

List of Thai language idioms

Idioms in the Thai language are usually derived from various natural or cultural references. Many include rhyming and/or alliteration, and their distinction from aphorisms and proverbs are not always clear. This is a list of such idioms.

Idiom	RTGS	Literal translation	Idiomatic meaning	Notes
ก ข ไม่กระดิกหู	<i>ko kho mai kradik hu</i>	ko, kho (first two consonants of the Thai alphabet), not wiggling an ear	an illiterate person ^[1]	
กงเกวียนกำเกวียน	<i>kong kwian kam kwian</i>	cart wheel, cart spokes	What one does will be returned by karma. ^[1]	
กันกระดก	<i>kon kradok</i>		letting praise get the better of oneself ^[1]	
กบในกะลาครอบ	<i>kop nai kala khrop</i>	frog underneath a coconut shell	one who has little knowledge or experience but thinks of oneself as wise ^[1]	
กบเลือกนาย	<i>kop lueak nai</i>	frogs being choosy of masters	one who consistently wants to change superiors ^[1]	from Aesop's <u>The Frogs Who Desired a King</u>
ก้มหน้า	<i>kom na</i>	bow down one's head	to endure a difficult situation ^[1]	
ก้มหน้าก้มตา	<i>kom na kokm ta</i>	bow down one's head and eyes	to concentrate on something ^[1]	
กรรมตามสนอง	<i>kam tam sanong</i>		what goes around comes around	
กระซังหน้าใหญ่	<i>krachang na yai</i>	big-faced awning	<u>brassy</u> ^[1]	
กระเชอกันร้ว	<i>krachoe kon rua</i>	bamboo basket with a leaky bottom	being a spendthrift ^[1]	
กระดั่งกาลนไฟ	<i>kradangnga lon fai</i>	singed <i>Cananga odorata</i> flower	a woman who has been married before, and is therefore better at pleasing men ^[1]	
กระดี๊ได้น้ำ	<i>kradi dai nam</i>	<u>gourami</u> fish finding water	a person showing a lot of gladness and excitement ^[1]	
กระดูกแข็ง	<i>kraduk khaeng</i>	(having) hard bones	not dying easily ^[1]	
กระดูกร้องได้	<i>kraduk rong dai</i>	calling bones	a murder where certain effects lead to the conviction of the murderer ^[1]	
กระดูกอ่อน	<i>kraduk on</i>	(having) soft bones	having little fighting skills ^[1]	
กระต่ายตื่นตูม	<i>kratai tuen tum</i>	panicking hare	one who panics without giving due consideration ^[1]	from the Daddabha Jataka tale of The Noise the Hare Heard

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กระต่ายสามขา	<i>kratai sam kha</i>	three-legged hare	steadfastly denying something ^[1]	also appears as กระต่ายขาเดียว (<i>kratai kha diao</i> , one-legged hare)
กระต่ายหมายจันทร์	<i>kratai mai chan</i>	hare wishing for the moon	a man interested in a woman of higher status ^[1]	
กระโถนทอง พระโรง	<i>krathon thong phra rong</i>	spittoon in a royal hall	one who is consistently ordered by many people to run their errands ^[1]	
กระหม่อมบาง	<i>kramom bang</i>	(having a) thin fontanelle/skull	easily falling ill ^[1]	also appears as หม่อมบาง (<i>khamom bang</i>)
กลมเป็นลูกมะนาว	<i>klom pen luk manao</i>	round as a lime	crafty and slippery ^[1]	also appears as กลิ้งเป็นลูกมะนาว (<i>kling pen luk manao</i> , rolling like a lime)
กลับเนื้อกลับตัว	<i>klap nuea klap tua</i>	turn one's flesh and body	to change one's bad ways for the better ^[1]	
กลับหน้ามือเป็นหลังมือ	<i>klap na mue pen lang mue</i>	turn from the palm to the back of the hand	to completely change for the opposite ^[1]	also appears as พลิกหน้ามือเป็นหลังมือ (<i>phlik na mue pen lang mue</i>)
กล้านักมักบั่น	<i>kla nak mak bin</i>	so bold, usually ends up chipped	being too bold it usually results in danger ^[1]	
กวนน้ำให้ขุ่น	<i>kuan nam hai khun</i>	stir water and make it cloudy	to inflame a calm situation and cause disruption ^[1]	
กว่าถั่วจะสุกงาก็ไหม้	<i>kwa thua cha suk nga ko mai</i>	By the time the beans cook, the sesame seeds have burnt.	being indecisive, resulting in losses from failure to act ^[1]	
ก่อนแล้วต้องสาน	<i>ko laeo tong san</i>	start it, must weave it	One must finish what one begins. ^[1]	
กะลา	<i>kala</i>	coconut shell	worthless ^[1]	
กัดหางตัวเอง	<i>kat hang tua eng</i>	bite one's own tail	speaking incoherently ^[1]	
กาคาบพริก	<i>ka khap prik</i>	crow holding a chilli pepper in its mouth	a dark-skinned person wearing bright red clothes ^[1]	
กาหลงรัง	<i>ka long rang</i>	lost crow in another's nest	one who refuses to return home; a tramp ^[1]	

