning" here means settlement, as in "to settle an agreement."

918) **The nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat**

The closer you get to accomplishing something, the more enjoyable the process and the more excited you feel. For example, someone who has put a lot of work into renovating a house and is now putting

the finishing touches on it before having an “open house” event is probably filled with a burst of energy and anticipation. In older times, people believed that the meat closest to the bone was the tastiest.

919) [Two dogs strive for a bone, and a third runs away with it](#)

When two people are fighting over something, the third party may use this to their advantage. For example, when two politicians are in a deadlock of debate, a third politician may actually benefit from having a more moderate or otherwise middle-ground solution. If the two arguing politicians damage their reputations, the third one may gain more popularity.

920) [Children and fools tell the truth](#)

This cynical proverb implies that an intelligent person knows when it is appropriate to lie, whereas fools and children do not. One woman was three hours late to work one morning because she had overslept. Instead of making up a believable story as to why she was tardy, she simply told the truth. According to the proverb, a wise person would not have made this mistake. For another instance, you need to be considerate when giving your opinion so as not to hurt other people’s feelings.

921) [Every why has a wherefore](#)

Everything happens for a reason, even if the reason is not evidently apparent for everyone. For example, when a happily married couple split, everyone around them was shocked in the beginning, until it later became known that the husband had been cheating on his wife.

922) [Kind hearts are more than coronets](#)

Kindness and goodness are more important in a person than status or nobility. A coronet is a headpiece similar to a crown, often made with gold and jewels. While it may be tempting to value wealth or class in others, it’s their character that matters the most. This proverb is actually a line from a famous poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson called “Lady Clara Vere de Vere.”

923) [Venture a small fish to catch a great one](#)

It’s good to make a sacrifice or an investment up front in order to attain a greater reward. Just as a fisherman sacrifices the chance to eat a small fish by using it as bait for a larger fish, it is a wise risk-and-reward approach to put the money you have saved into an enterprise that will yield far greater profits in the future.

924) [When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman](#)

People are equal, and should not be oppressed by class distinctions. This rather esoteric proverb goes back to John Ball, an English priest who led one of the peasant revolts during the Middle Ages. Adam and Eve are traditionally thought of as the first people in existence, and both of them had to work hard; in their time there were no “gentlemen” or aristocrats. “Delve” refers to digging in the earth, and “span” refers to spinning or making clothing. Therefore, since people at the beginning of time all worked equally, it follows that all people now should still be expected to work equally.

925) [A little help is worth a deal of pity](#)

Words of sympathy can only go so far when helping another in their time of need. When a woman’s car was totalled, many expressed their sympathies, but only one friend actually offered a loan of his car if she should need it. This tangible help proved to be much more valuable than a mere “sorry.”

926) **A man of words and not of deeds is like a garden full of weeds**

People need to back up their claims with action. For instance, a man once spent an entire summer telling his wife he would paint the house, assuring her of how beautiful it would look. But in the end, he never did any painting. A sister proverb says, "Actions speak louder than words."

927) **Better lose a jest than a friend**

One should resist the temptation to make fun of a friend, lest he be offended. For instance, when a teenager witnessed his friend being shouted at by his mother, he had to hold back his laughter so as not to embarrass his friend even further.

928) **Every beginning is hard**

The start of a new endeavor is usually the most difficult part. This is mainly because one has to deal with something that is unfamiliar or unknown. For instance, when starting a new job, it is common to experience feelings of anxiety or fear about what exactly it will entail. But after a few weeks, this all passes as routine again sets in.

929) **A trouble shared is a trouble halved**

One finds solace from pain simply by confiding in another. When a woman was diagnosed with cancer, she found relief when she joined a support group where she could finally share her emotional struggle with others who were willing to listen and empathize.

930) **Don't cut off your nose to spite your face**

When exacting revenge, be careful not to harm yourself in the process. If another vehicle cuts in front of you in traffic, don't get into an accident while attempting to get even with the other driver.

931) **One cannot love and be wise**

Love blinds the reason and makes people do foolish things. For example, young people who are pursuing education will often make life-changing decisions about where to go to college based on where their high school sweetheart is going to be living.

932) **Shrouds have no pockets**

The dead cannot take riches with them in the grave. For example, a person with wealth should give it away or enjoy it while they are alive because it is a waste to hoard wealth when you are about to die. A "shroud" is the fabric a dead person's body is wrapped in for burial.

933) **Keeping is harder than winning**

Maintaining a successful situation is more work than getting it to succeed in the first place. For example, building a profitable business takes a lot of effort. But managing the business and making necessary changes and adaptations over the years takes even more effort. Don't assume that all your challenges are over once you have accomplished a goal.

934) **The tongue is not steel, yet it cuts**

Words have the power to hurt. A thoughtless or rude comment to someone else can easily stay in their memory forever. Just as a blade can injure a person physically, words can injure a person emotionally and cause them a lot of psychological damage.

935) [A candle lights others and consumes itself](#)

Selfless leaders will sacrifice themselves when working for the benefit of others. The proverb is commonly applied to teachers in that a good teacher will work tirelessly, even without pay, simply to share what knowledge they have with a committed student.

936) [He that goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing](#)

One should not rely on the resources of others, for one will always remain in debt. As a result of borrowing money from various friends and family members, one man remained in debt for years, even once he finally found a job and started paying them back.

937) [If you can walk, you can dance; if you can talk, you can sing](#)

If you know the basics of a certain task, you can also conquer its more complex or challenging aspects with practice. For instance, a woman who is accustomed to reading simply written romance novels can tackle more intricate books if she really sets her mind to it.

938) [You never miss the water till the well runs dry](#)

It's easy to take something for granted. People often live in "survival" mode and only pay attention to what they need or don't have, not what they already have. We need to learn to appreciate more what we have and be grateful for it. A similar proverb is "You don't know what you've got till it's gone."

939) [Art has no enemy but ignorance](#)

As art is the outcome of creative imagination, people who lack this vision may fail to appreciate it. This Latin proverb reminds us of art's subjectivity in that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. Thus, da Vinci's famous *Mona Lisa* may be revered by most but criticized by others. The ignorant person is not the one who does not appreciate art itself, but the one who does not understand its subjective nature.

940) [The company makes the feast](#)

Having the company of good friends is the most important part of a celebration, while food and decorations are less significant. This proverb could be used to remind someone that a birthday party isn't ruined just because dinner was cold.

941) [Who chatters to you will chatter of you](#)

Someone who talks badly of other people to you will probably also talk about you behind your back. People who gossip by nature tend to gossip about everyone, even friends and relatives. Choose friends who speak well of others and refrain from unedifying conversations.

942) [He who excuses himself accuses himself](#)

If a person comes up with a lot of excuses and repeated explanations, they just bring people's attention to the issue, which they may not have otherwise noticed. A woman kept explaining to her manager that the delay in the project was not her fault and brought up many excuses, but the more she explained, the more her manager felt she was trying to cover up something.

943) [Never send a boy to do a man's job](#)

Don't trust a task to someone who lacks the skill and experience to get it done. This may be said to explain why one person is chosen for a task over another. It is also frequently used to express

disappointment in someone that has failed an assignment, implying that the person showed that they were an inept “boy” and not a competent “man.”

944) **Who says A must say B**

If you make a certain claim or statement on an issue, it follows that you should say and act consistently with that claim. For example, if you claim to care about the environment, then you must also make it clear in what ways you want to help the environment and improve it; otherwise, you are making empty claims, or worse, you are a hypocrite.

945) **God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb**

God is merciful to those who are weak or suffering. For instance, when a man lost his job, he was grateful that his compassionate landlord reduced his rent in exchange for some services. The proverb is attributed to Irish-born writer Laurence Sterne and is found in his *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768).

946) **The tailor makes the man**

How you dress is an important part of how you make an impression on others. People will look more important, prestigious, and wealthier than they really are if they dress in smart, expensive clothes. In older times many people had a tailor to personally help sew their clothes so they could look their best.

947) **Cast not the first stone**

One should not judge another person unless they are free of sin themselves. At the heart of this Biblical proverb is the question of whether anybody can truly be free of all sins. It first appeared in the Gospel of John, in which Jesus stops a group of men preparing to stone an adulteress to death.

948) **First thoughts are best**

Trust your intuition; your first instinct is often accurate. For instance, a group of friends were out having a picnic when they noticed some dark clouds approaching. Instead of taking a chance, they packed up their stuff. They were glad they did because fifteen minutes later it started pouring rain.

949) **He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune**

If a person commits to family life, they are surrendering their freedom to pursue adventure in life. For example, instead of taking a cross-country road trip with his bachelor friends one summer, a man was stuck at home changing his newborn son’s diapers. The proverb is attributed to the English philosopher Francis Bacon, and it appeared in his *Of Marriage and Single Life*.

950) **He that travels far knows much**

One gains more diverse knowledge of the world by exploring other regions and countries. When she spent a year traveling abroad in Southeast Asia, a woman not only learned about the customs and traditions of a drastically different culture, she also learned about herself by stepping out of her comfort zone.

951) **A bird never flew on one wing**

Why take one when you can have two? This proverb is employed when one of something is simply not enough. In Scotland, where the saying was first recorded, it is commonly used to encourage another drink at the pub. In other cultures, it is even considered rude to deny a second serving at mealtimes.

952) [Better untaught than ill taught](#)

Never try to learn from someone who lacks proper knowledge because you'll be misinformed. If you want to learn a musical instrument, for instance, you are better off studying with a teacher who can actually play; otherwise you may learn something that will be difficult to correct later on.

953) [Let the world wag](#)

Sometimes you need to let life move on while you escape from reality, stop worrying, and act carefree. All the large and small events in the world will continue to happen while you distract yourself with something in particular. For example, if you are getting stressed in the middle of exams, you might take an evening off studying to watch a movie and "let the world wag."

954) [Give him an inch, and he'll take an ell](#)

If you give a greedy person something small, he will expect more and more from you. For instance, when his friend needed a vehicle to go out of town for a day, a man was happy to oblige, thinking it would be a one-time occurrence. But when the same friend asked twice more in the following week, the man knew something was wrong. An ell is a unit of measure equal roughly to an arm's length.

955) [Let the cobbler stick to his last](#)

People should focus on doing what they are skilled at. For example, if you are very experienced at playing the drums but are not a pleasant singer, your bandmates might encourage you to stick to playing drums and let others sing instead. A cobbler is a person who makes shoes, and a last is a foot-shaped form that is used in shoemaking.

956) [Ne'er cast a clout till May be out](#)

Don't get rid of any clothes until summer arrives. While the weather may warm up in springtime, this proverb suggests that you should not be too quick to trust changes in weather. It could still get cold, so just to be safe, keep your clothes until after May. This phrase uses several outdated terms and poetic grammar. A "clout" here is an old term for an item of clothing, and "cast" means "to throw away."

957) [Half the world knows not how the other half lives](#)

It is difficult to truly understand the lives of those who are drastically different from you. For example, a person who comes from an upper-class American family might have only a limited idea about the realities of those people who live in Third World countries. Of course, the opposite applies in the same way.

958) [The nail that sticks out gets hammered down](#)

Someone who tries to be different from the rest of their community will be pressured or forced to conform. For example, if everyone in your extended family has gone to college and you would prefer to go to tech school, your aspirations will be met with a great deal of resistance. This proverb comes from Japan, a culture and a society that has traditionally favored conformity over individual expression.

959) [The sting of a reproach is the truth of it](#)

A critical comment is most hurtful when it has truth in it. If someone said you were an evil or psychopathic person, it would probably sound ridiculous. But if someone were to say that you were a sometimes thoughtless or rude person, it is more likely to hurt, especially if you know you can be guilty of these qualities at times.

960) [Don't build castles in the air](#)

Don't get lost in fantasy; take practical action if you want to succeed. For instance, a man who wishes to start his own tech business should probably consider taking a computer science course instead of spending his days dreaming about the perks of owning his own company.

961) [There is measure in all things](#)

Don't go to extremes when trying to accomplish something. For example, when training for a marathon, it would be foolhardy to try running the whole distance or even half the distance within the first week. In order to achieve a goal, you need to take reasonable, appropriate steps, one at a time.

962) [Two is company; three is none](#)

In many scenarios, especially romantic ones, it's preferable to be in the company of just one other person. Three people can ruin an otherwise intimate vibe. In mutual interactions, each person has an equal opportunity to talk and to be heard, but when the number increases, there is a chance that one person will be sidelined. This is very similar in meaning to "Two is company; three's a crowd."

963) [A wise man changes his mind, a fool never](#)

Wisdom means having the humility to admit a mistake and change your mind. Flexibility is a virtue where stubbornness is not. For instance, although a student had already spent valuable time pursuing his engineering degree, he decided to switch to the arts after showing signs of underperformance.

964) [Don't ride the high horse](#)

Avoid arrogance and excessive pride; no one likes a conceited individual. The term "high horse" dates back to medieval England where a person's importance was determined by the size of his horse. Thus, a noble or superior person would ride a larger horse than his subordinates.

965) [Fine clothes may disguise, but silly words will disclose a fool](#)

One's neat appearance will not work as a cover-up for ignorance for too long. For example, a man may arrive at a job interview dressed in a three-piece suit, but the interviewer will not be fooled when the applicant is unable to answer even the simplest questions about the potential job.

966) [A bad excuse is better than none](#)

An explanation, no matter how feeble or far-fetched, is better than none at all. In many cultures, it is even considered disrespectful to deny an invitation without an excuse, for instance, if you are invited to a gathering that you're unable to attend.

967) [The devil looks after his own](#)

Bad people seem to succeed and get away with breaking rules or committing crimes. This proverb suggests that the devil is protecting those bad people because they are his followers. For example, a cruel man becomes the CEO of a company, is convicted of fraud and embezzlement, and is still appointed to a position in government.

968) [I wept when I was born, and every day shows why](#)

This proverb expressed the view that the world is full of misery and sad events. Thus it is no surprise that a baby cries upon first being born. This proverb is attributed to seventeenth-century poet George Herbert, appearing in his *Jacula Prudentum*.

