

**Mary's note: The majority of the following are words and phrases that we heard our Mom (Mary Josephine Loeffler Wiberg) use while we were growing up:**

**Mom - isms  
(Cliches, Platitudes, Etc.)  
Compiled by  
Sven Joseph Wiberg  
(Mom's first child)**

**A bachelor is a person who never made the same mistake once.**

**A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush**

**Able was I ere I saw Elba (palindrome)**

**A blot on his escutcheon (his name - his reputation - his honor - his record, etc.)**

**Absence makes the heart grow fonder**

**A case of the blind leading the blind**

**A cat can look at the queen**

**Actions speak louder than words**

**Adapt or die**

**A diller a dollar a ten o'clock scholar  
what makes you come so soon?  
You used to come at ten o'clock  
But now you come at noon**

**A flash in the pan**

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

**After all is said and done, more is said than done**

**A good name is more to be treasured than great riches**

**A leopard can't change his spots**

**A little knowledge is a dangerous thing**

**All in due time**

**All that glitters is not gold**

**All things in moderation**

**All's well that ends well**

**All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy**

**A man's house is his castle**

**A miss is as good as a mile**

**An apple a day keeps the doctor away**

**And even this shall pass**

**An eye for an eye - a tooth for a tooth**

**An idle mind is the Devil's workshop**

**Any ole port in a storm**

**A penny for your thoughts**

**A penny saved is a penny earned**

**A place for everything, and everything in it's place  
(Grandma Lotten Wiberg)**

**April showers bring May flowers**

**A rolling stone gathers no moss**

**As bright as day**

**As clear as a bell**

**A smile is a curved line that sets things straight**

**As my mothers always said . . . .**

**A soft answer turneth away wrath**

**A standing army is like a standing member - an excellent assurance of domestic tranquility but a dangerous temptation to foreign adventure -Elbridge Gerry**

**(1744 - 1813) - founding father and signer of the Declaration of Independence**

**A stitch in time saves nine (A little preventive maintenance can eliminate the need for major repairs later)**

**A summer soldier and a sunshine patriot**

**As you travel on through life my friend, whatever be your goal, keep your eye upon the doughnut and not upon the hole**