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กำขี้ดีกว่ากำตด	<i>kam khi di kwa kam tot</i>	Better to grab faeces than flatulence.	Receiving anything is better than nothing at all. ^[1]	
กำแพงมีหู ประตูมีตา	<i>kamphaeng mi hu pratu mi ta</i>	Walls have ears, doors have eyes.	One should always mind their conduct; secrets can be revealed. ^[1]	also appears as กำแพงมีหู ประตูมีช่อง (<i>kamphaeng mi hu pratu mii chong</i> ; walls have ears, doors have cracks)
กำลังกินกำลังนอน	<i>kamlang kin kamlang non</i>	eating and sleeping	(of infants/toddlers) being of eating and sleeping age ^[1]	
กึ่งก้อย	<i>king koi</i>	little finger	tiny ^[1]	
กิ่งทองใบหยก	<i>king thong bai yok</i>	gold branch, jade leaf	(of a marrying couple) suited for each other ^[1]	
กินเกลือกินกะปิ	<i>king kluea kin kapi</i>	eating salt and <u>shrimp paste</u>	enduring trouble and poverty ^[1]	
กินแกลบกินรำ	<i>kin klaep kin ram</i>	eating chaff and bran	stupid ^[1]	
กินข้าวต้มกระโจมกลาง	<i>kin khao tom krachom klang</i>	eat boiled rice from the middle (of the bowl)	to do something in a hurry and without deliberation, resulting in harm ^[1]	
กินตามน้ำ	<i>kin tam nam</i>	eat by the water flow	to receive gifts or bribes without actively asking ^[1]	
กินที่ลับไขที่แจ้ง	<i>kin thi lap khai thi chaeng</i>	eat in secret, tell in public	to publicize what was done in secret ^[1]	
กินน้ำตา	<i>kin nam ta</i>	drink tears	to cry, to be in sorrow ^[1]	
กินน้ำตาต่างข้าว	<i>kin nam ta tang khao</i>	drink tears as a substitute for rice/food	to be so engrossed in tears and sorrow one is not eating ^[1]	
กินน้ำใต้ศอก	<i>kin nam tai sok</i>	drink water from another's elbows	(usually of "minor wives") to be forced to accept subordinate status ^[1]	
กินน้ำพริกถ้วยเก่า	<i>kin nam phrik thuai kao</i>	eat an old bowl of <u>nam phrik</u>	to (return to) live with one's previous wife ^[1]	
กินน้ำพริกถ้วยเดียว	<i>kin nam phrik thuai diao</i>	eat only one bowl of <u>nam phrik</u>	to live with only one wife ^[1]	
กินน้ำไม่เผื่อแล้ง	<i>kin nam mai phuea laeng</i>	drink water without sparing any for drought	to spend what one has without consideration for the future ^[1]	