969) [If there were no clouds, we should not enjoy the sun](#)

We need bad times to appreciate good times. In many parts of the world, cloudy days are more common than sunny days, and for this reason many people appreciate the exceptional days that are sunny. In order to be happy, it's important to embrace both the ups and downs in life.

970) [Dying is as natural as living](#)

Death is inevitable and therefore need not be feared. People don't need to spend their lives worrying about dying. It implies that death is simply one piece of the entire process one calls life.

971) [What soberness conceals, drunkenness reveals](#)

True opinions and feelings come out of a person when they are drunk. Typically people keep personal opinions and feelings to themselves, for social pressure or other reasons. Alcohol naturally relaxes the brain and makes it far easier to speak one's mind. In Latin, this phrase is much pithier: "*In vino, veritas.*"

972) [An honest man's word is as good as his bond](#)

Keeping a promise is an honorable trait. Another variant of this proverb is "An Englishman's word is his bond." The proverb originated in a time in England when stock-exchange transactions were done strictly verbally. Thus, the saying came to be a motto used to instill trust in one's financial dealings. The sentiment is still widely used today in situations where an actual contract would be too formal.

973) [Genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains](#)

The wisest people are meticulously detailed in their work. For example, a truly dedicated painter won't hesitate to throw an almost finished work in the garbage if even the smallest smudge is found on it. Here, "taking pains" refers to giving great care or attention to one's endeavors.

974) [Two negatives make an affirmative](#)

Two negative articles in a sentence will cancel each other out and result in a positive statement. For example, while the phrase "You don't know nothing" sounds negative at first, the reality is that we all know *something*; therefore, the words "don't" and "nothing" lead to a positive meaning.

975) [Ill gotten, ill spent](#)

Money acquired through questionable means usually is spent on questionable things. For example, most people who win money in gambling tend to spend their winnings quickly and go into even more debt. Most people who gain money through unsavory means spend that same money in ways that are vain, imprudent, and sometimes even destructive.

976) [Keep something for a rainy day](#)

Set aside something valuable, such as money, for a day when you may need it for unforeseen reasons. It may be tempting, for example, to buy a new computer with your tax return money, but the wiser thing to do may be to put it in your savings account. Difficult times, or "rainy days," come to all of us sooner or later.

977) [The pot called the kettle black](#)

Don't criticize someone's flaw if you have the exact same flaw yourself. If you have a bad habit of gossiping and so does your friend, telling them that they're a gossip may provoke them to respond, "The pot is calling the kettle black." Traditionally both pots and kettles are blackened and marred from longtime use of boiling and cooking.

978) [The age of miracles is past](#)

We need to have reasonable, realistic expectations. This proverb literally means that in the modern age, we cannot expect the kinds of magic and divine intervention that we read about in history. Tudor English playwright William Shakespeare referenced this idea in his 1599 history *Henry V*.

979) [Constant dripping wears away the stone](#)

A repetitive action, however minor, can have significant effects over time. Two roommates who shared an apartment ran into a conflict when one started regularly leaving dirty dishes in the sink. Noticing this, his roommate at first thought nothing of it, but after three months of doing his friend's dishes, he finally lost his temper. Another interpretation of the proverb is that perseverance will lead to success, no matter how long it takes.

980) [If you do not like it, lump it](#)

If there's a situation you don't like but can't do anything about, then you can choose to either accept it with a good attitude or a bad attitude. The word "lump" comes from an old British word that essentially means "sulk" or "glower." If dinner is going to be lima bean casserole and you hate lima beans, you can choose to either make peace with the fact or sulk about it; in either case, you can't change the outcome.

981) [There is always one who kisses and one who offers the cheek](#)

In relationships, there is always one person who sacrifices and does more than the other. One person may give up their job or career plans to focus on their spouse's career. Another person may spend more time with their spouse's family than their own family. One partner tends to be dominant and the other, to some extent, submissive.

982) [The greatest truths are the simplest](#)

The most important moral values in life are simple. One example that can be found across cultures is the "Golden Rule": treat other people the same way you would like to be treated. This principle may not be easy to live, but it is clear and easy enough to understand.

983) [He travels the fastest who travels alone](#)

The solitary traveler will reach their destination sooner, as they are less likely to be weighed down by their would-be companions. Typically, a group will have to make more frequent stops along the journey. When you are alone, you won't be distracted and can simply focus on reaching your destination. The proverb is widely attributed to the English novelist and poet Rudyard Kipling.

984) [Keep your shop, and your shop will keep you](#)

If you put sufficient effort and resources into running your business, your business will always be profitable enough to support you. Running a business takes a lot of work, but the work and time you invest will reward you with successful results. The next time your friend complains about how much work their start-up requires, you can remind them that the effort will ultimately pay off.

985) [New lords, new laws](#)

A change in leadership also means a change in rules and expectations. This saying suggests that every leader has their own idea of how a society or institution should work. When a new person or government comes into power, they are likely to impose new rules according to their vision.

986) [It's dogged as does it](#)

Determination is the key to success. "Dogged" means "persistent," in reference to the animal dog. Dogs are known for being loyal to their masters, and also for being very relentless hunters. Luck and talent are great qualities to have, but being determined in your efforts is essential to reaching any goal.

987) [Ill weeds grow apace](#)

Worthless people and things thrive. The word "apace" means quickly, so in more current language: "Bad weeds grow quickly." Cultivating beautiful flowers and vegetables in our gardens takes loving time and care while pesky weeds seem to grow without effort. So too do the people and things in life worth seeking take effort to find, while bad people and things thrive on their own.

988) [What man has done, man can do](#)

Once a person has accomplished a feat, even if it's dangerous or difficult, it can be accomplished again, by the same person or by someone else. The idea of climbing Mount Everest, for example, may seem intimidating, yet the fact that many other people have already done so gives you the encouragement and example to go ahead and try yourself.

989) [Live not to eat, but eat to live](#)

Do not be a glutton; instead eat only to nourish your body. People should have a bigger mission in life than indulging themselves. Food is both a necessity for life and something that we can truly enjoy. The food we enjoy is not always healthy for us. This message of austerity is a warning not to prioritize pleasure over your physical well-being.

990) [The receiver is as bad as the thief](#)

If you knowingly receive stolen goods, you are as guilty as the person who stole them. You may not personally have poached an endangered animal, but if you buy an object made from the skin or teeth of an endangered animal, realizing that someone had illegally killed it to sell the item to you, you are morally as guilty.

991) [The worse luck now, the better another time](#)

If you are having a difficult time now, maintain your hope that you will have success later. Everyone has ups and downs. Just as it's important to not become too cocky when you are well off, you also should not be too upset if things are going badly. A similar phrase is "better luck next time."

992) [All covet, all lose](#)

In making a choice, you need to be decisive and act in good time. For instance, if you get three attractive job offers and don't want to lose them, you might start negotiating part-time work at two of them, but end up losing all three due to your greed and indecision. A close variant of this proverb is "Grasp all, lose all."

993) **By perseverance, the snail reached the ark**

With determination and resolve, you will surely reach your goal. Deciding she wanted a new bicycle, one girl resolved to save one dollar every day until she had enough to buy one. After a few months, her patience and perseverance finally paid off. The proverb refers to the story of Noah's Ark in the Bible in which animals were saved from a catastrophic flood.

994) **The first blow is half the battle**

The most critical part of any process is in the initial stage. When you begin a new venture, it's important to take the initiative in order to beat your competitors. Sometimes, the quality doesn't matter as much as who gets to the market first. In wars, the army that takes the offensive increases its chance of winning as it confuses and weakens its enemy.

995) **You may know by a handful the whole sack**

A single event or encounter with a person can give you good insight into their character. Just as you know an entire sack of grain is ruined if you see mold at the top, you have a pretty good impression of a person's true character if you observe them being rude to a stranger or asking you an inappropriate question.

996) **Spend, and God will send**

This proverb encourages giving and suggests that we shouldn't worry too much about money because God will provide what we need. For example, a devout man might spend his money on his needy friend today and trust that divine assistance will help him pay his rent tomorrow.

997) **Favor for favor**

One should return a favor with one of comparable value. For example, when a man took it upon himself to shovel the snow from his sick neighbor's walkway during a snowstorm, the neighbor felt it was only right to return the favor after the next big snowfall.

998) **A contented mind is a continual feast**

True satisfaction comes not from one's surroundings, but from peace of mind. This proverb acts as a lesson for those having trouble accepting their circumstances. Despite being unemployed, a man maintained his positive attitude knowing that true contentment comes from within. The sentiment was originally found in Proverbs 15:15 in the Bible.

999) **Fair and softly goes far**

One should proceed gently and tactfully when reasoning with others. For instance, when a father learned his son's grades were slipping at school, he decided against a severe punishment. Instead, he gently explained to his son the importance of taking his education seriously.

1000) **All truths are not to be told**

Some things are better left unsaid. One reason is that it might hurt someone's feelings. For instance, even if a man hates his best friend's new girlfriend, he likely won't reveal this as it would only create awkwardness in the friendship. Sometimes it is better to keep an opinion to oneself out of respect.

1001) **Civility costs nothing**

An act of kindness does not require much effort. This encouraging proverb can refer to something as simple as holding the door for someone or complimenting a coworker on their new hairstyle. These actions don't cost a dime, yet they are sometimes enough to brighten one's entire day.

1002) Prosperity makes friends; adversity tries them

It is easy to make friends when life is comfortable, but when we face hard times, we find out who our true friends are. "Tries" in this context means to put on trial or to test. A true friend will stand by your side and give you encouragement and support in difficult times.

1003) Better an open enemy than a false friend

Sometimes you can trust an enemy more than an alleged friend. Though they may want to harm you, adversaries are often open about their intentions. On the other hand, someone who claims to be a friend but actually has hidden motives is considered dangerous due to the unpredictability of their actions. This counterintuitive proverb asks us to question who we can really trust.

1004) The longest way round is the shortest way home

The most successful way to do something is to do it carefully and appropriately, without taking shortcuts. Some people, in their impatience, will hurry through a process in the hope of finishing it sooner. The irony here is that this kind of hurrying often leads to mistakes and other problems to be fixed, so that the whole process takes longer than working thoughtfully from the beginning.

1005) If you cannot bite, never show your teeth

Don't show anger or make a threat if you can't or won't follow through with it. For example, if your child is acting disrespectfully, don't threaten to send them to their room the next time they say something rude unless you are committed to actually doing so. Dogs usually show their teeth as a warning before they bite; a dog who shows its teeth but doesn't bite is "all bark and no bite," as another proverb goes.

1006) Why keep a dog and bark yourself

If you have someone assigned a specialized task, let that person do their task and don't do it for them. Just as it would be insensible to bark at strangers near your property when your dog can do it far more effectively, it would likewise be inefficient to try to fix your own leaking sink when you have already paid an experienced, competent plumber.

1007) Opportunities do not wait

When an opportunity knocks on your door, you should act swiftly and decisively while it is available. Many opportunities in life are wasted because we are afraid, suspicious, or hesitant to take them. For example, if someone offers you free tickets to a special event, they will probably need a decision quickly, or they will want to offer the tickets to someone else who is ready to accept.

1008) Adversity makes strange bedfellows

A common struggle often brings two parties together despite their differences. For instance, two traditionally opposed countries may become allies in the face of a common adversary. They understand that in times of crisis, certain prejudices must be set aside.

1009) Like breeds like

People will pass on their characteristics or share similar behaviors with one another. This is typically used in a negative sense. For example, if the chef in a kitchen is very rude, the rest of the kitchen staff might start behaving the same way.

1010) Rats desert a sinking ship

Some people will abandon an organization or a project at the first sign of failure. This saying is said to come from the observation that rats aboard a ship will leave when the ship runs into danger. This can be used as a way to criticize cowardly people who run away from a problem, or to draw attention to a larger problem behind people's decisions to leave.

1011) From the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step

Something beautiful or amazing can easily be followed by something mundane or foolish. For example, after starring in several brilliant, thought-provoking roles, an actress surprised audiences when she appeared in a gratuitous Hollywood action film.

1012) As you make your bed, so you must lie in it

You will have to suffer the consequences and unpleasant results of your actions and decisions. When you book a cheap room in a remote hotel, don't complain if you have no hot water, no working air conditioner, and a long walking distance to all amenities.

1013) A shut mouth catches no flies

If you want to seize an opportunity, you need to put forth the necessary effort to get it. For instance, if a carpenter has just started his own construction company, he shouldn't sit at home expecting clients to come knocking on his door. He must put in the footwork by spreading the word about his services in the community. This proverb refers to the frog that keeps its mouth shut but needs to open it to catch a passing insect with its tongue. Another meaning of the proverb is to stay silent to avoid trouble.

1014) Custom rules the law

Laws are typically derived from the customary way of doing things. For instance, traffic laws were not created arbitrarily; things like stop signs and traffic lights were simply designed to enforce the rules that common sense already deemed appropriate.

1015) No wrong without a remedy

Society makes sure that there's a consequence for any crime. For example, if someone steals money from another person, the justice system will punish the thief and create a plan for the thief to pay the money back to the victim.

1016) Time lost can never be regained

Time is priceless. If you wish to make an achievement or realize a goal, don't waste your time with other diversions. If, for example, you procrastinate applying to law school, then you will be older and have fewer chances of getting a good career by the time you finally attend law school. Don't waste your time.

1017) Little leaks sink the ship

Do not underestimate the impact small problems because they can add up and turn into a disaster. It may be easy to ignore minor issues, but it is better to solve them when they are small than to wait until they compound into a major problem.

1018) *An open door may tempt a saint*

Even the purest souls may be tempted by an enticing opportunity. For instance, though one man typically carried himself with honesty and integrity, his character was tested when he became treasurer of an organization and suddenly had access to large sums of money with less accountability.

1019) *Do not kick against the pricks*

Protesting against an authoritative figure is often futile. When a boy was punished for lying about his grades, his begging and pleading only led to his father increasing the punishment. The proverb refers to a time when people used oxen to drive carts and plow their fields. In order to steer the animals, the driver would prick them with a goad (a spiked rod). However, sometimes the animals would rebel and kick back, which only meant more painful prodding by the driver.

