

SPRINGTIME AND IDIOMS

When springtime arrives, the poet in all us comes alive. Sunnier days, fresh rains, budding trees and the first garden blooms caused Christina Rossetti to proclaim, “**Spring is when life’s alive in everything,**” and Doug Larsen to remark, “**Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush.**” Winter’s no longer in control—everything’s new and anything’s possible. Or so thought Robert Browning, who penned “Pippa’s Song”:

The year’s at the spring
And day’s at the morn;
Morning’s at seven;
The hillside’s dew-pearled;
The lark’s on the wing;
The snail’s on the thorn;
God’s in His heaven –
All’s right with the world!

The list of springtime idioms in English is short, but there are a few expressions that incorporate the word “spring.” Brits and Australians might say, “She’s full of the joys of spring,” when someone bounces into the office in an unusually happy mood. Another idiom, “**spring fever,**” denotes the feeling of restlessness experienced with the onset of the season. I like the way humorist Mark Twain described the phenomenon:

“It’s spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you’ve got it, you want—oh, you don’t quite know what it is you do want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so!”



When spring fever hits, school children and university students alike can be glad “**spring break**” is built into the calendar. A little recess is just the prescription for this particular malady. However, for the person who’s “no spring chicken”—another way of referring to someone who’s not exactly young anymore—it may not be a good time to visit beaches and island destinations!

To the above list of idioms, you can use “**spring**,” “**sprang**,” and “**sprung**” in sentences to convey the idea of quickness or suddenness (meanings of idioms are shown in parentheses):

Joe is planning to spring the new idea on his colleagues at the annual meeting.
(to surprise someone with something)

A good night's sleep erased his fatigue and helped him spring into action the next morning.
(to begin suddenly moving or doing something)

Mary sprang to her feet when she recognized the man was her long-lost brother.
(to stand up quickly)

The seeds we planted seemed to spring up overnight, and that's when we knew spring had sprung.
(to appear or develop suddenly; to sprout)

The party springs to life whenever Mary walks into the room and starts playing her accordion.
(to become suddenly alive or more alive)

Whenever you hear someone say, “**Hope spring's eternal**”—meaning he's holding out hope for a particular resolution, even though he has sufficient evidence that things won't turn out the way he'd want—he's thinking in sync with novelist Victor Hugo, who wrote *Les Misérables*: “*Winter is on my head, but eternal spring is in my heart.*”