

# ANIMAL-FRIENDLY IDIOMS THAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LOVE

**Replace outdated phrases that are harmful to animals with these fun alternatives. Plus, get exclusive idiom posters for your lesson!**

The words that we use have the power to influence those around us. Unfortunately, many of us grew up hearing common phrases that perpetuate violence toward animals, such as “kill two birds with one stone,” “beat a dead horse,” and “bring home the bacon.” These old sayings are often passed down in classrooms during lessons on literary devices.

While these phrases may seem harmless, they carry meaning and can send mixed messages to students about the relationship between humans and other animals and can normalize abuse. Teaching students to use animal-friendly language can cultivate a compassionate attitude between humans and other animals and help end the epidemic of animal abuse perpetuated by young people. Try using some of the following fun idioms in your lessons this year:

Harmful	Helpful	Meaning
<b>Kill two birds with one stone</b>	<b>Feed two birds with one scone</b>	Accomplish two things with one action
<b>Let the cat out of the bag</b>	<b>Spill the beans</b>	Tell a secret
<b>Take the bull by the horns</b>	<b>Take the flower by the thorns</b>	Handle a problem fearlessly
<b>Be a guinea pig</b>	<b>Be a test tube</b>	Be tested on
<b>Hold your horses</b>	<b>Hold the phone</b>	Wait
<b>Open a can of worms</b>	<b>Open Pandora’s box</b>	Create a situation that will cause problems
<b>Bring home the bacon</b>	<b>Bring home the bagels</b>	Make a living

Harmful	Helpful	Meaning
Beat a dead horse	Feed a fed horse	Try to make something happen that has no chance of happening
More than one way to skin a cat	More than one way to peel a potato	More than one way to complete a task
Put all your eggs in one basket	Put all your berries in one bowl	Bet everything on one possibility
Cry over spilled milk	Cry over burnt toast	Be upset about something that has already happened and can't be changed
Packed in like sardines	Packed in like pickles	Squeezed tightly together
On a wild goose chase	Out chasing rainbows	Looking everywhere for something that can't be found
Eat crow	Eat your words	Admit to being wrong
Ants in your pants	Pepper in your pants	Inability to sit still
Walk on eggshells	Walk on broken glass	Be careful not to offend someone
Run around like a chicken with its head cut off	Run around like a clock with no hands	Run around in a frantic, distracted manner (Created by Sonya Tunstall in Dayton, Ohio)
Have bigger fish to fry	Have bigger kites to fly	Have higher priorities to attend to (Created by Trevor Thomas in Fayetteville, Arkansas)
Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.	Give people apples and you feed them for a day. Teach people to grow apple trees and you feed them for a lifetime.	Teach people, and you give them invaluable skills that last a lifetime. (Created by Nina Otazo and her 11th grade class of 2021 in Houston, Texas)