**Avoid it like the plague**

**A watched pot never boils**

**A wolf in sheep's clothing**

**A word to the wise is sufficient**

**A word to the wives is sufficient**

**A world of difference**

**Back in a flash**

**Beating a dead horse**

**Beauty is in the eye of the beholder**

**Beauty is only skin deep (but ugly goes clear to the bone)**

**Beauty is truth, truth beauty. That is all there is to know and all you need to know**

**Be Careful**

**Be care of your thoughts**

**For your thoughts become your words**

**Be careful of your words**

**For your words become your actions**

**Be careful of your actions**

**For your actions become your habits**

**Be careful of your habits**

**For your habits become your character**

**Be careful of your character**

**For your character becomes your destiny**

**Beggars can't be choosers**

**Beginners luck**

**Be not deceived - God is not mocked**

**Be sure your sins will find you out**

**Better late than never**

**Better Red than dead (reference: Red = communist)**

**Better safe than sorry**

**Better the devil you know than the devil you don't know**

**Between a rock and a hard place**

**Beware of Greeks bearing gifts (reference: Trojan Horse)**

**Big as a whale**

**Birds of a feather flock together**

**Bite the bullet**

**Black as the ace of spades (Blacker than . . .)**

**Break a leg!**

**Bring home the bacon**

**Brittle as glass (More brittle than . . .)**

**Buckle down!**

**Butter him up**

**Cat got your tongue?**

**Can't see the forest for the trees**

**Children should be seen and not heard (Uncle Kaleb Wiberg)**

**Chill out**

**Cleanliness is next to Godliness**

**Clear as a bell**

**CLOSE THE DOOR!!! - (were you raised in a barn??)  
(Mary J. Wiberg)**

**Closing the barn door after the horse is gone**

**Clothes make the man**

**Cold as a witch's tit (Colder than . . .)**

**Cold as ice**

**Cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey**

**Come hell or high water**

**Cool as a cucumber**

**Crystal clear**

**Curiosity killed the cat (satisfaction brought him back)**

**Cute as a bug in a rug (Cuter than . . .)**

**Cute as a button (Cuter than . . .)**

**Cute like a fox**

**Dead men tell no tales**

**Devil's advocate**

**Different strokes for different folks**

**(Different ships, different longsplices - British maritime variant)**

**Discretion is the better part of valor**

**Do as you would be done by (Golden Rule)**

**Don't be a dog in the manger**

**Don't buy a pig in a poke (a poke is a bag)**

**Don't cast your pearls before swine**

**Don't count your chickens before they're hatched**

**Don't cry over spilt milk**

**Don't cut off your nose to spite your face**

**Don't disturb the status quo**

**Don't fiddle while Rome burns**

**Don't go wishing your life away**

**Don't hide your light under a bushel**

**Don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggss**

**Don't look a gift horse in the mouth**

**Don't look back - something might be gaining on you (Satchel Paige)**

**Don't make a mountain out of a molehill**

**Don't make waves**

**Don't put all your eggs in one basket**

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

**Don't rain on my parade**

**Don't rock the boat**

**Don't shoot yourself in the foot**

**Don't throw out the baby with the bath water**

**Don't try to teach a pig to sing - you'll only waste your time and annoy the pig**

**Don't upset the apple cart**

**Don't wast your breath**

**Don't worry - be happy**

**Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Golden Rule)**

**Drink is the curse of the working man**

**Drunk as a skunk**

**Early to bed**

**Early to rise**

**Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise (Benjamin Franklin)**

**Easy come, easy go**

Every mother crow thinks her's is the blackest

Evil succeeds when good men do nothing

Experience is the best teacher

Faint heart ne'er won fair lady

Fair to middlin (in answer to How are you?)

Faith without works is dead

Fast as greased lightning (faster than . . .)

Fatally flawed

Fast as a pig

Father knows best

Feed a cold, starve a fever

Fighting like cats and dogs

Fight only those battles you have a chance to win

Figures don't lie, but liars can figure

Finally - dawn breaks over Marblehead!!

First things first

Fish or cut bait

Flat as a pancake

Flattery is like chewing gum - chew it for a short while, but don't swallow it.

Fool me once, you're a fool - fool me twice, I'm a fool

Fools rush in where wise men fear to tread

From the lowliest depth there is a path to the loftiest height

Fuzzy as a peach (Fuzzier than . . .)

Garbage in, garbage out

Get thee behind me, Satan ("Uade retro, Satanas")

Get the lead out of your britches (pants)

Get while the gettin's good

Get with it

Gilding the lily

Give it your best shot

Give the Devil his due

Give wind and tide a chance to change

Go along to get along

God loveth a cheerful giver

God never shuts one door without opening another

God willin' and the creek don't rise

Going at it hammer and tong

Going like a bat out of hell

Go like the wind

Good, better, best, never let it rest 'till your good is better and your better best

Good is better than evil 'cause it's nicer (Mammy Yokum - "Pansy")

Good things come in small packages

Go to blazes

Go to H- E- double two sticks

Got the blues

Go with the flow

Habit can be a curse or a boon (Sven J. Wiberg)

Handsome is as handsome does

Happiness is like potato salad - when you share it with others it's a picnic

Happy as a clam

Happy as a pig in slop (Happier than . . .)

Mom-isms

Hard as a rock (Harder than . . .)

Haste makes waste

Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil  
(Hear all, see all, and say naught - British variant)

He bought the farm (i.e., he died. Since it is nearly impossible to buy a farm in a normal life span, the last payment will come due after the poor farmer has died.)

He could charm the birds out of the trees

He could talk a dog off a meat wagon

He couldn't hit the broad side of a barn

He does in a pig's ass (did; will; is; was; etc.)

He has his head in the clouds

He hasn't got a leg to stand on

He kicked the bucket (died)

Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned

He marches to the beat of a different drummer

Hen pecked

He shot himself in the foot

He was a sitting duck

He who loses money loses much  
He who loses a friend loses more  
But he who loses courage loses all

He who knows not history is doomed to repeat it  
(Variant of "Those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it" - Santayana)

He who laughs last laughs best

He who loveth sleep shall come to poverty

High as a kite (drunk)

His word is his bond

Hoisted by his own petard (blown up by his own bomb)

Home is where the heart is

Honesty is the best policy

Honesty is not the best policy - it's the only policy

Hot as Hell - Hot as Hades - Hotter than . . .