1020) *A light purse makes a heavy heart*

The lack of financial security can lead to a negative perspective and demeanor. One without money is likely to live a stressful, fearful life, not knowing when their luck might turn. Like its sister, "A heavy purse makes a light heart," this proverb points to the powerful effect that money has on one's attitude.

1021) *Never buy a pig in a poke*

Do not commit to a purchase if you have not had a chance to examine it well. For example, you should not buy a house without inspecting it first because it may not match the seller's description of it. A "poke" in this context is a bag.

1022) *God heals, and the doctor takes the fee*

Though a doctor may administer the medicine, it is God who chooses whether a person heals. This is consistent with the religious belief that people are simply instruments of God's will. This proverb is widely attributed to Benjamin Franklin.

1023) *Beauty when unadorned is adorned the most*

True beauty needs no ornaments or decoration. This is because the beauty of an object is found in its simplicity. Some of the most attractive people wear simple clothing and no makeup; their beauty comes not from their physical appearance, but from confidence and poise.

1024) *Date before you marry*

Get to know a person or a situation before making a full-fledged commitment. Usually this phrase is used literally, to emphasize the importance of getting to know a person before making the lifetime commitment of marrying them. However, you can use this phrase figuratively as well. For example, when it comes to a demanding career, it may be a good idea to "date," or try an internship, before "marrying," i.e., committing to a full-time position in a certain field.

1025) *He who digs a pit will fall into it*

People often bring harm upon themselves while trying to hurt or hamper others. A woman who wasn't fond of one of her colleagues tried to get them fired. But noticing her conniving ways, her boss decided to fire her instead. This proverb appears in Ecclesiastes 10:8 in the Bible.

1026) *There is a remedy for everything except death*

As long as you are alive, any problem can be fixed. One person might despair because they have lost their home, ruined their credit, and are in poor health. As unfortunate as their situation is, they are still able to do something about it so long as they are still able to think and act.

1027) *When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion*

People who are seemingly weak on their own can do monumental things when they work together. A nation of frustrated individuals, for example, can bring down a powerful leader in a revolution or other type of uprising. Don't underestimate the power of numbers.

1028) *Have but few friends, though many acquaintances*

It is okay to be on friendly terms with many people, but one should limit the number of trusted friends in their life. If you have too many friends, you might not have enough time or energy to give each the proper attention and care they deserve.

1029) *A nation without a language is a nation without a heart*

This proverb refers to the importance of language in establishing the identity of a nation. Of Welsh origin, it has also found expression in many other countries as a way to cherish and preserve their national language, which might be threatened by a more powerful language.

1030) *A blind man will not thank you for a looking glass*

A gift, no matter how valuable, is worthless unless it is useful and suitable for the recipient. For example, a homeless person likely won't appreciate a book when what he really needs is a hot meal and new clothes.

1031) *No one should be judge in his own cause*

People cannot be impartial when giving their opinion about a situation they are involved in. A judge should be unbiased, and people get too invested in their own interests to be trusted as a judge of them. "Cause" here means a belief or mission. For example, if you hear about a political movement directly from an activist, you will only hear their side of the story.

1032) *He who denies all confesses all*

One who refuses to admit any culpability in a situation is often lying. When a mother discovered some cookies were missing from the pantry, her first thought was to question her eight-year-old son. When he categorically denied the accusations, she suspected him even more.

1033) *A fair face may hide a foul heart*

Don't put too much faith in external appearances; those who act kindly may have an ulterior motive. For example, a man was glad to make a new friend at work until he discovered this "friend" was only using him to get a better position in the company.

1034) *Two boys are half a boy, and three boys are no boy at all*

Too many people (especially young people) can distract each other from a task that needs to get done. For example, a farmer hires a twelve-year-old boy to clean his barn. The boy asks if his friend can join him, but the farmer responds, "No, if you two are together, you won't get as much done because you'll be fooling around. Two boys are half a boy."

1035) *Cross the stream where it is shallowest*

Don't make a task harder than it should be. When a man's car broke down three miles from his home, he chose to walk the whole way instead of calling a taxi or a friend. In this case, the man took on an unnecessary burden.

1036) *You must grin and bear it*

When you are going through something unpleasant that you can't change or fix, the best thing you can do is to have a good attitude. Getting a bad sunburn on a vacation can be painful and embarrassing, and unfortunately, there is nothing you can do to immediately alleviate it. You can, however, choose to have fun and enjoy your vacation anyway.

1037) *Hope is the poor man's bread*

A person in dire conditions may survive only on the hope of a better life. Although he had been unemployed and living on his friend's couch for months, a man did not give up hope that he would find his dream job and all the wealth and luxury that would come with it.

1038) *If the sky falls, we shall catch larks*

Even the worst predicament can yield something positive. For instance, it was only once a woman was immobilized due to a car accident that she discovered her passion for singing. This proverb is a close relative of "Every cloud has a silver lining." A lark is a bird that is a cross-cultural symbol of daybreak, often in a spiritual or religious sense.

1039) *A rich man's joke is always funny*

This cynical proverb alludes to one of the many things money can buy: a laugh. Although one man was generally disliked in the community, many people would still laugh at his jokes simply to take advantage of his wealth. The proverb is attributed to Manx poet Thomas Edward Brown who penned the couplet, "Money is honey, my little sonny, and a rich man's joke is always funny."

1040) *He who would climb the ladder must begin at the bottom*

In the pursuit of a desired goal, one often must start from nothing and work their way up, bit by bit and step by step. For example, even the future president of a nation might begin their career working as a desk clerk at town hall, but with perseverance and dedication, they will climb their way to the top.

1041) *Men are blind in their own cause*

People with a mission lose perspective. Enthusiasm can cause you to focus too much on your own beliefs and lose the ability to accept other points of view or new information. For example, someone who is an advocate of industrialization will be skeptical of any scientific evidence that global warming is a significant risk.

1042) *A broken friendship may be soldered, but will never be sound*

Even after resolving a serious dispute, a friendship will never be what it once was. Two best friends had a falling-out when they both fell in love with the same woman. Although neither of the men ended up with her and eventually became friends again, their bond was never quite the same. Soldering is a special technique in which two pieces of metal are joined together. The proverb likely refers to a cracked bell, which even after repair will never attain its original ringing tone.

1043) [Better to live one day as a lion than a hundred years as a sheep](#)

It is more respectable to be a strong warrior than a weak coward. After being bullied for weeks at school, one boy finally found the courage to fight back against his tyrants. This sentiment is difficult to reconcile for the pacifists among us. This proverb was famously used by the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini in a 1922 speech.

1044) [Good to begin well, better to end well](#)

It is a strong finish that matters most, even if one experiences a shaky start. For example, after almost failing out of college their freshman year, one student drastically changed their study practices and went on to graduate summa cum laude.

1045) [A fool may throw a stone into a well, which a hundred wise men cannot pull out](#)

The harm caused by just one person may be so significant that even a hundred intelligent people cannot correct it. In other words, foolishness is sometimes more powerful than wisdom. One inexperienced worker made a mistake in the construction of a house which, being discovered too late by the foreman, resulted in monumental delays in the project.

1046) [The nearer the church, the farther from God](#)

The higher-ranking an individual is in a church, the more likely they are to become corrupt and lose their spirituality. Some churches have had a history of alleged corruption by prominent members, especially when the church has had a great deal of money or other assets. Some people believe that churches should be modest and have simpler organization.

1047) [The last drop makes the cup run over](#)

Everyone and everything has a breaking point. One minor task after another may not seem to matter at first, but eventually a person will become overwhelmed, just as many tiny drops of water together can eventually overflow a cup. This proverb is identical in meaning to "The last straw breaks the camel's back."

1048) [Every path has a puddle](#)

No journey or endeavor is without its hurdles, so don't expect perfection in life. The experience of raising a child, for instance, is full of joys and rewards, but any parent will agree that it is also wrought with many challenges and trials.

1049) [All are not saints that go to church](#)

Not all people are as pure and holy as they may seem. One man lived a deplorable life, running an illegitimate business and cheating on his wife. Although he presented himself well in the community, even attending church every Sunday, this did not make up for his dishonest actions. Some of his observers could not be fooled.

1050) [Do not wear out your welcome](#)

Even the most generous host has his limits; don't take a friend's hospitality for granted. A man had invited his brother to his family's Christmas celebration, but after two weeks, the unemployed guest was still sleeping on the couch, much to the entire family's chagrin.

1051) [Soft words and hard arguments](#)

Using polite language to communicate a well-supported opinion will place you in a better position to win a debate. When a person raises their voice or uses disrespectful words, it is easy to disapprove of what they have to say. Likewise, it is easy to dismiss people who cannot defend their views with strong evidence and logic.

1052) *Hasty climbers have sudden falls*

Overambitious people often fail to take the necessary precautions and thus fall short. For instance, excited about starting his own construction business, a man neglected to take out the necessary insurance and found himself in trouble when he caused damage to a client's home.

1053) *The quarrel of lovers is the renewal of love*

After a couple fights, they experience a resurgence of affection. When fighting, people's good feelings toward each other temporarily dissipate. After they have reconciled, their mutual feelings return and are even stronger by contrast. Going from the extreme of anger and frustration to love again causes a "high" of emotions.

1054) *There's many a good tune played on an old fiddle*

An old person is still capable of great talents and abilities. Your grandfather may still be able to beat you at chess every time. Or your great-aunt may be deft at playing the piano than anyone else you know. Don't judge a person and their potential based on their age.

1055) *Little and often fills the purse*

If you frequently save small amounts of money, it will add up. This is advice to make a habit of saving money where you can. For example, if you regularly set aside a small part of your paycheck to put into a vacation fund, that account will fill up without costing you a lot of effort.

1056) *A good tongue is a good weapon*

Don't underestimate the power of words. For instance, a well-crafted speech is invaluable in gaining political support, whereas brute force is more likely to fail. The same sentiment is found in the proverb, "The pen is mightier than the sword."

1057) *He that cannot obey cannot command*

One should be comfortable following before one starts leading. For example, in the military, one typically begins by taking orders as a low-level recruit. Only once one has gained enough experience will one be trusted to lead others in battle. This proverb is attributed to Benjamin Franklin and appears in *Poor Richard's Almanac*.

1058) *Call no man happy till he is dead*

Happiness is fleeting. This cynical proverb, coined by the ancient Greek Herodotus, reminds one to keep their joy in check, for it can always be dampened by something unpleasant. One man had been beaming with happiness ever since he received a promotion at work, but when he heard his mother had passed away, he was brought back down to earth.

1059) *The worth of a thing is best known by the want of it*

Usually it's only when we are deprived of a certain facility or privilege that we realize its true value. Water, for example, is inexpensive and easy to come by; however, in a desolate place with a shortage of

water, we would realize just how important it is since we need it to stay alive. In a different example we may take a loving relationship for granted until the other person leaves us.

1060) *When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers*

When two powerful entities fight, it is the weak that suffer. For example, when two governments decide to go to war, it is the common people who suffer most, either as civilians or as soldiers. Similarly, trade wars between two big countries can hurt smaller economies the most. This is a popular Swahili proverb.

1061) *Fortune knocks once at every man's door*

Everyone gets a chance to succeed at least once in life. After years as a struggling writer, one woman finally got the recognition she deserved when a well-known publishing house contacted her to publish one of her books.

1062) *Step-by-step one goes far*

Be patient and persistent because small actions make it possible to achieve your goals. It may not feel like great progress is made with each small step, but after a while you'll start to realize how far you have traveled. For example, studying to be a pilot requires a lot of practice and testing, but eventually a student will gain enough experience to get a pilot's license. Another variant of this proverb is "Step after step, the ladder is ascended."

1063) *What will Mrs. Grundy say*

This is a phrase you say to someone when you are worried that what you are doing will be seen as scandalous. "Mrs. Grundy" is a fictitious character, popular in Victorian times, and refers to any priggish or self-righteous person who tends to be nosy and judgmental of others, especially young people who like to have fun.

1064) *Desperate diseases must have desperate remedies*

Extreme circumstances justify extreme actions. When a blizzard left a couple stranded in their vehicle for two days, they were forced to eat snow just to stay hydrated, being without water. This sentiment is echoed in the common proverb, "Desperate times call for desperate measures."

1065) *Conscience is a thousand witnesses*

Conscience tells us the difference between right and wrong, and justice and injustice. It forces us to reveal what has been kept secret for a long time. A person will be tormented by the guilt of something and decide to bring it into the open. Thus, one's own conscience is viewed as the best truth-revealing factor.

1066) *May God defend me from my friends; I can defend myself from my enemies*

While we are usually cautious with strangers and rivals, we are less vigilant when it comes to relatives and friends. Our trust in the people close to us makes it easier for them to hurt us if they choose to do so. While frequently cited as Voltaire, this saying is actually adapted from a quote of the French exile Jean Hérault de Gourville in Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan's *Considérations sur l'esprit et les mœurs* in 1788.

1067) *A book that is shut is but a block*

A source of knowledge is worthless unless it is actually utilized. For instance, a woman may buy many books on various interesting topics, but she will not learn anything until she actually opens one and starts reading. Similarly any device has no worth if it is not utilized.

1068) [There's many a true word spoken in jest](#)

People often reveal their true feelings when joking. Your friend may feel hurt when you tease her about being “lazy” for not returning your phone calls. Even though you used exaggerated language, your friend can still sense that there is some truth in your sentiments. When joking with or teasing someone, consider how much of your true feelings you wish to reveal.

1069) [As a tree falls, so shall it lie](#)

Once established, a person's character tends to remain unchanged. Many people doubt that a man who lived his entire life as a criminal could ever change his ways and become a responsible, productive member of society. This proverb has a biblical origin, appearing in Ecclesiastes 11:3.