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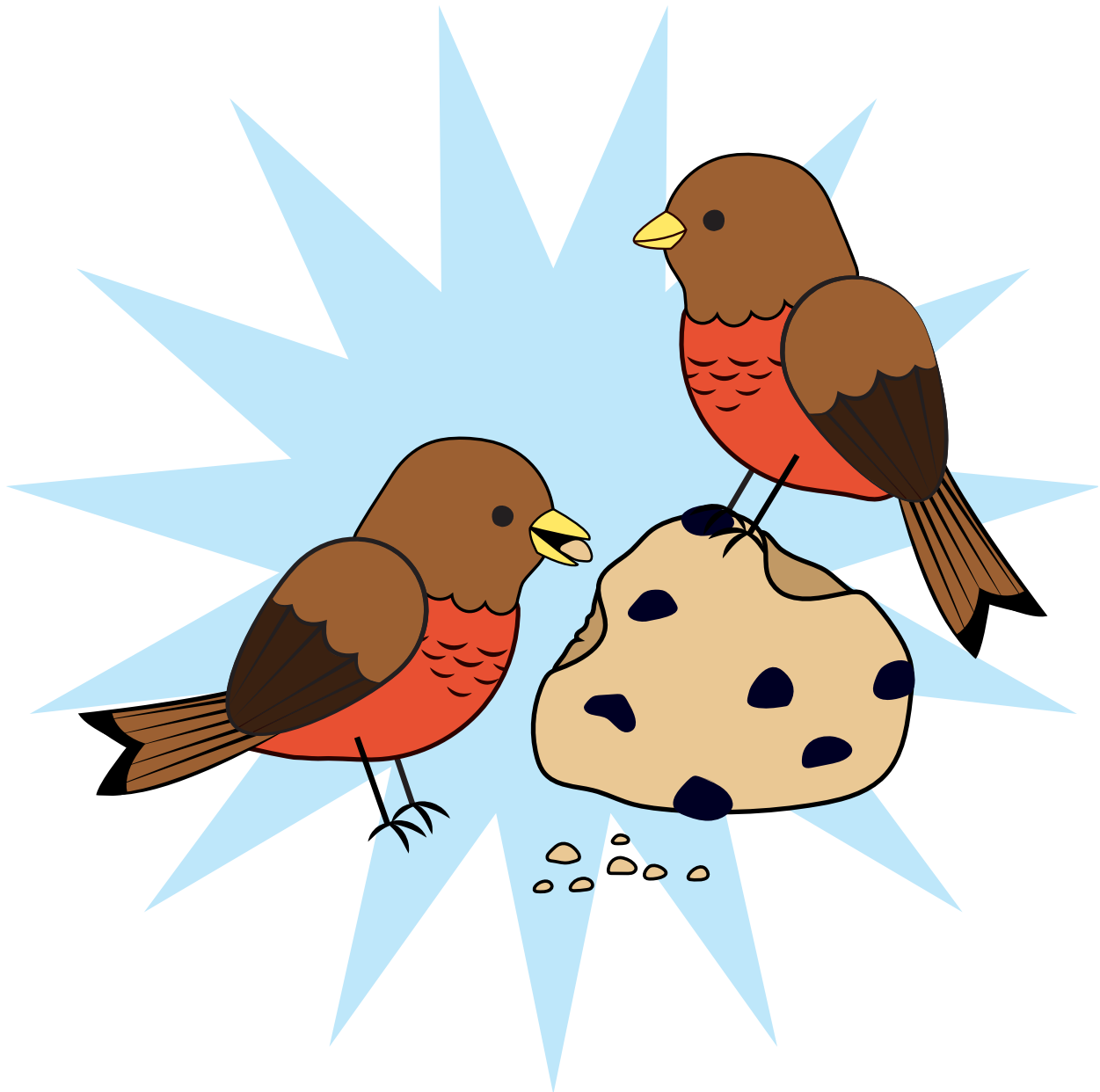