Hotter than the ham(mer)stones of hell

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again

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

If life gives you lemons, make lemonsade

If looks could kill, you'd be dead

If Mamma ain't happy - ain't nobody happy

If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

If wishes were horses, beggars would ride

In ya can't beat 'em, join 'em

If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen

If you don't like New England weather, wait a minute (Mark Twain)

If you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas

If you rest, you rust

If you wanna make an omlette, you gotta break some eggs

Ignorance is bliss

I have a bone to pick with you

I have other fish to fry

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery

**In a brown study (a state of abstraction, absent-mindedness or deep thought)**

**In a purple funk**

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

**In God we trust - all others pay cash!**

**In like Flynn (one explanation - Edward J Flynn- "Boss" Flynn-a campaign manager for the Democratic party during FDR's presidency. Flynn's machine in the South Bronx in New York was so successful at winning elections that his candidates seemed to get into office automatically)**

**In over his head**

**In the nick of time**

**In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love (Alfred Lord Tennyson)**

**Into each life a little rain must fall**

**I see said the blind man as he picked up his hammer and saw**

**It ain't how deep you fish, it's how you wiggle your worm**

**It ain't over til it's over (Yogi Berra)**

**It ain't over till the fat lady sings**

**I think, therefore I am (Rene Descartes)**

**I think, therefore I am (fish, sail, golf, etc.)**

**It never rains but it pours**

**I told you so!**

**It's a dog's life**

**It's all Greek to me**

**It's all in a day's work**

**It's an ill wind that blows no good**

**It's a good as done**

**It's a good as gold**

**It's just a drop in the bucket**

**It's no skin off my nose**

**It takes a heap o' livin' to make a house a home**

**It takes all kinds of nuts to make a fruitcake**

**It takes all kinds of people to make a world**

**It takes a lot of love to make a house a home**

**It takes one to know one**

**It takes two to fight**

**It takes two to tango**

**I used to want a new pair of shoes 'till I met a man with no feet**

**Joy: Jesus first, yourself last, others in between**

**Just a drop in the bucket**

**Just a lick and a promise**

**Just made it by the skin of your teeth**

**Justice delayed is justice denied**

**Killing time**

**Knuckle down!**

**Laugh and the world laughs with you; cry and you cry alone**

**Lean and mean**

**Leave well enough alone**

**Less is more! (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe - architect)**

**Less is more, more or less (comment on the above by another architect)**

**Let he who is without sin cast the first stone (Jesus)**

**Let sleeping dogs lie**

**Let the chips fall where they may**

**Life goes on**

**Life is a flower of which love is the honey**

**Life is ten percent what you make of it and ninety percent how you take it**

**Life is what you make of it**

**Life's trials may be hard to bear, but patience can outlive them**

**Like a hot knife through butter**

**Like carrying coals to Newcastle**

**Like shooting fish in a barrel**

**Little drops of water, little grains of sand, make the mighty ocean and the mighty land**

**Little things affect little minds**

**Live and learn**

**Live each day as if it were your last**

**Look before you leap**

**Looks are deceiving (Looks can be deceiving)**

**Looks are only skin deep**

**Lose yourself in nature and find peace**

**Love is blind**

**Love makes the world go round**

**Lower than a snake's belly**

**Lower than whale shit**

**Luck is a lady**

**Make hay while the sun shines**

**Man is not a figure in the landscape; he is a shaper of the landscape**

**Many are called but few are chosen**

**March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb**

**Men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses**

**Might makes right**

**Mighty oaks from little acorns grow**

**Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute**

**Mind your own business**

**Mide your P's and Q's (an admonishment to type-setters who had to look at the letters reversed) - has come to mean "behave yourself"**

**Misery loves company**

**Money doesn't grow on trees**

**Most of us spend a lot of time dreaming of the future, never realizing a little arrives each day.**

**Much ado about nothing**

**Music hath charms to sooth the savage beast**

**Nature abhors a vacuum**

**Necessity is the mother of invention**

**Never confuse wishes with facts**

**Never say never**

**Never say die**

**Never speak of a man's virtues before his face or his faults behind his back**

**Nice guys finish last (Leo Durocher)**

**Neither a borrower nor a lender be**

**No cracks from the peanut gallery (the highest seats in a theatre - patrons could throw peanuts or heckle - make sarcastic cracks about - a performance if they didn't like it)**

No man is an island unto himself (“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, part of the main - John Donne - 1624)

No news is good news

No pain, no gain

No rest for the wicked

Not a snowball’s chance in Hell

Not every soil can bear all things

Nothing is so much to be feared as fear (Thoreau)

We have nothing to fear but fear itself - Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Nothing is sure except death and taxes