1070) [It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice](#)

Appearances and backgrounds don't matter, so long as a person or organization can do their job. This proverb was actually coined by a Chinese politician named Deng Xiaoping, who said this phrase in reference to politics. Rather than embracing a political ideology in a purist form (for example, Communism, Socialism or Capitalism), Xiaoping was more interested in policies and methods that actually *worked*. Practicality, in other words, is more important than idealism.

1071) [What the heart thinks, the tongue speaks](#)

It's natural for the things we say to reflect the things we think and feel. If you are disappointed in something your friend has said or done, for example, it will almost certainly be reflected in the way you speak to them. Except for liars and sociopaths, the words and sentiments of other people give us good insight into their thoughts and values.

1072) [Every family has a skeleton in the cupboard](#)

Every family has something to hide. For example, one family in town was known for its incredible wealth and charitable nature. But what the public didn't know was that most of their money was earned by two sons who happened to be dealers of narcotics.

1073) [A short horse is soon curried](#)

A small task is accomplished quickly. Don't be put off by a minimal job as you will complete it before you know it. The term “curried” refers to the use of a currycomb (a special metal comb) to groom a horse. In this case, it goes without saying that a short horse will be groomed quicker than a large one.

1074) [It is easier to pull down than to build](#)

It's easier to criticize or destroy something than to build it up or find a solution. If you have found that people tend to be more negative and complain about things than positive and in search of insight, that's because human nature gravitates toward what is easier! The next time someone gives you an unhelpful critical comment be sure to ask them for helpful suggestions instead.

1075) [Willful waste makes woeful want](#)

If you fail to use something important in a judicious manner and damage it, you will regret it later. For example, if you carelessly spill most of the flour and sugar in your kitchen when you are baking cookies, you will not have enough left later when you want to make a second batch.

1076) [He who wills the end wills the means](#)

If one is determined enough to reach their goal, they will make any sacrifices and take the necessary risks to do so. For instance, a man with low income wanted to buy a house. He took a second part-time job, borrowed money from his dad, and sold his wife's jewelry until he finally collected enough money to realize his goal.

1077) [The grey mare is the better horse](#)

The wife is always right, or in charge. "Grey mare" is a disparaging term used to describe a woman, usually a scolding wife. The term possibly comes from a famous old song called "The old grey mare" that sings ambiguously of a subject that could either be an actual horse or someone's wife.

1078) [He that would have the fruit must climb the tree](#)

You must make the necessary effort to achieve your goal. If a woman wishes to take a big vacation, she must put in the footwork and save enough money to pay for it. She should not simply expect things to fall into her lap.

1079) [Lawmakers should not be law breakers](#)

People who make rules should show integrity and not break the rules themselves. This saying references the irony that people in power often feel entitled to bend or break rules that they nonetheless enforce on others. For example, it is hypocritical for legislators to write tax law while evading taxes on their own wealth.

1080) [The wolf may lose his teeth, but never his nature](#)

A person can change their appearance or even their lifestyle, but they can never change their fundamental nature. A violent or dishonest person may no longer be able to commit crimes when they are locked behind bars, but their inclination to misbehave will still remain. This proverb is similar in meaning to "A leopard cannot change its spots."

1081) [It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest](#)

A truly corrupt or vile person is the one who hurts their own people, family, or community. Birds by nature take care of their nests to keep them safe, clean, and protected from harm, and they usually share their nests with family, including their own chicks. Many people, intentionally or unintentionally, hurt others, but only the most depraved people hurt their own kind.

1082) [A little body often harbors a great soul](#)

Children sometimes have the biggest, purest hearts of all. They can often surprise you with a depth of compassion and love unparalleled by adults. This is perhaps why it is harder for a child to cope with the death of a pet.

1083) [The bait hides the hook](#)

Beware of an offer or opportunity that sounds too good to be true. In order to catch a fish, a fisherman must hide the sharp hook with tasty bait. Likewise, if you are offered something very appealing or “tasty,” be sure to discover what the downside is before accepting or jumping in.

1084) Liars should have good memories

If you lie, be prepared to keep track of the lies you’ve told. Someone who lies will need to remember who they have lied to and what lies they have told them. If someone notices that a liar’s story has changed, the truth will come out, and the liar’s reputation will be harmed.

1085) Give and spend, and God will send

God bestows one with wealth so that they may share it with others. When a woman inherited millions from a deceased grandfather, she felt it her responsibility to donate a large sum to charity as she believed giving will be rewarded.

1086) Fish follow the bait

People are often led by temptation. In their greed, they can be fooled into the most embarrassing situations. For example, a man was convinced to invest in a questionable start-up company with the promise that it would pay off in significant dividends. When the company failed after only six months, he realized his lust for wealth had clouded his judgment.

1087) He that will thrive, must rise at five

Those who wake up and face the day early are usually more successful than their lazy counterparts. If one rises early, they have that much more time to accomplish their goals each day. This rhyming proverb is reminiscent of “Early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”

1088) He that would the daughter win must with the mother first begin

If a man intends to marry a woman, he would do well to impress her mother. This proverb comes from a time when the approval of a woman’s parents was an important precursor to successful marriage, which, in some cases, might still be true.

1089) Do not halloo till you are out of the wood

Don’t rejoice until you are certain a difficult time is over. For example, a group of high school seniors started celebrating their graduation before they had finished their last exams. Because they neglected to study, many failed. To halloo is to yell loudly in order to attract attention.

1090) Three removes are as bad as a fire

Moving a home or business three times is as financially and mentally draining as having an actual fire. Fires cause a lot of loss to property, financial and otherwise. But moving from one place to another incurs loss of money, as well as time and other resources. The word “removing” is an archaic way of saying “moving.”

1091) You can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy

A person from a more rustic or bucolic background will always keep with them the characteristics of their hometown, even if they relocate to a more urban place. Your coworker may surprise you one day by singing along happily to a Brad Paisley song on the radio, telling you afterwards, “You can take the boy out of the country, but you can’t take the country out of the boy!”

1092) *All is grist that comes to the mill*

Anything that comes one's way can be turned into something useful. One man had a knack for spinning everything to his advantage in life. When he was fired from his job, he took it as motivation to try a different career. Grist is the part of a grain that is separated from its chaff in preparation for grinding in a mill. This proverb has a very close analogue in, "All's fish that comes to the net."

1093) *Jam tomorrow, jam yesterday, but never jam today*

If someone you know is never prepared or satisfied in the present, but instead lives in the past or waits for the future, then for him it's "jam tomorrow, jam yesterday, but never jam today." In the classic book *Through the Looking Glass* Alice meets the Queen of Hearts who tells her this phrase. Alice points out that it's logically impossible to have jam yesterday and tomorrow but not today, but the eccentric queen fails to acknowledge this.

1094) *After the feast comes the reckoning*

Everything has its price. A big celebration may be thrilling, but the time will come when the bill must be settled. One couple were shocked when they received the bill for their extravagant wedding and realized that they were going to bear debts for years.

1095) *Love lives in cottages as well as in courts*

All kinds of people fall in love regardless of their social or financial status. Since the Middle Ages, the "courtly love" of the royal class has been held up as a model of ideal romance. However, people of the lower classes, who live in humble cottages, are just as capable and deserving of love.

1096) *When fortune knocks, open the door*

When an opportunity comes to you, welcome it with open arms. For example, if you receive a scholarship to study at a prestigious university, don't hesitate to accept it, even if this means moving to another country or making any other life adjustments. A chance for fortune comes to all of us at least once; you must be ready to do your part and act when it comes.

1097) *Little thieves are hanged, but great ones escape*

Master criminals manage not to get caught or punished for their crimes. There are certain skills involved in committing a crime, but it takes an additional set of skills to get away with that crime. This saying is originally from France.

1098) *He that would have eggs must endure the cackling of hens*

One must sometimes endure minor annoyances in order to enjoy one's bounty. For example, a man was overjoyed when he found a penthouse apartment with an amazing view of the New York City skyline. The only downside was that the birds on the roof would sometimes keep him awake at night.

1099) *He that fights and runs away may live to fight another day*

In a battle, sometimes a retreat is the best tactic. While engaged in a heated argument with his girlfriend, one man realized it was best to concede his point. Even though he felt strongly about his perspective, he knew it was not worth spoiling the relationship as a whole.

1100) *Much coin, much care*

People with a lot of money have a lot of worries. This suggests that wealth complicates people's' lives. The more money you have, the more decisions you have to make about it, and the more you have to do to protect it. Note that "coin" is sometimes informally used to mean "money" as an uncountable noun.

1101) *Deeds are fruits, words are but leaves*

Eloquent and heart-ravishing statements should be validated by concrete actions. Promises and pledges are meaningless if they are not carried through. Plant leaves are good to look at, but only fruit feed and satisfy people.

1102) *Two of a trade can never agree*

Two people in the same field or area of expertise are bound to feel superior to each other and therefore disagree on the "right" way to do something. For example, you may take lessons from two different dance teachers in the same community, and they each give you a different approach for how best to learn. Each teacher claims their way is "best" or "right," while in reality they may both be equally effective, just different.

1103) *There is no little enemy*

No threat or danger should be regarded as small enough to dismiss and neglect. For example, a country that behaves in a hostile way yet seems relatively weak and powerless may unexpectedly gain power or a political ally. It's better to always be alert and never assume you are safe from any potential foe.

1104) *The remedy may be worse than the disease*

Sometimes the result of a treatment will bring an overall worse outcome than not seeking treatment. For example, if a surgery to resolve a minor issue proves to be very complex or dangerous with unintended side effects, it may be better to simply leave the issue as it is, as long as it does not seriously compromise your quality of life.

1105) *An ounce of discretion is worth a pound of wit*

It is sometimes better to be cautious than funny in social situations. Without realizing it, one man seriously offended his friend by making a tasteless joke about his family. Though the joke was quite witty, it was made in poor taste, and the friend was hurt, although the offender lacked the discretion to notice.

1106) *If you want to live and thrive, let the spider run alive*

In older times, it was considered bad luck to kill a spider. Though it is difficult to trace the exact origins of this superstition, it may have something to do with the spider's tendency to eat other, more problematic insects, thus keeping one's living space clean and free of pests.

1107) *A civil question deserves a civil answer*

A politely asked question warrants a respectful answer. Before boarding a sold-out plane, a man politely asks if he can be upgraded to first class. The answer is, of course, "no," but the flight attendant delivers her response with the patience and respect the customer deserves.

1108) *Every ass likes to hear himself bray*

Fools enjoy the sound of their own nonsense. Reminiscent of, “Every bird loves to hear himself sing,” this proverb takes a more cynical approach. Asses, or donkeys, are known for their abrasive bray, but they don’t seem to mind the sound themselves.

1109) *A stern chase is a long chase*

It is difficult to overtake an equal, so it’s better to avoid an exhausting competition whenever possible. For example, if a boy wants to be the pitcher on his baseball team, he will have a hard time if the position is already taken by someone with a similar skill level. The proverb refers to a nautical dilemma once faced by warring ships. If one sailing ship was pursuing another in its wake, it could sometimes take days to catch up as both ships would be riding the same winds and currents.

1110) *The beaten road is the safest*

It’s better to use a method that’s proven to work instead of trying a new, risky one. If you are thinking of starting a new business and all your friends have successful restaurants, you’ll find it more tempting and more convenient to open another restaurant rather than a bookshop, as you don’t know whether there will be good demand for books in your area or not.

1111) *Poverty is not a shame, but the being ashamed of it is*

Do not feel sorry for yourself just because you are poor. Some people may feel humiliated, guilty, or embarrassed about having less money than others. This proverb says in a poetic way that feeling ashamed of your circumstances is a worse problem than your circumstances, as it makes you discontent and unable to move forward in life.

1112) *Near is my shirt, but nearer is my skin*

This is a phrase for someone who only looks out for their own interests. It is used to describe a self-centered person who will even ignore community, friends, and family in order to help themselves.

1113) *The mouse that has but one hole is quickly taken*

Always have more than one option available for any situation you may find yourself in. For example, it’s a good idea to have a savings account as well as bonds or other assets in case a time of financial difficulty comes. People who are more adaptable and prepared for tough times will survive longer, just as a mouse with more than one hole will escape faster than one that doesn’t.

1114) *First try and then trust*

It is best to test a person before putting your complete trust in them. For instance, when a local bank hired a new employee, they chose to limit the employee’s responsibilities and access to the system for the first few weeks. Only once they had proven themselves trustworthy were they given full clearance.

1115) *What’s bred in the bone will come out in the flesh*

A deeply trained or ingrained characteristic will continue to manifest itself throughout one’s life. For example, a person who has had a very rough early childhood (starting, perhaps, with fetal alcohol syndrome before birth) will continue to have certain struggles and challenges as they grow up.

1116) *A carpenter is known by his chips*

One’s profession or interests can often be guessed by observing the traces of what he leaves behind. For example, if you see someone reading a historical novel next to you on the train, you will not be

surprised when you find out that he is a history professor. The literal meaning is that a person who leaves wood chips on the floor of his workshop is likely to be a carpenter.

1117) [He that once deceives is ever suspected](#)

Once trust in a person is betrayed, it can never be completely restored. When a wife cheated on her husband, he did his best to forgive her, but he could never completely forget what had happened. A trace of doubt always remained, even though she never cheated again.

1118) [The greatest wealth is contentment](#)

Being happy with what you have is more valuable than all the money and possessions in the world. People who have plenty of possessions tend to crave more of them and therefore become frustrated. Being satisfied with what you have will lead to a quieter, better life.

1119) [No flying without wings](#)

You can dream all you want, but practicality must come first. In order to achieve a goal, the proper preparation must be done, and proper means must be obtained; otherwise, the plan will never succeed. For example, if a young boy wishes to become a professional baseball player, he must practice long and hard, putting in the necessary footwork to achieve his goal.

1120) [Every medal has two sides](#)

There are two sides to every story, so be careful whom you believe. For example, if a couple breaks up, it is not uncommon for each party to have a different take on what caused the split. A similar proverb is used to refer to different interpretations of a situation as “two sides of the same coin.”