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กินน้ำเห็นปลิง	<i>kin nam hen pling</i>	drink water while seeing a leech	to be disconcerted, as in when one means to drink water but sees a leech in it ^[1]	
กินบนเรือนชื่ บนหลังคา	<i>kin bon ruean khi bon langkha</i>	to eat in the house then defecate on the roof	to be ungrateful ^[1]	
กินบุญเก่า	<i>kin bun kao</i>	eat old <u>merit</u>	to receive the results of good deeds from past lives; (of wealthy persons) to live off old wealth, e.g. inheritance ^[1]	
กินปูนร้อนท้อง	<i>kin pun ron thong</i>	eat lime, feel the belly burn	to act conspicuously (for fear of one's deeds being revealed) ^[1]	
กินรังแตน	<i>kin rang taen</i>	eat a wasp nest	to be irritable ^[1]	
กินลมกินแสง	<i>kin lom kin laeng</i>	eat dry wind	not having any benefit ^[1]	
กินเศษกินเลย	<i>kin set kin loei</i>		to misappropriate a small portion for oneself ^[1]	
กินสำหรับ	<i>kin samrap</i>	eat from a served set	to eat fine food ^[1]	
กินเหมือนหมู อยู่เหมือนหมา	<i>kin muean mu yu muean ma</i>	eat like a pig, live like a dog	messy and untidy ^[1]	also appears as กินอย่าง หมู อยู่อย่างหมา (<i>kin yang mu yu yang ma</i>)
กินเหล็กกิน ไหล	<i>kin lek kin lai</i>	eat iron, eat <i>lai</i> (a mythical metal)	extraordinarily able to bear labour or pain ^[1]	
กินอยู่กับปาก อยากอยู่กับ ท้อง	<i>kin yu kap pak yak yu kap thong</i>		to know but pretend not to ^[1]	
กูไม่กลับ	<i>ku mai klap</i>	not returning after a yodelling call	not listening to objections; unstoppable ^[1]	
เก็บดอกไม้ร่วม ต้น	<i>kep dok mai ruam ton</i>	pick flowers from the same tree	to be together as a result of having made merit together in a previous life ^[1]	also appears as เด็ด ดอกไม้ร่วมต้น (<i>det dok mai ruam ton</i>)
เก็บเบี้ยใต้ถุน ร้าน	<i>kep bia tai thun ran</i>	pick up cowry shells under the platform	to make small savings ^[1]	
เกลียดตัวกินไข่ เกลียดปลา ไหลกินน้ำแกง	<i>kliat tua kin khai kliat pla lai kin nam kaeng</i>	hate the animal but eat its eggs, hate eels but drink the broth	to dislike someone, yet want to receive benefits from them ^[1]	

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เกลือจิ้มเกลือ	<i>kluea chim kluea</i>	salt dipped in salt	(of two persons) not conceding to each other ^[1]	
เกลือเป็นหนอน	<i>kluea pen non</i>	salt becoming maggots	betrayal by close family or friends ^[1]	also appears as ไส้เป็นหนอน (<i>sai pen non</i> , innards becoming maggots)
เกี่ยวก้อย	<i>kiao koi</i>	hook (each other's) little fingers	to show closeness or affection ^[1]	
เกี่ยวแฝกมุงป่า	<i>kiao faek mung pa</i>	cutting vetiver grass to roof the forest	to attempt something beyond one's abilities ^[1]	
แกว่งเท้าหาเสี้ยน	<i>kwaeng thao ha sian</i>	swing one's foot in search of a splinter	to get into trouble ^[1]	
แกะดำ	<i>kae dam</i>	<u>black sheep</u>	one who acts differently from the group ^[1]	
ใกล้เกลือกินต่าง	<i>klai kluea kin dang</i>	near salt, eat lye	not knowing the value of something readily accessible, instead opting for something inferior ^[1]	
ไก่แกแม่ปลาช่อน	<i>kai kae mae pla chon</i>	old chicken, mother snakehead fish	a crafty old woman ^[1]	
ไก่อบินไม่ตกดิน	<i>kai bin mai tok din</i>	A chicken can fly without falling to the ground.	an area of densely situated buildings ^[1]	
ไกรรองบ่อน	<i>kai rong bon</i>	second-rated cock in the ring	one who serves as a substitute and may be called into service ^[1]	
ไก่เห็นตีนงู งูเห็นนมไก่	<i>kai hen tin ngu ngu hen nom kai</i>	chicken sees snake's feet, snake sees chicken's breasts	both knowing of each other's secrets ^[1]	
ไก่อ่อน	<i>kai on</i>	young chick	one who has little experience and is easily deceived ^[1]	also appears as ไก่อ่อนสอนขัน (<i>kai on son khan</i>)
ไกลปืนเที่ยง	<i>klai puen thiang</i>	far from the noon cannon	(of a person) simple, as a result of living far from development ^[1]	
ขนหน้าแข้งไม่ร่วง	<i>khon na khaeng mai ruang</i>	shin hairs not falling off	(of a wealthy person) not inconvenienced by having to pay a large, yet relatively small to them, amount of money ^[1]	