**HARMFUL:**

**Kill two birds with one stone**

**HELPFUL:**

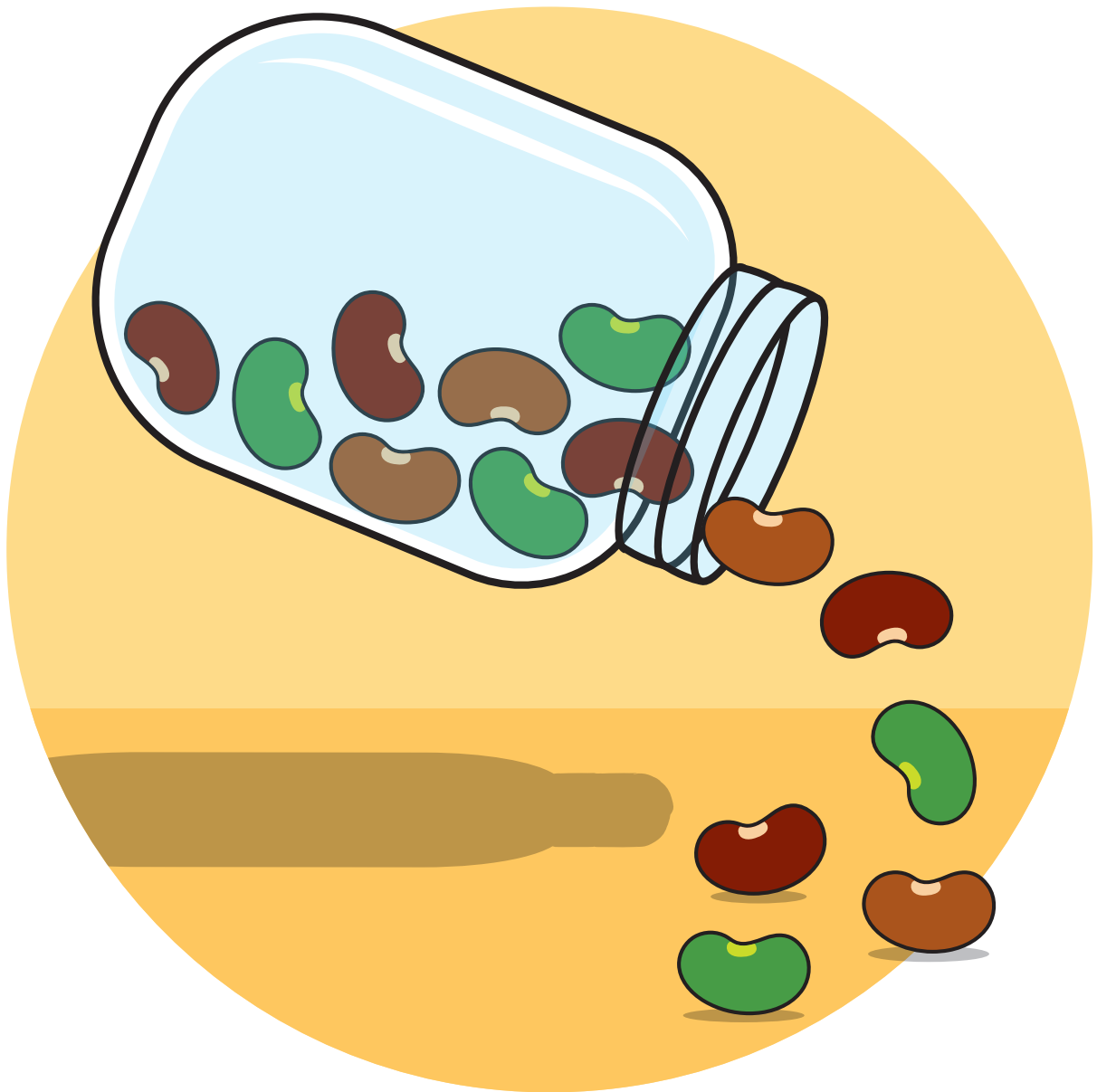
**Feed two birds with one scone**



**MEANING:** Accomplish two things with one action

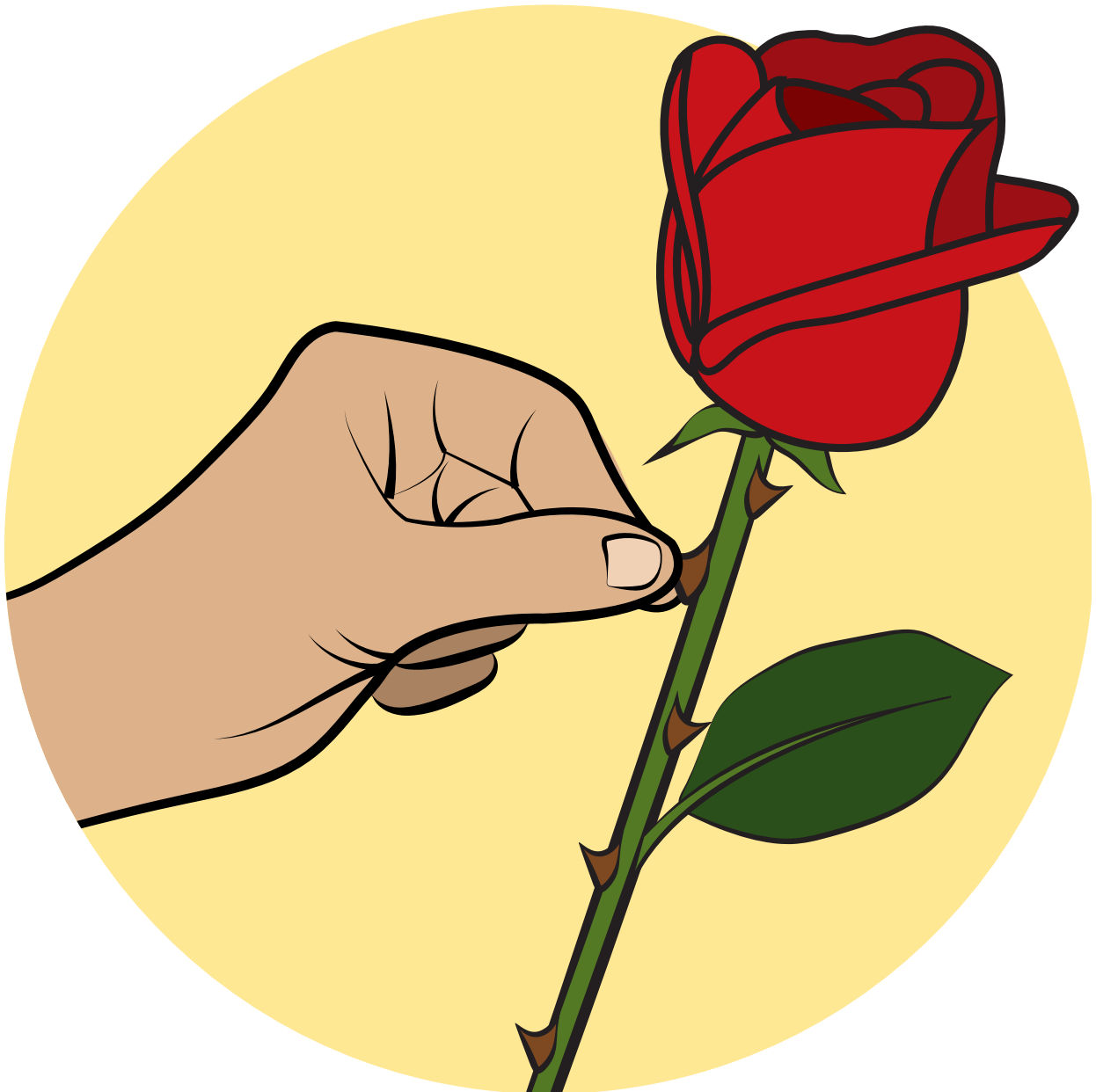