1121) [A deaf husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple](#)

This proverb plays to the gender stereotypes that women talk too much and men act dishonestly. A humorous variation of “ignorance is bliss,” the saying implies that a wife is better off not seeing what her husband does, and likewise, a husband is better off not hearing his wife’s endless nagging.

1122) [Every shoe fits not every foot](#)

Some tasks are not suited to everyone. This is especially true in the area of the arts; not everyone can be a professional singer or a skilled painter. The proverb is a consolation to those who may be struggling with succeeding in a certain craft by suggesting that perhaps something else would simply suit them better.

1123) [The rotten apple injures its neighbors](#)

A person with a bad character will influence those around them in a bad way. If you and your friends spend time with a person who has bad moral habits, such as swearing or rudeness, their influence is likely to rub off on the rest of you, even though you all are the majority. Typically, a rotten apple will cause other apples to go rotten quickly if it’s in close contact with them.

1124) [Money burns a hole in the pocket](#)

If you carry cash with you, it will soon be spent. This saying is a way to warn someone to be thrifty in times when they have extra cash. The image of money burning a hole in your pocket and falling out is an alarming, memorable way to warn someone not to spend their money thoughtlessly.

1125) [The unexpected always happens](#)

Don't make comfortable assumptions about what will and won't happen, as some events that never crossed your mind may actually happen. People don't plan on running late or getting in a car accident, yet these quirks of life happen to everyone. Always be ready in case something goes wrong or differently than you have planned.

1126) [It's a good horse that never stumbles](#)

Everyone makes mistakes from time to time. A horse that carries someone all the time will eventually stumble; no person or animal is perfect. Technically speaking, the proverb is saying, "A perfect horse never stumbles," and no horse, or human, can achieve that perfection.

1127) [Before you make a friend, eat a bushel of salt with them](#)

A true friend is one you can trust. The proverb plays to the assumption that if two friends eat enough meals together to use up a whole bushel (thirty-six liters) of salt, they will likely know each other long enough to trust one another. In other words, the saying acts as advice not to trust people you don't know well.

1128) [Translators, traitors](#)

Translating a sentence perfectly from one language to another is technically impossible. There are words and nuances of meaning that differ between languages. Therefore, a translator is "betraying" the language when they translate it into another language by failing to honestly convey the exact meaning.

1129) [Nothing is certain but the unforeseen](#)

No one can be absolutely certain about what happens in the future. What you consider as impossible now may actually happen tomorrow. We may try to predict what will happen, but there are many variables and evolving changes. Therefore, things that are highly unlikely for us now may actually take place in the future.

1130) [England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity](#)

One person's challenges may yield another's benefit. For example, when a manager was injured and stuck at home, one of his reports saw it as an opportunity to show leadership and got promoted. The proverb originated in the First World War as a slogan for Irish nationalists.

1131) [God is always on the side of the big battalions](#)

In battle, victory always goes to the stronger, smarter, braver of the two opposing forces, regardless of any faith in God that either party might claim to have. This proverb is attributed to eighteenth-century French philosopher Voltaire.

1132) [Necessity knows no laws](#)

Self-preservation can lead people to take extreme measures that break laws and violate norms. For example, if someone is homeless and starving to death, trespassing and theft will seem justified, even though they are considered crimes under normal circumstances.

1133) [A woman either loves or hates](#)

This proverb plays to the assumption that women are very emotional and tend to be extreme in their perception of others. In its original form, the saying read, "A woman either loves or hates; she knows no medium." It was attributed to the ancient Latin writer Publilius Syrus.

1134) [Put your trust in God, and keep your powder dry](#)

Have faith that God will help you against your enemies, but at the same time be prepared to take action yourself when needed. "Powder" is a reference to gunpowder needed for firearms at the time. Gunpowder does not work when it is damp, so in order to keep your weapon ready for action, you had to keep your gunpowder dry.

1135) [Destroy the seed of evil, or it will grow up to your ruin](#)

If you don't stop a problem in its early stages, it will eventually become too big to manage. This proverb comes from one of Aesop's fables in which birds are warned to pick up all the hemp seeds planted by a nearby farmer. This is because the seeds would eventually become hemp plants, which would in turn be made into a rope net to catch the birds.

1136) [There are tricks in every trade](#)

In every occupation there are especially clever or efficient ways of doing things. For example, patching up any uneven wall spaces before painting the walls will ensure that your paint job is more even and looks nicer. "Tricks of the trade" are often learned through experience, trial and error.

1137) [He does not believe, who does not live according to his belief](#)

If you truly believe in something, you should practice it yourself. For example, if a man preaches about the harm large vehicles cause the environment but continues to drive an SUV, he likely isn't as concerned for the planet as he lets on.

1138) [If one sheep leaps over the ditch, all the rest will follow](#)

If one person sets an example and does something new, other people are likely to follow. For example, when the famous fashion designer Coco Chanel started to sunbathe, many people changed their minds about avoiding the sun and decided it was fashionable to have tanned skin. People, like sheep, are very social, community-oriented animals that tend to stay in a group and follow leaders and role models.

1139) [Things past cannot be recalled](#)

You can't change something that's already said or done. "Recall" often means "remember," but in this case the word means "take back," as people will obviously remember painful or otherwise negative things you have said or done. Be careful not to say or do anything you may later regret.

1140) [You cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds](#)

You can't engage in activities or relationships that conflict with each other from social or moral perspectives. For example, you can't become best friends with your boss and also with your coworkers, when your boss and coworkers are at odds with each other. Relationships and values in life require careful consideration, and certain choices will exclude others.

1141) [Every bird loves to hear himself sing](#)

People love to talk about themselves. This proverb alludes to the innate, self-centered nature of humans. On a funnier note, it seems that some people will speak not because they have something valuable to say, but just to hear the sound of their own voice.

1142) *If you wish good advice, consult an old man*

People with more knowledge, wisdom, and experience tend to give the best advice. People who are old generally know more and have experienced a lot more things than people who are young. Therefore, if you want the best insight possible, ask a person who is old—or at least older than you are.

1143) *It is a poor heart that never rejoices*

Even melancholy people have to be happy at some point. Sadness and bad moods can't last forever. Keep this in mind the next time your spouse or good friend or family member is having a hard time; it may be difficult for you as well, but they can't be sad forever.

1144) *Catch not at the shadow and lose the substance*

Don't get sidetracked by trivial details; only a thing's essence truly matters. For instance, when a thrifty college student bought a used car, they were only concerned with the color and sound system, neglecting to inquire about the engine. When the car broke down one month later, they realized their error.

1145) *Anger and haste hinder good counsel*

Both anger and haste tend to taint one's ability to make logical decisions. In the heat of passion or excitement, one often acts irrationally. When a teenager finally got his driver's license, he couldn't wait to buy a car. He saved \$500 and purchased the first piece of junk he could find, but when it broke down after three weeks, he realized his hurried decision had steered him wrong.

1146) *Who knows most speaks least*

People who are wiser tend to speak less. Those who speak less have the opportunity to listen, observe, and learn more. The next time you are itching to impress someone with your knowledge or ideas, consider instead listening to the other person to see if you can in fact learn something new from them instead.

1147) *Better be a fool than a knave*

A naive or simplistic person is better than a willfully dishonest one. One who does something wrong by accident is easily forgiven, but one who knowingly commits an offense is viewed as a scoundrel. Thus, the judgment here is based on one's intention. A knave is defined as a villainous person who cheats their way through life.

1148) *Be careful what you pray for, you might get it*

Don't wish for something you might later regret. After years of hoping, one man finally landed a job as head of the department, but he soon became overwhelmed by his new workload. Somehow he hadn't realized that the new position would mean significantly more stress and a huge blow to his social life. Within days he was longing for his boring, old job back.

1149) *Never make two bites of a cherry*

Don't make a small task in batches as this wastes your time and energy, but do it at once instead. If you are writing a one-page essay, it's not a good idea to split the task as you will probably lose focus, and each time you come to it, you'll have to spend time remembering what it was about.

1150) [The buyer needs a hundred eyes, the seller not one](#)

Shoppers need to look carefully at an item's details, while salespeople can exaggerate the item's merits. This saying is documented in British poet George Herbert's 1633 book of proverbs, *Jacula Prudentum*. It is a good reminder that marketing can be misleading and the buyer should beware—"caveat emptor."

1151) [You can't put new wine in old bottles](#)

You can't use new concepts or designs on old-fashioned structures or frameworks. For example, you can't run a sophisticated new game on an early-generation computer or install the latest GPS technology in a car that is thirty years old.

1152) [Gifts from enemies are dangerous](#)

Unfriendly people tend to have ulterior motives when acting kindly. At school, one boy accepted a gift from a notorious bully, thinking he had made a new friend. But it turned out that the bully simply wanted to be "friends" with the boy in order to swim in his pool. The proverb is often rendered as "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts," referring to the Greeks' famous attempt to infiltrate the Trojan walls by presenting a large wooden horse as a gift.

1153) [Sickness is felt, but health not at all](#)

We are usually in a healthy state, so we don't notice or appreciate it. For example, we become very aware of our breathing when we have a cough because the illness draws our attention to it. This proverb points out that most people are not mindful of their good health.

1154) [He that is ill to himself will be good to nobody](#)

How a person treats others is a reflection of how they treat themselves. For example, people who are hopelessly addicted to alcohol often treat their friends and family members poorly. This is not because they want to hurt those people; it is simply an extension of the pain they cause themselves by continuing to drink.

1155) [The golden age was never the present age](#)

It's easy to think things were better in the past, or will be better in the future, than they are right now. People are inclined to see current trends in a negative light. A "golden age" is a time in which a community or civilization is at its height; however, during this time, people usually don't realize or appreciate it.

1156) [You can't shout "fire" in a crowded theater](#)

Don't circulate provocative ideas that can lead to harm or distress. For example, if you are working in an environment that is densely crowded and many of your coworkers have a nervous personality, it would be both irresponsible and inconsiderate to feed them conspiracy theories about imminent contagious diseases.

1157) [Don't meet trouble halfway](#)

Deal with a problem in its entirety; otherwise, it will come back to bother you. For example, after noticing one of his car tires was leaking air, a man simply filled it at the gas station instead of taking it to the shop to be properly repaired. When he discovered the next day that it went flat, he realized he had better treat the issue with the proper attention.

1158) *He who gives fair words feeds you with an empty spoon*

There is no substance in flattery. One becomes a better person through constructive criticism, not through empty praise. For example, professional musicians do not become so skilled in their craft by being flattered by their teachers.

1159) *Listeners hear no good of themselves*

If you listen in on other people who are speaking about you, you may only hear negative statements. For example, if you try to hear what your colleague is telling your boss in a private meeting, it may turn out that they are telling the boss that you invade their privacy.

1160) *Hear much, speak little*

It is better to listen than to speak. One who observes is better able to assess a situation, whereas the person who talks too much may miss important details. Similarly, talkative people tend to be self-centered in nature, failing to consider other points of view.

1161) *An ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory*

One can learn only so much by reading books; if you really want to understand something, you are better off experiencing it firsthand. After spending weeks researching the art of painting, a man realized he had barely learned a thing when he finally picked up a paintbrush. Certain things can only be learned by doing.

1162) *Ignorance is a voluntary misfortune*

There's no excuse for being ignorant. Unlike certain misfortunes, such as having cancer or your house struck by lightning, you have control over your ability to learn new things. If you fall behind in life because of your lack of skills or knowledge, it's because you have chosen to spend your time and energy elsewhere.

1163) *Scratch a Russian, and you will find a Tartar*

French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte supposedly said this, to say that, under the surface—or if provoked—Russians are uncivilized and ruthless. The Tartars or Tatars are a group of Turkic people living in parts of Russia and the Ukraine. After Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan's empire ended, Europeans continued to associate the Tatars with the Mongol horde. Napoleon invaded Russia but failed to defeat local forces in the harsh Siberian winter. This phrase has also been used or adapted to make a statement about other nationalities.

1164) *A good heart conquers ill fortune*

Those with a strong will and peaceful character will overcome even the most challenging adversity. Even after the death of a child, a mother with a resilient heart will pull through, maintaining a positive, hopeful resolve.

1165) *A dwarf on a giant's shoulders sees the farther of the two*

Collective wisdom grows when passing from one generation to the other. For example, a devoted student will one day surpass his teacher in knowledge, but only because of the teacher's support. The saying was popularized by Sir Isaac Newton when, in a 1676 letter to his rival Robert Hooke, he wrote, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

1166) *A discontented man knows not where to sit easy*

Anxiety is the natural state for one who lacks peace of mind because he endlessly seeks that which will bring him contentment, thus leaving no time for rest. When he achieves one goal, he will immediately go after the next. This proverb would be helpful to those who are overworking themselves.

1167) *Brag is a good dog, but holdfast is a better one*

It is okay to be confident, but even better to show your prowess humbly. This proverb, appearing in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, praises the silent masters among us. It is no accident that some of the best artists and writers in the world are generally reserved and understated, calling to mind a sister proverb: "Talk is cheap."

1168) *When in doubt, do nowt*

If you're not sure about taking a course of action or making a certain decision, refrain from doing so. For example, if you are not sure you love your boyfriend enough to spend the rest of your life with him, it would be better not to agree to marry him. "Nowt" is an Old English word meaning "nothing," used here for the sake of rhyming.

1169) *The best physicians are Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet, and Dr. Merryman*

The most important ways to stay healthy are to eat healthy food, to avoid stress, and to enjoy yourself. This proverb anthropomorphizing three healthy habits is documented as far back as Tudor English doctor William Bullein's 1558 book *The Government of Health*.

1170) *God defend me from my friends; from my enemies I can defend myself*

It is often our friends and family that hurt us severely, perhaps because we depend on them the most. For instance, when a man's own brother stole money from him, it upset him far worse than if a stranger had committed the act. This proverb is attributed to eighteenth-century French philosopher Voltaire.

1171) *He that has a great nose thinks everybody is speaking of it*

People are often hyperaware of their own appearance. When a young boy was forced by his parents to start wearing glasses, he was certain he would be the laughingstock of his whole class. Similarly, when a man got a small stain on his shirt at a dinner party, he imagined everyone was staring at him.