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ขนหัวลุก	<i>khon hua luk</i>	hairs of the head standing up	very frightened or scared ^[1]	
ขนทรายเข้าวัด	<i>khon sai khao wat</i>	carry sand into the <i>wat</i>	to help benefit the public/community ^[1]	
ขนมผสมน้ำยา	<i>khanom phasom nam ya</i>	<i>khanom chin</i> with <i>nam ya</i> sauce	equal and befitting each other ^[1]	
ขมเขาโคขึ้นให้กินหญ้า	<i>khom khao kho khuen hai kin ya</i>	force cattle by its horns to eat grass	to force someone to do as one wants ^[1]	
ขมื่นกับปูน	<i>khamin kap pun</i>	<u>turmeric</u> and lye	(of two persons) argumentative when meeting each other; disliking each other ^[1]	
ขว้างงูไม่พ้นคอ	<i>khwang ngu mai phon kho</i>	throw a snake no farther than one's own neck	to do something resulting in negative consequences for oneself ^[1]	
ขวานผ่าซาก	<i>khwan pha sak</i>	axe splitting a carcass	(of a person's manner of speech) direct and inconsiderate ^[1]	
ของหาย ตะพายบาป	<i>khong hai taphai bap</i>		to blame others when something is lost or missing ^[1]	
ข้าเก่าเต่าเลี้ยง	<i>kha kao tao liang</i>		a long-familiar person; a long-serving servant ^[1]	
ข้านอกเจ้า บ่าวนอกนาย	<i>kha nok chao bao nok nai</i>		one whose acts defy order or tradition ^[1]	
ข้ามน้ำข้ามทะเล	<i>kham nam kham thale</i>	cross over water and sea	to fight through obstacles in order to succeed ^[1]	also appears as ข้ามน้ำข้ามท่า (<i>kham nam kham tha</i>)
ขายผ้าเอาหน้ารอด	<i>khai pha ao na rod</i>	sell cloth to save face	to sacrifice important property to save one's name ^[1]	
ขายหน้าวันละห้าเบี้ย	<i>khai na wan la ha bia</i>		to cause embarrassment every day ^[1]	
ข้าวกันบาตร	<i>khao kon bat</i>	rice at the bottom of an alms bowl	food left over from monks' meals, which <u>temple boys</u> eat ^[1]	
ข้าวแดงแกงร้อน	<i>khao daeng kaeng ron</i>	<u>brown rice</u> , hot soup	kindness, favours ^[1]	

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ข้าวยากหมากแพง	<i>khao yak mak phaeng</i>	rice being difficult, <u>areca nuts</u> being expensive	a state of famine ^[1]	
ข้าวเหลือเกลืออ้อม	<i>khao luea kluea im</i>	rice being in excess, salt being satiating	a country with plentiful food ^[1]	
ข้าวใหม่ปลามัน	<i>khao mai pla man</i>	new rice, tasty fish	the state of something new being regarded as good; usually referring to newlyweds ^[1]	
ขิงก็รา ขากี้แรง	<i>khing ko ra kha ko raeng</i>		(of two persons) both being hot-tempered, neither one backing down ^[1]	
ขี่ช้างจับตั๊กแตน	<i>khi chang chap takkataen</i>	ride an elephant to catch grasshoppers	to invest a lot for little gains ^[1]	
ขี้ก้อนใหญ่ให้เด็กเห็น	<i>khi kon yai hai dek hen</i>	defecate a large turd for a child to see	to do something inappropriate in front of a child ^[1]	
ขี้แพ้ชวนตี	<i>khi phae chuan ti</i>	loser calling for a fight	to be a sore loser ^[1]	
ขี้ไม่ให้หมากิน	<i>khi mai hai ma kin</i>	defecate and refuse it for dogs to eat	to be a miser ^[1]	
ขี้รดโทษล่อง	<i>khi rat thot long</i>	make a mess and blame the toilet hole	to blame others for one's own fault ^[1]	
ขึ้นต้นไม้สุดยอด	<i>khuen ton mai sut yot</i>	climb a tree to the very top	to reach the highest possible rank ^[1]	
ขุดด้วยปาก ถากด้วยตา	<i>khut duai pak thak duai ta</i>	dig with the mouth, scrape with the eyes	to display contempt with words and looks ^[1]	
ขุดดินกินหญ้า	<i>khut din kin ya</i>	dig the earth, eat the grass	to do what little work which just feeds oneself ^[1]	
ขุดบ่อล่อปลา	<i>khut bo lo pla</i>	dig a pond, lure the fish	to plot and deceive others for one's own benefit ^[1]	
ขุนนางไขพ่อแม่ หินแงไขตา ยาย	<i>khun nang chai pho mae hin ngae chai ta yai</i>	Nobles are not one's parents; rough stones are not one's grandparents.	One should not trust others apart from one's parents and grandparents. ^[1]	
ขุนไม่เชื่อง	<i>khun mai chueang</i>	fed but not tame	ungrateful ^[1]	also appears as ขุนไม่ขึ้น (<i>khun mai khuen</i>)