**HARMFUL:** Let the cat out of the bag

**HELPFUL:** Spill the beans



**MEANING:** Tell a secret

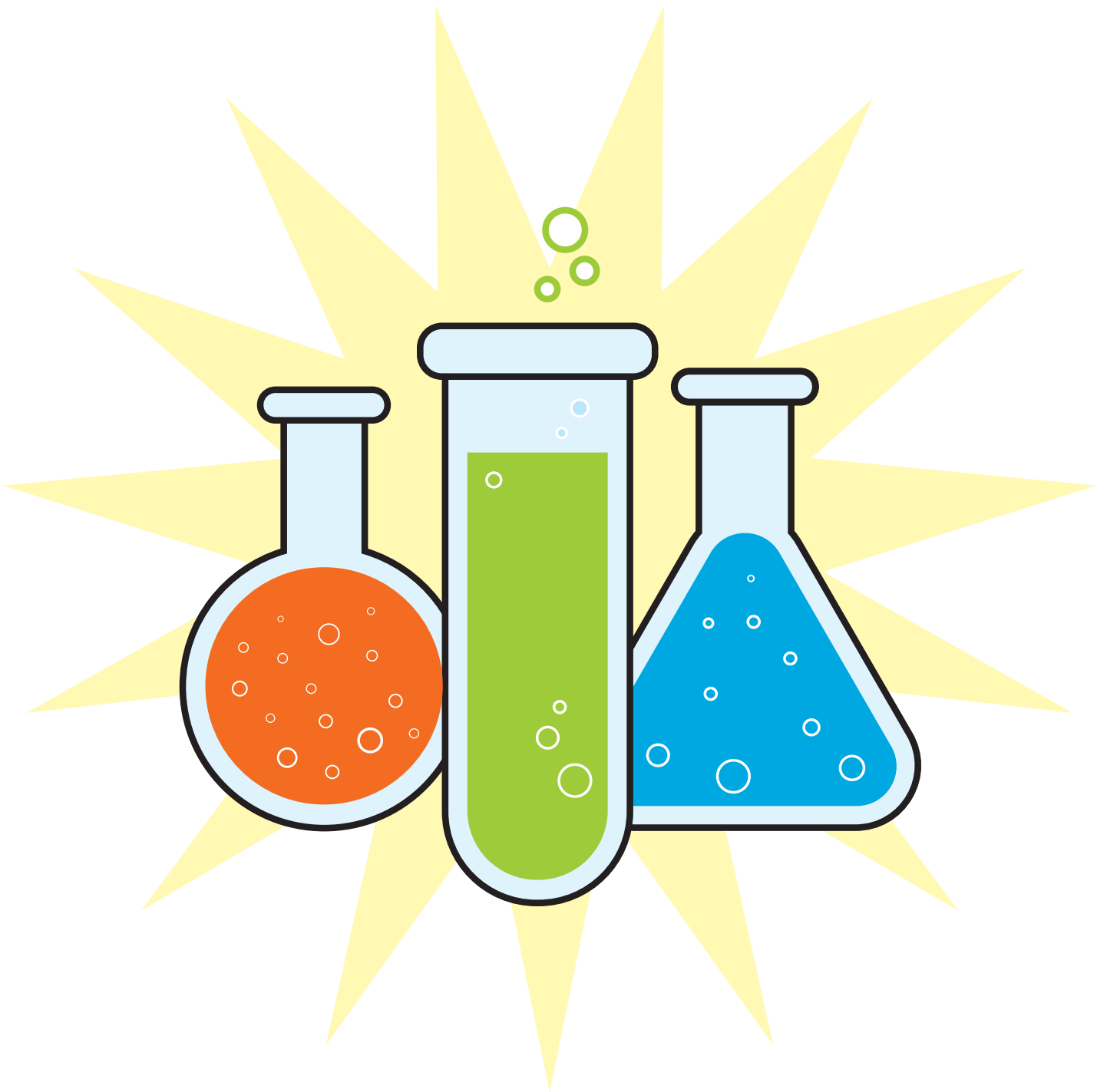
**HARMFUL:** Take the bull by the horns  
**HELPFUL:** Take the flower by the thorns



**MEANING:** Handle a problem fearlessly

**HARMFUL:** Be a guinea pig

**HELPFUL:** Be a test tube



**MEANING:** Be tested on

**HARMFUL:** Hold your horses

**HELPFUL:** Hold the phone



**MEANING:** Wait

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**HARMFUL:** Open a can of worms