1172) *If two men ride on a horse, one must ride behind*

When two people are collaborating on an important project or enterprise, one must be the leader and one the follower. Just as one person has to sit behind the other when riding a horse, one person must defer to and help the other when working together. Two people trying to lead and direct at the same time is just as impossible as two people trying to ride a horse side by side.

1173) *The moon does not heed the barking of dogs*

Don't waste your time complaining about something that you can't do anything about. Venting about the rising price of gasoline, for example, won't change the fact any more than a dog barking at the moon will change the moon's phases. A similar expression is "to bay at the moon."

1174) *Stolen fruit is the sweetest*

We enjoy things more when they are forbidden. The fact that they are not allowed makes us more excited to try them out. For example, children might be more excited about a movie they are not allowed to see than one their parents approve of. Some variants say "forbidden fruit," which is a reference to the biblical story of the first humans' temptation in the Garden of Eden.

1175) *Keep a thing seven years, and you will find a use for it*

If you currently have something you are not using, wait a while and you will find a use for it. Certain objects may become handy later when circumstances change. For example, some old children's books you have could end up being perfect for your niece when she is old enough to read.

1176) *Penny and penny laid up will be many*

If you save a little bit at a time, you will eventually have a lot. The term "laid up" often means to be so sick that one is confined to bed, but here it means "set aside" or "saved." This proverb encourages us to save even small amounts of money and be patient as the savings grow over time.

1177) *Home is home, be it ever so homely*

One's residence may be simple or lackluster, but nevertheless it can still have the special charm only a home can have. For example, a newly married couple purchased their first home, and though it was in desperate need of renovations and a paint job, they loved it simply because it was their own.

1178) *The sooner begun, the sooner done*

Even if there's a task you dread doing, doing it right away means getting it over with sooner. You can remind yourself of this the next time you need to make an emotionally draining phone call or when you have a large pile of laundry waiting in your bedroom.

1179) *It's better to be born lucky than rich*

Luck is more valuable than riches. Riches, while prized and sought by most people, can be fleeting and are easily lost. Luck, on the other hand, can follow a person through life. Moreover, a person who is lucky can find success not only in riches, but in love, friendship, health, and other things that are arguably better than riches.

1180) *Beauty fades like a flower*

Physical beauty does not last forever. Just as a flower eventually withers and dies, a beautiful thing loses its luster over time. When he first met his future wife, he thought she was the most beautiful woman in the world, but after twenty years of marriage, he just didn't look at her the same way. This disheartening proverb plays to the shallower side of human nature.

1181) *If money be not thy servant, it will be thy master*

Learn to control money; otherwise, it will control you. We as humans have financial obligations (such as rent and bills), as well as unlimited wants (such as luxury items and other nonessentials), all of which require money. Using money wisely and avoiding debt require a lot of skill, discipline, and foresight.

1182) Never quit certainty for hope

Don't trade a sure position for something that may or may not happen. For example, if you have a steady job and are talking to another company about possibilities for working with them, don't give up the job you have until you get a definite offer at the other company.

1183) Care brings gray hair

Excessive worry does more harm than good. After years of anxiety and stress watching his three children grow up, one father finally learned that his fretfulness had served no real purpose. Whether stress can actually cause one's hair to turn gray as the proverb suggests is yet to be determined, but stress in itself is proven to lead to mental and physical health problems, which in turn makes a person look older than they are.

1184) The first duty of a soldier is obedience

The most important part of being in the military is not fighting but following orders, as this will ensure that the chain of command remains in effective control. In the 1835 Texas Revolution, Texan Army leader Stephen F. Austin issued orders that included this line. It remains a popular saying to express the importance of loyalty in the military. Modern thinking has started to question this concept.

1185) Many go out for wool and come home shorn

Greed or ambition can drive a person to unwisely risk what they already possess. This phrase comes from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, as a warning to the Don from his niece. She says this as an attempt to caution him that he should not go out adventuring to fight a knight.

1186) When the wind is in the east, 'tis neither good for man nor beast

Wind blowing in from the east is typically foul and bad for crops and other important endeavors. This pithy, rhyming proverb harkens back to a time when farming was the livelihood of many people, and thus inclement weather was a serious issue. References to the "east wind" can also be found throughout the Bible.

1187) There is luck in odd numbers

This proverb expresses the superstitious idea that you are more likely to be lucky when you have or do things in odd numbers. For example, if you want to impress someone by giving them flowers, it's better to give them nine flowers than eight flowers. Cultures around the world have their own beliefs about which numbers and kinds of numbers are lucky, and which ones aren't.

1188) Walnuts and pears, you plant for your heirs

Think about the welfare of people who will come after you are gone. An example is making financial investments that will benefit your future children and grandchildren, even if you cannot be around to enjoy them. Walnut trees and pear trees both take a very long time to grow and produce fruit; therefore, a woman who plants them does so for the benefit of a future generation, not herself.

1189) Rather death than shame

Honor is more important than life itself. This phrase is associated with medieval European ideals of chivalry, or the ways that knights were expected to behave. Knights fought for the honor of their lords and were expected to be willing to die in order to preserve their honor.

1190) [No man loves his fetters, be they made of gold](#)

People will never enjoy restrictions on their freedom, even if the circumstances seem generous. "Fetters" are handcuffs or chains, so this proverb is saying that even if someone is held with gold chains, they will not enjoy being held captive. For example, a wife confined to her home will resent it no matter how many luxuries she has there.

1191) [Salt water and absence wash away love](#)

Relationships cannot survive long distances. "Salt water" here refers to seawater, and this proverb was originally used to warn that sailors could not maintain relationships due to distance and long absences. Sailors had a general reputation for infidelity and having partners in multiple ports.

1192) [He that commits a fault thinks everyone speaks of it](#)

People tend to be self-conscious about their mistakes, imagining a situation to be much worse than it actually is. For instance, when a student fell asleep in class, they were certain that all the other kids were making fun of them behind their back. In reality, not a single person had noticed.

1193) [The biter is sometimes bit](#)

People who do unscrupulous or wrongful actions may become themselves victims of a similar action. For example, a person in the habit of saying cruel things to others shouldn't be surprised if one day someone says something cruel to them. "Biter" is an old word that means a cheater or a fraud.

1194) [Nothing is given so freely as advice](#)

People will always be happy to share with you their ideas about how you should manage your own affairs, even if you don't ask them for their opinion. However, they will not be as willing to give away money or other types of tangible assistance.

1195) [Take not a musket to kill a butterfly](#)

Do not use extreme measures for small tasks. For example, if you had two friends coming over for dinner, you would not need to bake an entire lasagna and an entire stockpot of soup. "Take not" is an old-fashioned or poetic way to say "do not take."

1196) [A forced kindness deserves no thanks](#)

A generous act is worthless unless it is carried out willingly and sincerely. For instance, a mother may force her child to befriend a new student at school, but such an act is not true generosity. The new student would likely be better off without a friend than to only have a fake one.

1197) [The envious man grows lean](#)

Jealousy will drain you of happiness and energy. Just as skipping meals will cause your body to physically waste away, envying other people will cause you to waste away mentally and spiritually. It's better to be grateful for what you have than to focus on what others have.

1198) [If we are bound to forgive an enemy, we are not bound to trust him](#)

It's good to forgive but not necessarily forget. Forgiving an enemy helps us let go of anger and other negative feelings that could otherwise damage us. However, just because we forgive someone who did

us wrong doesn't mean it's a good idea to trust them; otherwise, we could get attacked or hurt all over again.

1199) [Eagles do not breed doves](#)

Offspring typically resemble their parentage in character. Therefore, if a father is aggressive and unmerciful like an eagle, he will not likely produce a son who is gentle and compassionate as a dove.

1200) [Peace makes plenty](#)

People are generous when they feel safe and comfortable with each other. For example, in times of war, nations will guard their resources, trade will be interrupted, and individuals may have to conserve their own assets. In contrast, in peacetime, markets will be more open to trade, people will feel more secure, and nations and individuals alike will experience more prosperity.

1201) [Once on shore, we pray no more](#)

We seek divine assistance when we feel in danger, but when life is stable, we get caught up in our daily routines. The idea is that in the danger of high seas or in wartime, everyone becomes religious whether or not they are religious at other times. This is similar to the saying, "There are no atheists in foxholes."

1202) [Affection blinds reason](#)

Love can make one act irrationally. One man risked his life running across speeding traffic just to get the attention of his beloved. Another adopted ten dogs at once when he found out the girl he liked was a dog lover. When one is in the throes of attraction, logic tends to fly out the window.

1203) [Sadness and gladness succeed each other](#)

We experience happiness and sadness relative to each other. We could not recognize happiness if we were never sad, and knowing happiness makes sadness more bitter. For example, we grieve the people we love because we were happy with them, and we feel joy with our friends and family because we understand what loneliness is like.

1204) [A good wife and health are a man's best wealth](#)

Money is never as valuable to a man as a loving, supportive spouse and physical well-being. For instance, even after losing his job, a man felt grateful to have a successful marriage and a healthy body. The proverb is attributed to Benjamin Franklin.

1205) [The borrower is the servant to the lender](#)

Those to whom you owe money are in a position of power over you. Money is a means to both power and freedom. A person who owes a lot of money in student debt, for example, can't afford to do or buy many things they otherwise would, or they could risk defaulting on their loans to their lender and suffer serious consequences.

1206) [After a calm comes a storm](#)

A person might be overcome by trouble or adversity when least expected. After a successful year, which included a new job and getting married, a woman was shocked to be diagnosed with a serious disease. The proverb literally refers to the tendency for weather to become extremely calm before an intense, destructive storm.

1207) Muck and money go together

Some menial or unpleasant jobs can be a source of a good income. This proverb originally referred to agriculture and suggests that dirty or hard work pays off. "Muck" is a term for manure and can also be used to refer to unpleasant mud.

1208) The more you stir it, the more it stinks

The more you get involved in something already unpleasant, the worse you'll make it. If a situation seems to be going badly in a rather complicated way, stay out of it. For example, you may have several family members who are fighting and arguing over an inheritance claim. Trying to argue with all of them or fix the problem yourself will end in failure or worse frustration than before.

1209) Why buy a cow when milk is so cheap

Why pay for or invest in something expensive when you can get the benefits cheaply, or even for free? A common example of this is the idea that a man who can obtain premarital sex will not be motivated to get married; therefore, a woman who is interested in him should withhold sexual relations. Another example would be refusing to buy your own car since your friend gives you a ride to and from work every day.

1210) Don't make a rod for your own back

Beware of taking actions that may create long-lasting problems. For instance, a politician introduced new measures of accountability for mayors, only to suffer the consequences when he later became mayor himself. This proverb refers to the dated practice of attaching rods to a child's back in order to improve posture.

1211) Liberty is not license

Political freedom does not mean that people are entitled to behave as they like without regard to others. For example, a common example in the United States is that the freedom of speech granted in the First Amendment does not give Americans the right to shout "Fire!" in a crowded theater. Doing this would cause panic and could result in injuries, which would be harmful to the liberty of others.

1212) The gods send nuts to those who have no teeth

Good fortune sometimes comes to people who can no longer use it or enjoy it. This saying literally describes an ironic situation where a person without teeth cannot do anything with a gift of nuts. As another example, a person who had lost their hair would have no use for a comb or a free haircut.

1213) Learning is better than house and land

Education is more valuable than the accumulation of property. This saying implies that once you gain knowledge, it is yours to keep forever. Assets can be lost or taken from you, so it is better to focus on learning than on acquiring wealth.

1214) Fools build houses and wise men live in them

Building a house is so expensive that renting is usually the better option. Having always dreamt of owning his own property, a man bought a piece of land and started building, but by the time the house was finished, he had nothing left and was forced to rent it out anyway.

1215) A friend is never known till needed

Unlikely friends often present themselves when they are truly needed. When one man's father passed away, he was surprised when an unexpected acquaintance reached out to him while the friends he had known for years were nowhere to be found.

1216) *A good surgeon must have an eagle's eye, a lion's heart, and a lady's hand*

Eagles are known for their acute observational skills, lions as courageous and determined creatures, and women for their delicate touch. All of these qualities are valuable assets to the surgeon in the operating room.

1217) *An occasion lost cannot be redeemed*

Don't take an opportunity for granted as it may not come your way again. When a man was offered a significant promotion at work, he was worried about the increase in responsibility and informed his boss he needed some time to think it over. Unfortunately, he took too much time, and the job was offered to someone else in the company.

1218) *They brag most who can do least*

Overtalkativeness is a sign of a weak or empty-headed person. You may know a person who is always talking about how talented or skilled they are at something, yet you rarely see them put these talents into action. On the other hand, there may be someone else you know who is very evidently talented, but also modest and humble.

1219) *Gold may be bought too dear*

Some wealth is not worth the sacrifice one must make in order to obtain it. For instance, a man neglected his wife and children in pursuit of advancing his career, but when his wife left him, he realized his promotion and subsequent wealth were not worth the loss of his family.

1220) *A man without reason is a beast in season*

One may lose sight of themselves when rooted in hot emotion and not logic. For instance, it is not uncommon for a person in love to act irrationally. One night, a desperate man drove through a dangerous snowstorm just to see his beloved again. The proverb refers to an animal's reckless, sometimes aggressive habits during mating season.

1221) *The noblest vengeance is to forgive*

The best way to respond to someone's hurtful action is to forgive them. While it may be tempting to get revenge when someone does something unfair to you, this does not help you or lead to greater happiness in the end. Moreover, when you forgive someone, you put an end to the violence cycle and take away from them the opportunity to hurt you or pursue you further.

1222) *A wise man is never less alone than when alone*

Wise people have the intellectual resources to occupy themselves even when alone. It is quite common for brilliant thinkers to spend much of their time in solitude, lost deep in thought. This doesn't mean they are lonely or sad; they simply don't need the company of others to entertain themselves. The proverb is attributed to the famed Irish satirist Jonathan Swift.