Nothing ventured, nothing gained

Not worth a pitcher of warm spit

Numberless as the sands on the seashore

Off the top of my head

Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive

Oil and water don’t mix

Old habits are hard to break

Old habits die hard

On a wild goose chase

Once bit, twice shy

Once in a lifetime

One foot in the grave

One foot in the gutter and the other on a bar of soap (on a banana peel)

One good turn deserves another

One man’s justice is another’s injustice

One man’s beauty, another’s ugliness

One man’s wisdom, another’s folly (Emerson)

One man’s meat is another man’s poison

One man’s trash is another man’s treasure

One thing at a time

One today is worth two tomorrows

Only once in a blue moon

Only one life, ‘Twill soon be passed;  
Only what’s done for Christ will last

On the ball

On top of the world

Open insults, openly arrived at (Epigram - in reference to the degeneration of modern diplomacy - ascribed to Bernard Berenson - from conversation with Citizen Harry S. Truman in 1956)

Open mouth, insert foot

Opportunity knocks but once

Out of sight, out of mind

Out of the frying pan into the fire

Over the hill

Patience is a tree whose root is bitter but it’s fruit is very sweet

Patience is a virtue - possess it if you can  
Seldom in a woman, but never in a man

Paper stands still - you can put anything on it  
(Mom Wiberg)

Payback is a bitch

Penny wise, pound foolish

People who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw bricks (stones)

Plumbing the depths

Politics makes strange bedfellows

Practice makes perfect

**Practice what you preach**

**Pressing the flesh (shaking hands)**

**Pride goeth before a fall**

**Procrastination is the thief of time**

**Profession can't hold a candle to practice and practice is always the most effective profession (Sven J Wiberg)**

**Purple passion**

**Question, question, question! Always!**

**Question authority!!!**

**Quit while the quitting's good**

**Quit while you can**

**Quit when you're ahead**

**Raining cats and dogs**

**Red as a beet**

**Rome wasn't built in a day**

**Search me!**

**See a pin and pick it up and all the day you'll have good luck**

**See a pin and leave it lay and all the day you're luck will stay**

**Seeing is believing**

**Seeing the world through rose colored glasses**

**Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you**

**See ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.**

**Separate the wheat from the chaff**

**She passed me a little card which read:**

**The fruit of silence is prayer  
The fruit of prayer is faith**

**The fruit of faith is love**

**The fruit of love is service**

**The fruit of service is peace (Mother Theresa)**

**"She" 's the cat (Mom Wiberg)**

**Shit or get off the pot**

**Sick as a dog (sicker than . . .)**

**Sign in School: Notice all clock watchers: Time passes, but will you?**

**Silence is golden (so shut up and get rich)**

**Simple things fascinate simple minds**

**Sink or swim**

**Slick as a whistle**

**Slow but steady wins the race (the hare and the tortoise)**

**Slower than molasses and twice as thick**

**Slower than molasses in January (going up hill)**

**Sly as a fox**

**Small minds discuss other people  
Average minds discuss current events  
Intelligent minds discuss ideas**

**Smart as a whip (smarter than . . .)**

**Smooth as silk (smoother than . . .)**

**SNAFU (Situation Not Normal, All Fouled Up)**

**Soft as a baby's bottom (softer than . . .)**

**So here's to dear old Boston,  
The land of the bean and the cod,  
Where the Lowells speak only to the Cabots  
And the Cabots speak only to God**

**Spare the rod and spoil the child**

**Stay loose and let the juices flow (Satchel Paige)**

**Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names can never hurt me**

Sticks out like a sore thumb  
Still waters run deep  
Straddling the fence  
Strike while the iron is hot  
Strong as an ox (Stronger than . . .)  
Success has a thousand fathers, but failure is an orphan  
Success is not forever and failure is not fatal  
Suddenly it hit me like a ton of bricks  
Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof  
Swimming against the tide  
Take care of the little things and the big things will take care of themselves  
Take some of the hair of the dog that bit you  
Talking to him is like spitting into the wind  
Talking to him is like talking to the wall  
Tell me no secrets and I'll tell you no lies  
Tell the Truth and shame the Devil  
TGIF (Thank God It's Friday)  
That and better will do (Pop Wiberg)  
That'll happen when hell freezes over  
That's water over the dam  
That's water under the bridge  
That's it in a nutshell  
That's just so much pie in the sky  
That's the way the cookie crumbles  
That was a close shave  
That was too close for comfort