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เข็นครกขึ้นเขา	<i>khen khrok khuen khao</i>	push a <u>rice pounder</u> up a hill	to engage in an extremely difficult task requiring a lot of effort and patience, sometimes beyond one's capacity ^[1]	
เข้าด้ายเข้าเข็ม	<i>khao dai khao khem</i>	in the thread and the needle	almost succeeding, but susceptible to be foiled by a small mistake or interruption ^[1]	
เข้าตามตรอก ออกตามประตู	<i>khao tam trok ok tam pratu</i>	enter by the street, exit by the door	to follow tradition in asking to marry ^[1]	
เข้าเถื่อนอย่าลืมพร้า	<i>khao thuean ya luem phra</i>	enter the forest, do not forget the machete	to be cautious ^[1]	
เข้ารกเข้าพง	<i>khao rok khao phong</i>	go into the bushes	to say or do something unrelated or incorrectly as a result of lack of expertise ^[1]	
เข้าหูซ้ายทะลุหูขวา	<i>kjap hu sai thalu hu khwa</i>	enter the left ear, go throughout the right	not learning what one is taught ^[1]	
เขียนด้วยมือ ลบด้วยตีน	<i>khian duai mue lop duai tin</i>	write with the hand, erase with the foot	to praise but then later destroy ^[1]	
เขียนเสือให้วัวกลัว	<i>khian suea hai wua klua</i>	draw a tiger to scare the cattle	to do something to frighten the other party ^[1]	
เขียว ๆ แดง ๆ	<i>khiao khiao daeng daeng</i>	green and red	colourfully dressed women ^[1]	
แขกไม่ได้รับเชิญ	<i>khaek mai dai rap choen</i>	uninvited guest	undesirable people or animals likely to cause damage or inconvenience, usually referring to thieves or certain animals ^[1]	
แข่งกับเวลา	<i>khaeng kap wela</i>	race with time	to do something quickly ^[1]	
แข่งเรือแข่งแพ แข่งได้ แข่งบุญแข่งวาสนา แข่งไม่ได้	<i>khaeng ruea khaeng phae khaeng dai khaeng bun khaeng watsana khaeng mai dai</i>	Competing in boat racing, can be done; competing in fate and fortune, cannot be done.	to know one's own abilities and not attempt what is incapable of ^[1]	
แขวนนวม	<i>khwaen nuam</i>	hang boxing gloves	retire from boxing; quit doing something ^[1]	
ไข่ในหิน	<i>khai nai hin</i>	egg in the rock	something which is meticulously cared for ^[1]	

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สมน้ำหน้า	<i>som nam na</i>		You get what you deserve	
การบีบเลือดจากปู	<i>gaan bèep lêuat jàak bpoo</i>	to squeeze blood from a crab	attempting to obtain something from somebody (especially money) that they do not have or cannot give up	

References

1. Royal Institute (2003). *พจนานุกรมฉบับราชบัณฑิตยสถาน พ.ศ. 2542 (Royal Institute Dictionary, B.E. 2542)* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090302235916/http://rirs3.royin.go.th/>) (in Thai). Bangkok: Nanmee Books Publications. ISBN 974-9588-04-5. Archived from the original (<http://rirs3.royin.go.th/>) on 2009-03-02.

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