1223) *A great city, a great solitude*

It is often in a city full of people that one feels most lonely. This paradoxical proverb speaks to the self-centered nature of those living in a big, busy city. Although one may be surrounded by numerous people, most are only interested in themselves, thus making friendship a challenging endeavor.

1224) *He that touches pitch shall be defiled*

One who mixes with wicked people cannot avoid being influenced by them. For example, if a straight-A student starts mingling with the delinquents at school, they will soon be skipping classes with the lot of them. Pitch is also known as resin or tar. It is usually dark in color, from which we get the expression “pitch-black.”

1225) *An old poacher makes the best gamekeeper*

It takes a criminal to know a criminal. One who has participated in some wrongdoing is best suited to catch others committing the same foul. A poacher is one who illegally traps animals, and a gamekeeper is one who is entrusted to prevent this from happening. Thus, the ideal gamekeeper is one who was previously a poacher himself as he already knows the poacher’s tricks and traps.

1226) *What can you expect from a hog but a grunt*

Don’t have inappropriate or unrealistic expectations of people or objects. A person who is raised with little education and no appreciation for the finer things in life cannot be expected to recognize or appreciate your artistic accomplishments. A person who is small-minded and rude can hardly be expected to appreciate a subtle but thoughtful gesture on your end.

1227) *Where bees are, there is honey*

Wherever hardworking people are, there are profitable results. Bees are often seen as a symbol of industry, discipline, hard work, and productivity. An environment where people cultivate good habits and practices yields wealth and success.

1228) *The English are a nation of shopkeepers*

The British public is focused on economic growth. This phrase comes from Scottish economist Adam Smith, who wrote in his 1776 economics book, *The Wealth of Nations*, that the British Empire was acting in “the sole purpose of raising up a people of customers.”

1229) *You buy land, you buy stones; you buy meat, you buy bones*

Consider the literal and material consequences of every acquisition you take, including the less valuable aspects. With land you may acquire some useful soil, but also worthless rocks. With meat you will have some bones that are inedible. Many possessions include a part that is useless or otherwise without value.

1230) *Bread never falls but on its buttered side*

An already negative situation will often get even worse. For example, not only did a teenager crash their car the first time driving it, but they crashed it into their father’s car! This pessimistic proverb is reminiscent of Murphy’s law, which states that “anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.”

1231) *He is not a wise man, who cannot play the fool on occasion*

A clever person may feign ignorance in order to avoid trouble. When a man accidentally damaged his phone by dropping it in the snow, he brought it to the store and pretended he didn't know what happened in order to have the repair cost covered by the warranty.

1232) Pleasant hours fly fast

Time seems to move quickly when we are enjoying ourselves. For example, half an hour spent with friends will seem very short, while half an hour spent in a hospital waiting room will seem very long. A more modern way of phrasing this is "Time flies when you're having fun."

1233) Stone-dead hath no fellow

This saying was used to advocate for the death penalty. The phrase "hath no fellow" is used here in the sense of "has no equal," meaning that there is no punishment as effective as making sure that a criminal is dead. This was already a saying when seventeenth-century English Lord Robert Devereaux, the Earl of Essex, used it to justify the execution of his enemies.

1234) A fool believes everything

Fools are gullible by nature and can be easily deceived, but the wise will question even the most rudimentary fact. This rather obvious sentiment is recorded in Proverbs 14:15 in the Bible, where it is written, "The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps."

1235) Early wed, early dead

One who marries young may be wasting quality bachelorhood. This cynical proverb likens marriage, and the responsibilities attached to it, to a death sentence. One woman started to regret her decision when she lost touch with most of her friends after getting married. She wished she had given herself just a few more years of fun and adventure before tying the knot.

1236) There are more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream

There is more than one way to get something done. For example, if you need to open a package but have no knife or razor handy, you could use the pointed end of a pencil instead. This proverb is very old and has many different versions, the oldest known of which is "There's more than one way to kill a dog besides hanging." Cats do not tolerate cream as it causes them digestive problems.

1237) A straw will show which way the wind blows

A seemingly minor sign may be a hint at something bigger to come. For instance, the fact that the polar ice caps are melting might seem insignificant, but it has now been proven to be an indication of drastic changes to come in terms of global warming. This sentiment is also common when referring to the polling of public opinion, from which the term "straw vote" comes.

1238) When a thing is done, advice comes too late

Don't give someone advice or a lecture when things are past changing or undoing. You probably would not appreciate your sister telling you that "you should have studied harder," after you failed your math test. Likewise, don't "advise" people in a situation where it's too late for the advice to be taken.

1239) Fling dirt enough and some will stick

If one spreads enough harmful rumors about a person, eventually their reputation will suffer, regardless of whether the accusations are true. An alternative interpretation is that one is bound to succeed in a

task if one persists long enough. When applying to colleges, one student felt it best to apply to as many as they possibly could until one finally accepted them.

1240) *One enemy is too many, and a hundred friends too few*

You should not want anyone to be an enemy, and you can never have too many friends. To live a peaceful, happy life, this saying advises us to avoid conflicts and try to develop and maintain as many positive relationships as we can.

1241) *Every flow must have its ebb*

Life consists of ups and downs, peaks and valleys. Speaking to the impermanent nature of human experience, this proverb acts as consolation to those in a dark time, or a precaution to those experiencing good fortune. It literally refers to the ocean's tide, which constantly moves in and out due to lunar influence.

1242) *Death defies the doctor*

No matter how skilled a doctor is at treating his patients, death will eventually come. For instance, a person with stage IV cancer may be treated successfully and live comfortably for months or even years, but in such a battle the disease usually wins, regardless of a doctor's intervention.

1243) *Safety lies in the middle course*

Moderation is the way to stay safe. This proverb suggests that extremes are dangerous. For example, food science goes back and forth on the relative safety of different kinds of food, like meat and alcohol and coffee. Instead of consuming too much of these things or avoiding them entirely, it may be safest to enjoy them in moderation.

1244) *Lean liberty is better than fat slavery*

Freedom is always better than being under someone else's control, and we should not trade our free will for a comfortable life. As a modern example, an artist might prefer to work for themselves rather than take a design job that would pay a higher salary but limit their creative freedom.

1245) *Pride feels no pain*

Fashionable people will endure discomfort in order to impress others. From heavy, powdered wigs to tight collars and cravats to stiletto heels, fashion trends are often uncomfortable to wear. Throughout history, men and women have been willing to ignore this discomfort in order to appear stylish.

1246) *Adam's ale is the best brew*

This proverb serves as a suggestion to avoid drinking alcohol. "Adam's ale" was once a colloquial term for water, referring to the biblical Adam who had nothing but water to drink. The term gained popularity in the anti-alcohol movement of the nineteenth century.

1247) *The more you get, the more you want*

People are never satisfied with what they have. A person with a successful job and a nice car may wish for more vacation time or a bigger home. Another person with all of those amenities may wish to be younger and healthier. As soon as we get something we want, we inevitably find another thing we don't have and start to wish for it.

1248) *Every man knows his own business best*

A person should be trusted in his own line of work. When having their new home built, one couple was uneasy about some of the decisions the head contractor was making, but they agreed to have faith in his judgment. After all, neither of them knew anything about construction themselves.

1249) *Catch your bear before you sell its skin*

Don't promise something you may not be able to deliver. For instance, a man bought a brand-new car with the expectation that he would be receiving a large bonus. But when he lost his job, he was left heavily in debt.

1250) *A dripping June sets all in tune*

One positive action can have a long-lasting impact. For instance, a small donation to a charity could make a world of difference to those in need. The proverb refers to the farming fact in England that proper rains in June mean a fruitful rest of the summer.

1251) *Better die with honor than live with shame*

In the choice between dignity and disgrace, one can only choose dignity. Always stand up for what you believe in, even if you fail; the disgrace of backing down is considered far worse. Although this proverb is appropriate in a military setting, it can also be used to simply promote principled, honorable living. In other words, if one lives an honest, dignified lifestyle, they will have nothing to be ashamed of.

1252) *One foot is better than two crutches*

We should be thankful for what we have because our situation could always be worse. Instead of feeling sorry for yourself if you have only one foot and have to walk with a crutch, be glad that you are not paralyzed and need two crutches to walk.

1253) *He that has no children knows not what is love*

Only a parent knows the true meaning of unconditional love. Being a parent means loving your children no matter what they do or become in life. Love is about caring for someone in spite of their shortcomings, a lesson that parenting will be sure to teach.

1254) *Marriage makes or mars a man*

Being married can either help or hinder you in your life. Married life is a major change that can have unexpected effects on a person's goals, dreams, and happiness. For example, when you marry, you could find yourself supported and loved in a way that fulfills you, or you could find that your spouse makes you feel bad and limits your ability to pursue your ambitions.

1255) *Sussex won't be druv*

A local unofficial motto states that the people of Sussex County in England are admirably stubborn and cannot be forced to do something against their will. In 1875, Rev W.D. Parish's *A Dictionary of the Sussex Dialect* noted that "I wunt be druv" was already "a favorite maxim with the people of Sussex." "Wunt" is local dialect for "won't," or will not, and "druv" is local dialect for "driven," as sheep are driven by a shepherd.

1256) *Eagles catch no flies*

Important people do not trouble themselves with insignificant matters. For instance, the chief of a police department will likely not bother making routine traffic stops of civilians. He will leave that work to his subordinates and instead focus on preventing more serious crimes from taking place in the city.

1257) *As the wind blows, you must set your sail*

You need to adjust your plans according to current events. Though life may throw difficult circumstances your way, you can always make the best of things. What one person may consider a problem, another person may view as an opportunity. For instance, one man was horrified when his car was totaled, but when his friend experienced the same problem, he simply viewed it as a chance to start cycling to work.

1258) *Expectation is better than realization*

One's hopeful projection of the future is often better than the eventual reality. For instance, a young man had been eagerly anticipating his eighteenth birthday party, but when the day finally came, he was disappointed to find his expectations had been set too high.

1259) *Fish and guests smell after three days*

Hospitality has its limits; a guest should be careful not to take advantage of their host. People cannot tolerate their privacy and routine being interrupted for too long. This is a humorous interpretation of its sister proverb, "Don't wear out your welcome."

1260) *The fish will soon be caught that nibbles at every bait*

The person who shows interest in every dodgy deal will eventually get into trouble. For example, if you respond with curiosity to every scam email that comes your way, you could well end up with your identity stolen. Be careful not to go after every offer that comes to you, especially when you have little information.

1261) *When things are at the worst, they begin to mend*

Don't despair when things are at their low point, as life is changing, for better or worse, and a certain state will not remain forever. When you encounter a series of bad luck, this often signals a reversal in fortune. A similar proverb is "The night is darkest just before the dawn."

1262) *A good book is a good friend*

The pleasure one gleans from a book can be just as comforting as a friendship. Growing up, one girl didn't have many friends in school; she preferred to spend her time reading books. For her, a book provided all the joy and good advice she needed without any of the effort required to maintain a friendship.

1263) *Corporations have neither bodies to be punished nor souls to be condemned*

Corporations can make decisions that have severe consequences on people's lives and get away with it. This proverb, attributed to Baron Thurlow of eighteenth-century Great Britain, can be used to justify negative decisions made purely in the name of business—for instance, if a company happens to go bankrupt and thousands of people lose their jobs. An actual example is that of General Electric, which polluted the Hudson River in New York City between 1947 and 1977, by discharging a range of chemicals that were harmful to wildlife and people, and no particular person was punished for it.

1264) *Hawks will not pick out hawks' eyes*

Threatening or nefarious people usually leave their peers alone, focusing instead on those weaker than themselves. At school, bullies tend to pursue easy targets, staying away from those who would likely not be bothered by their threats.

1265) *It is a foolish sheep that makes the wolf his confessor*

It's a bad idea to share secrets and sensitive information with people who might use it against you. If you, for example, have a loved one who has been in a compromising situation, it would be a very bad idea to trust a harsh or judgmental person with that information. A "confessor" is a priest who is authorized to hear people confess their sins, some of which may be very bad and damning indeed.

1266) *Up like a rocket, down like a stick*

This is said of someone who rises high in fortune or fame, then crashes down after losing it all. You might say of a certain celebrity, "They were very talented and successful in their early years, but they lost everything when their drug addiction became too serious: up like a rocket, down like a stick."

1267) *A man of gladness seldom falls into madness*

Those who cultivate a positive outlook are less likely to lose their composure. Even in difficult times, a cheerful person will maintain an optimistic attitude, while a gloomy person may succumb to depression or even insanity.

1268) *An old fox is not easily snared*

With old age comes all the experience, resilience, and survival skills one has gained in a lifetime. If an old person avoids a predicament, it is quite possible they have already learned this lesson earlier in life. For instance, a man who has been married forty years will likely have learned which arguments to avoid getting into with his wife.

1269) *He is unworthy to live, who lives only for himself*

It is important to think of the needs of others, not only your own. For instance, a man who chooses to devote himself to caring for a wife and children will find life much more rewarding and fulfilling than a selfish miser who isolates himself from the rest of the world.

1270) *You cannot put an old head on young shoulders*

It's impossible for a younger person to have the wisdom and experience of an older person. It may be tempting to put a young, dynamic, healthy individual in charge of a great enterprise and hope that they can be trained and advised to make good decisions. However, ultimately the wisdom of an older person cannot be compensated for or instilled within a short period of time.

1271) *If each would sweep before his own door, we should have a clean city*

Bringing about positive change is a group effort. In older times, it was common for people to sweep garbage and refuse out their own doorway. Each individual must participate and do their part in order for there to be any real, lasting result.

1272) *A woman conceals what she knows not*

This proverb plays to the gender stereotypes that assume that women cannot keep a secret, and if they know anything, they cannot resist telling it to others.

1273) [Kindness is difficult to give away because it keeps coming back](#)

When you are kind to people, you don't lose anything, and you will always be rewarded for your kindness. A person whom you are kind to is likely to be kind to you in return, continuing the cycle of reciprocity. This is a play on words about "giving" kindness to others when you treat them well.