That went over like a lead balloon  
The apples doesn't fall far from the tree  
The best things in life are free  
The bigger they are, the harder they fall  
The bread rises in the yeast and sets in the vest  
The bread winner  
The cat's meow  
The Devil finds work for idle hands  
The early bird gets the worm  
The future is not all doom and gloom  
The goal of life is living in agreement with Nature  
The Golden Rule is that there is no Golden Rule (Shaw)  
The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world  
The longest journey begins with the first step  
The love of money is the root of all evil  
Them as can, do - them as can't, teach  
The mills of the gods grind slow, but they grind exceeding fine  
The more people I meet, the more I like my dog  
The nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat  
The number one cause of divorce is marriage  
The pen is mightier than the sword  
The play's the thing  
The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance  
There are only two things you have to do in life - Pay taxes and die  
There are plenty of other fish in the sea

**There, but for the grace of God, go I**

**There is a vein of gold hidden inside your nature**

**There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip**

**There's more than one way to skin a cat**

**There's no fool like an old fool**

**There's no free lunch**

**There's no sense beating a dead horse**

**There's nothing new under the sun**

**There's no use crying over spilled milk**

**There's something rotten in Denmark**

**There's no much good in the worst of us  
And so much bad in the best of us  
That is hardly behooves any of us  
To talk about the rest of us**

**There's the Devil to pay**

**The road to hell is paved with good intentions**

**The salt of the earth**

**The truth will out**

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

**The world is round, and the place which may  
seem like the end may also be only the beginning.**

**Thick as a brick**

**Thick as mud**

**Thick as thieves**

**Think before you act**

**Think before you ink (British School)**

**This above all else - to thine own self be true - and  
it must follow as the night the day, thou can'st not  
then be false to any man**

**This nation, a place where the meaning of Man's  
life matches the marvels of Man's labor**

**Those who cannot remember the past are con-  
demned to repeat it (George Santayana) - Variant:  
He who knows not history, is doomed to repeat it**

**Throw in the towel**

**Time flies (Tempus fugit)**

**Time heals all wounds - Variant: Time wounds all  
heals**

**Time is money**

**Time marches on**

**Time waits for no man**

**Tit for tat**

**To be able to fill leisure intelligently is the last  
product of civilization**

**To err is human; to forgive divine**

**To get someone's goat**

**Too little, too late**

**Too many cooks spoil the broth (or the soup)**

**Top of the morning**

**Tough as nails (tougher than . . .)**

**Tough as shoe leather**

**Turn over a new leaf**

**Treading a thin line**

**Trespassers will be violated (Hugo W Wiberg, II)**

**Truth is stranger than fiction**

**Two heads are better than one**

**Two wrongs don't make a right**

**United we stand - divided we fall**

**Use it or lose it**

**Vanity thy name is woman**

**Venting your spleen**

**Violence begets violence**

**Virtue is its own reward**

**Walking the center of the road**

**Waste not, want not**

**Water over the dam**

**We do not remember days, we remember moments**

**We get too soon old and too late smart  
(We get too soon oldt, undt too late schmart!)**

**We have nothing to fear but fear itself (FDR)  
Nothing is so much to be feared as fear - Thoreau**

**We mock the thing we are to become**

**What can't be cured must be endured**

**What goes around, comes around (and the payoff is usually a bitch)**

**What's cooking?**

**What you are to be, you are now becoming**

**When in doubt, throw it out**

**When in Rome, do as the Romans**

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

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

**Which is worse? An empty head or an empty purse?**

**White as a ghost**

**White as a sheet**

**White as snow (whiter than . . ., whiter than the driven . . .)**

**Whom the Gods would destroy, they first make mad.**

**Willful waste makes woeful want**

**Will wonders never cease?**

**Women give sex to gain love - Men give love to gain sex**

**Wonders will never cease (Sir Henry Bate Dudley)**

**Work expands to fill the time available**

**Work is the curse of the drinking man**

**Work like a dog**

**You are what you eat**

**You can always tell a woman, but you can't tell her much**

**You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink**

**You can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy**

**You can't compare apples and oranges**

**You can't fool mother nature**

**You can't get blood out of a stone (or is it a turnip?)**

**You can't judge a book by its cover**

**You can't kid a kidder**

**You can't make an omlet without breaking a few eggs**

**You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear**

**You can't pull the wool over my eyes**

**You can't teach an old dog new tricks**

**You got ants in your pants?**

**You'd forget your head if it wasn't fastened on**

**Your chickens have come home to roost**

**You're a dead duck**

**You're a long time dead**

**You're known by the company you keep**

**You're not the only pebble on the beach**

**You will, over my dead body!**