1274) [Abundance like want, ruins many](#)

Material wealth can be a curse as it leads to vanity and covetousness. After a man received a large inheritance from his late father, he changed from a giving, humble person to a narcissistic miser. Although he was quite wealthy, his friends and family all abandoned him, leaving him to live a sad, isolated existence.

1275) [One sheep follows another](#)

Weak-minded people will copy each other. Sheep are herd animals and will follow each other, even into danger. This proverb is a warning against the bandwagon effect and to avoid situations where people are following others mindlessly. For example, someone may recruit others into a multi-level marketing scheme, but you would be wise not to listen to any of them.

1276) [Stretch your legs according to your coverlet](#)

Don't live beyond your means, but spend according to what you can afford. For example, don't rent a home that costs more than your salary. This proverb teaches adaptability to limited resources. A "coverlet" is a blanket, so this saying literally means that if you only have a short blanket, don't lie full length, but bend your knees so that you can stay warm.

1277) [Six hours' sleep for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool](#)

This old saying was made famous by French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte who suggests that men need less sleep than women, and that getting a lot of sleep is only for the weak or lazy people. The idea that different kinds of people need different amounts of sleep and that oversleeping is bad predates Bonaparte.

1278) [The difficult is done at once; the impossible takes a little longer](#)

This is a boastful way to say that nothing is impossible to you. With self-confidence we can realize many of our goals, even though the most challenging ones will take more time. The US Armed Forces use a similar motto with the variant "The difficult is done immediately."

1279) [Many would be cowards if they had courage enough](#)

It takes bravery to admit that you are afraid. Many people act bravely because it is expected of them, even if they do not feel brave in a given situation. Quitting a stressful job or ending a miserable marriage may be more challenging than putting up with these unpleasant circumstances.

1280) [You must cut your coat according to your cloth](#)

You can only shop, buy, or acquire based on your financial resources. Just as it would be impossible to try making a coat that's larger than the cloth you have available, it would likewise be folly to buy a new home or car or other items that you do not have the means to pay for.

1281) [The camel, going to seek horns, lost his ears](#)

Don't be so greedy in your pursuits, or you may lose a valuable asset that you already have. An employee who wants to land a huge promotion can work extra long hours to do so, but in the process they risk straining their relationship with their spouse and children, especially over time. Sometimes we are better off being grateful for what we have instead of trying to have more.

1282) [Hanging and wiving go by destiny](#)

In life, marriage and death are both, to a large extent, determined by fate. Apparently people seem to choose their spouses, but destiny plays a great role in how and when they meet. This proverb first appeared in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

1283) [Don't spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar](#)

Don't neglect an important part of a task simply to save an insignificant amount of time or money. One farmer lost a quarter of his corn crop in an attempt to save a little bit of fertilizer. In the proverb, "ship" is actually a dialectal pronunciation of "sheep," and "ha'porth" refers to a half-penny's worth. At one time, farmers would use tar to protect a sheep's skin from potential infections, so to scrimp on this item could be disastrous.

1284) [A swarm in May is worth a load of hay; a swarm in June is worth a silver spoon; but a swarm in July is not worth a fly](#)

One's fortune depends on the season. This seventeenth-century proverb was originally a beekeepers' maxim. It refers to the varying likelihood of a bee finding blossoming flowers to pollinate over the course of the summer, with June being the ideal time.

1285) [One man may steal a horse, while another may not look over a hedge](#)

We respond differently to behavior depending on how we feel about the people involved. For example, imagine if you are friends with one neighbor and hate another. You might forgive the friendly neighbor for taking a vehicle without permission, but call the police to report the other neighbor as a stalker for looking into your yard.

1286) [Every extremity is a fault](#)

It is best to practice moderation, avoiding extremes. For example, working too many hours can be injurious to your health and social life, but at the same time failing to fulfill your responsibilities at work can lead to being fired.

1287) [He should have a long spoon that sups with the devil](#)

One should keep their distance if they must deal with a wicked person. For example, in a small rural town, there was only one competent car mechanic. Although it was well-known that they ran an illegitimate business, the people of the town had no choice but to utilize their expertise when it came to their vehicles. The proverb literally means that if one is dining at a table with the devil himself, then one should use a long spoon so as not to be within the evil spirit's reach.

1288) [The highest branch is not the safest roost](#)

The job or position with the most power is often dangerous. A ruler may have authority over an entire country, but just below them are many other political figures who would be happy to take their place, even if it means killing the ruler. Many birds make their roost, or resting spot, in the branches of a tree.

1289) [Wise men change their minds, fools never](#)

Wise people are open to changing their minds because they realize that they (like all people) are flawed and biased and cannot grasp the full picture. Foolish people tend to be stubborn and therefore are not open to seeing their own mistakes, including mistakes that can be an actual detriment to themselves.

1290) [Let not your tongue cut your throat](#)

Be careful what you say because you could say something that puts your life in danger. For example, in a country where insulting the ruler is punishable, you should not say anything that would be taken as offensive to the ruler.

1291) [The world is a ladder for some to go up and some down](#)

The world is a place of constant change, and people's fortunes can rise and fall. One person may be rich but lose all their money in a bad investment one day, while another person may be poor but through work or luck is able to become wealthy. Sometimes our situations may even seem to happen by a stroke of fate.

1292) [You cannot get a quart into a pint pot](#)

You can't get something too large to fit into a small space, so don't try the impossible. While preparing to go out for the evening, you may notice your sister trying to fit everything she usually has in her purse into her evening bag. "You can't get a quart into a pint pot," you tell her, pointing out that her evening bag is far too small.

1293) [Good management is better than good income](#)

No matter how large your income might be, you can end up in financial difficulty if you don't moderate your expenses. For example, a well-paid engineer with a large mortgage on their house and a big loan for their two cars found themselves struggling to pay all the bills each month.

1294) [Fair faces need no paint](#)

A naturally beautiful face requires no makeup to look good. The same holds true for a person's positive attributes; for instance, a naturally talented guitar player does not need to hide behind sound effects or expensive equipment. His talent will shine through when playing even the simplest instrument.

1295) [It is too late to lock the stable when the horse has been stolen](#)

It's no use to take precautions after the damage has already been done. If your horse is still in the stable, it would make sense to lock the door. But if your horse has already been stolen, the best thing you can do is to understand what you failed to do so you can be more careful in the future.

1296) [The lone sheep is in danger of the wolf](#)

A person who strays from the company and safety of the group is more vulnerable to a dangerous or untrustworthy person. Sheep, like people, are social creatures, and a strong, supportive network keeps most of us safe from people who might otherwise exploit or hurt us. For example, a young woman is more likely to feel comfortable and protected at a rowdy club if she's with some good friends.

1297) [The more women look in their glass, the less they look to their house](#)

The more a woman focuses on her appearance, the less she will care about taking care of her home. Until recently, many women were expected to stay home and take care of the household and children,

which demands a great deal of time and attention. This rather antiquated proverb warns men to make sure their wives do not waste too much time looking in the “glass”, or mirror, in order to primp and make themselves look attractive when they have more important responsibilities to take care of.

1298) [Time discloses all things](#)

The answers or truth about an important issue will eventually be revealed with time. For example, the true character of an elected politician will become apparent once they have been in office for a little while. The true reality of a person or event can't stay hidden forever.

1299) [A reed before the wind lives on, while mighty oaks do fall](#)

A humble, flexible person will succeed where a proud, stubborn person fails. The proverb refers to the ability of the reed grass to withstand strong winds due to its pliant nature, while an oak tree is destined for destruction in its rigidity. This proverb encourages us to avoid fighting losing battles or engaging in needless confrontations.

1300) [Custom without reason is but ancient error](#)

Don't trust a custom simply because it is tradition; you need to question the logic and moral behind it. For instance, on Black Friday hordes of people rush to buy things they don't actually need, simply because the items are being offered at a discounted price.

1301) [A young man idle, an old man needy](#)

In old age, one regrets the opportunities taken for granted in youth. In his final years, one man found himself alone and poor, having carelessly squandered away his relationships and money in his younger years. This proverb acts offers advice to those who act frivolously in their youth.

1302) [Praise no man till he is dead](#)

People we admire may surprise us by committing dishonest actions, or if past actions are revealed. So as long as people are alive, they may be tempted to engage in corrupt behavior at a certain point. For example, many well-liked celebrities have turned out to be hiding shameful secrets. This proverb says that it is safer not to admire anyone in public until they have died because there will be no more surprises.

1303) [One year's seeding makes seven years' weeding](#)

If something is left out of control, it will create long-term problems. If a garden is neglected and weeds grow, they will “go to seed,” and those seeds will come back as new weeds for years to come. This proverb is a reminder that it is worth the effort to avoid letting unfavorable conditions fester because you will have to work harder later if that happens. For example, if you fail to clean your kitchen for weeks, you may get mice. It may take months to get rid of mice in your home.

1304) [It is ill jesting with edged tools](#)

Don't trifle or play around with dangerous things or people. Just as it would be a bad idea to play with an electric saw, it's a bad idea to put yourself in a compromising situation with a stranger or to experiment with a substance or activity that could physically harm you.

1305) [A moneyless man goes fast through the market](#)

Don't waste your time looking at things you can't afford. Focus only on what is within reach. If a man can only afford a Toyota, he had better not tease himself by going to the BMW dealership.

1306) [Don't make yourself a mouse, or the cat will eat you](#)

If you present yourself as weak or indecisive, someone is likely to take advantage of you. If you go shopping for a new car without a clear idea of your needs or price range, the salesman may manage to sell you something you can't even afford.

1307) [Common fame is seldom to blame](#)

One's reputation, though it may be exaggerated, may actually have a ring of truth in it. One politician was known to be a womanizer, but although the rumors about his various affairs weren't completely true, he was certainly not the most honest man when it came to women.

1308) [Every man has his proper gift](#)

Everyone should be grateful for their particular lot in life. For example, a woman may be so jealous of her friend's marriage that she fails to recognize the benefits of being single. Appearing in 1 Corinthians 7:7 in the Bible, this proverb begs one not to take their own circumstances for granted.

1309) [It is useless to flog a dead horse](#)

If a point has already been made or an issue resolved, there's no gain in bringing it to attention any further. In times when horses were used for everyday work, people often used a whip or flog to direct them. Bringing up the same point repeatedly about something when there is nothing more to say is about as useless as beating a horse that's dead.

1310) [You don't fatten a pig by weighing it](#)

Don't waste time on metrics, but focus instead on how to make actual improvements. Focusing on the stats of your new blog, for example, will do nothing to build traffic if you don't actually make a proactive effort to improve the quality of your blog and add more interesting content.

1311) [Revolutions are not made with rose water](#)

Radical political change usually involves violent conflict. The implication of saying that a revolution is not made with a sweet, harmless perfumed substance like rose water is that it might be made with blood and sacrifices. This could be said sarcastically to someone who holds an idealistic view of nonviolent revolution.

1312) [One hour's sleep before midnight is worth two after](#)

Going to bed earlier gives you more restful sleep. This saying is used to encourage someone to go to bed instead of staying up late. There are many proven medical benefits to getting plenty of sleep, including a better mood, lower risk of stroke, and a stronger immune system.

1313) [After death, the doctor](#)

There is no use trying to fix a problem if the damage has already been done. For instance, after a lifetime of smoking, a man finally realized he needed to quit. Unfortunately, within the next year he was diagnosed with lung cancer. In this case, his positive action was too little, too late.

1314) [Promises are like pie crust, made to be broken](#)

Do not trust promises because many people do not keep them. This cynical proverb compares promises to crumbly pastry, which is not durable or long-lasting. It suggests that we should not be surprised when others break their promises to us.

1315) [Every dog is allowed one bite](#)

Even mild-mannered people are allowed aggression from time to time. For instance, a quiet, old man was rarely known to raise his voice, but when a cyclist almost hit him in the street one day, he lost his temper. The proverb is actually a law in some localities; it states that the owner of a notoriously safe breed of dog is not liable for that dog's first attack.

1316) [Don't cut the bough you are standing on](#)

Don't act carelessly when making an important decision as it could lead to your own demise. A man quit his job, assuming he would be offered a position at another company at which he had interviewed. Unfortunately, the company selected someone else, and he was left without any job at all. A bough is the main branch of a tree.

1317) [In the world, who knows not to swim goes to the bottom](#)

People who don't have practical knowledge, basic survival skills, and a desire to succeed will become life failures and will fall behind everyone else. A more well-known expression is "Sink or swim," meaning succeed or fail. Either way, it's at your own effort, and it's your own responsibility.

1318) [Take away the cause, and the effect ceases](#)

If you solve the core problem, the symptoms will stop. For example, if you have a headache from being in a loud place, you could take medicine to try to remove the pain, but the headache will also stop if you remove the cause by finding a quieter environment.

1319) [Every heart has its own ache](#)

Everyone experiences heartache in life. Whether one has lost a child, a lover, or a friend, they will feel that emptiness inside that can only be described as a broken heart. Though one may react differently to their particular situation, the pain experienced is the same.

1320) [Years know more than books](#)

Experience is a more reliable source of knowledge than books. While you can learn facts and information easily enough from books, hard-earned experience in life has no parallel when it comes to understanding the world. The knowledge that comes with age is more mature, ingrained, and heartfelt.

1321) [A young man married is a young man marred](#)

Beware of marrying too early. Once married, one is often hindered from making personal advancements or achievements in his life. For instance, a young man married at age twenty-one may realize the mistake he's made when his wife doesn't support his dream of being a professional musician.

1322) [Hypocrisy is an homage that vice pays to virtue](#)

Hypocrisy occurs when dishonest people acknowledge what is actually a virtuous action. For example, a woman had a secret drinking problem when by herself, but she always resisted drinking in public, even openly condemning people who do.

1323) *One man sows, and another reaps*

Privileged people benefit from the labor of others. Similar in meaning to “One beats the bush, and another catches the bird,” this proverb refers to situations in which one person puts in effort and another person benefits from the outcome. This line comes from John 3:47 in the Bible.

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