**HELPFUL:** Open Pandora's box



**MEANING:** Create a situation that will cause problems



**HARMFUL:** Bring home the bacon

**HELPFUL:** Bring home the bagels



**MEANING:** Make a living

**HARMFUL:** Beat a dead horse

**HELPFUL:** Feed a fed horse

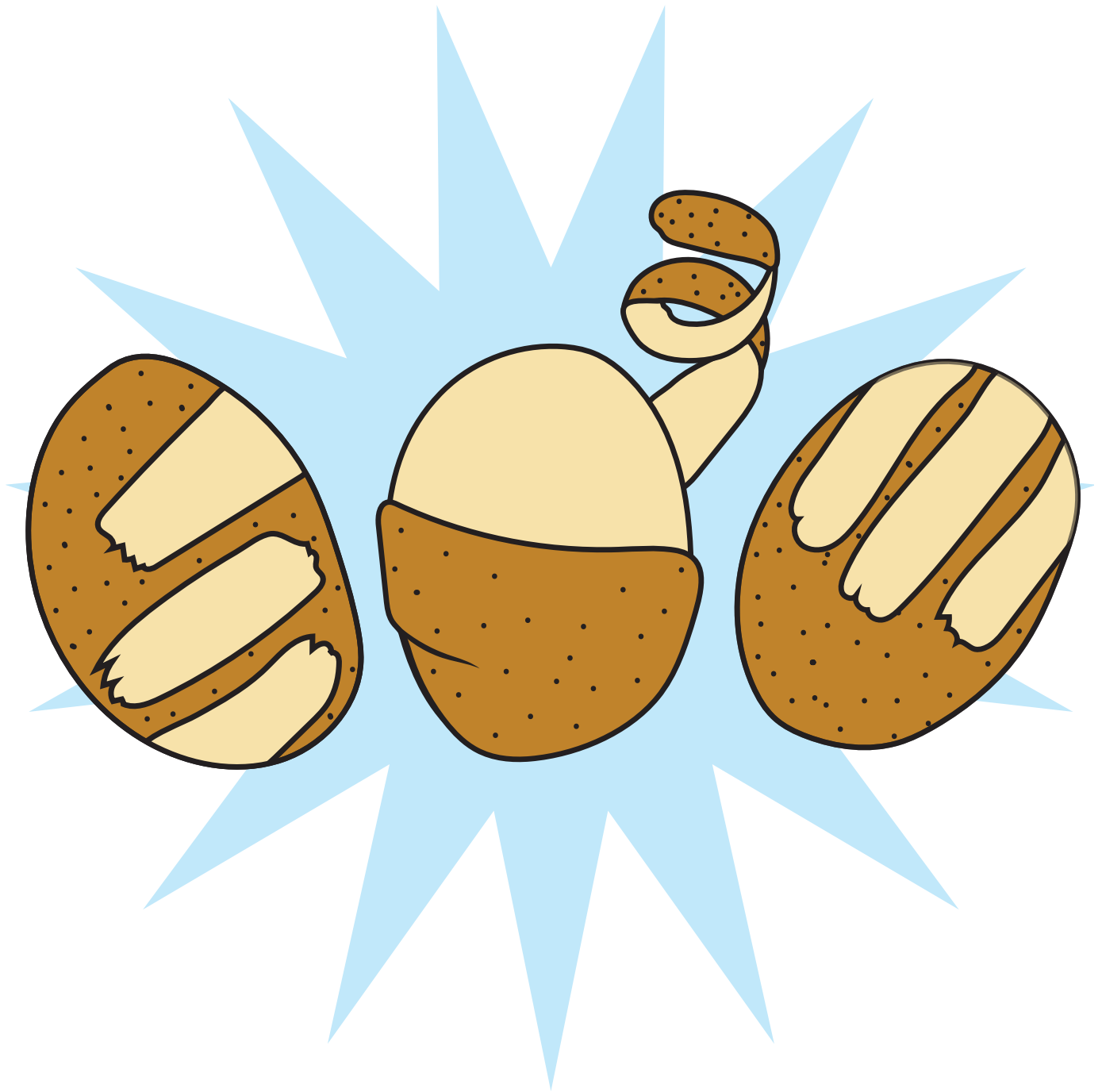


**MEANING:** Try to make something happen that has no chance of happening.

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**HARMFUL:** More than one way to skin a cat

**HELPFUL:** More than one way to peel a potato

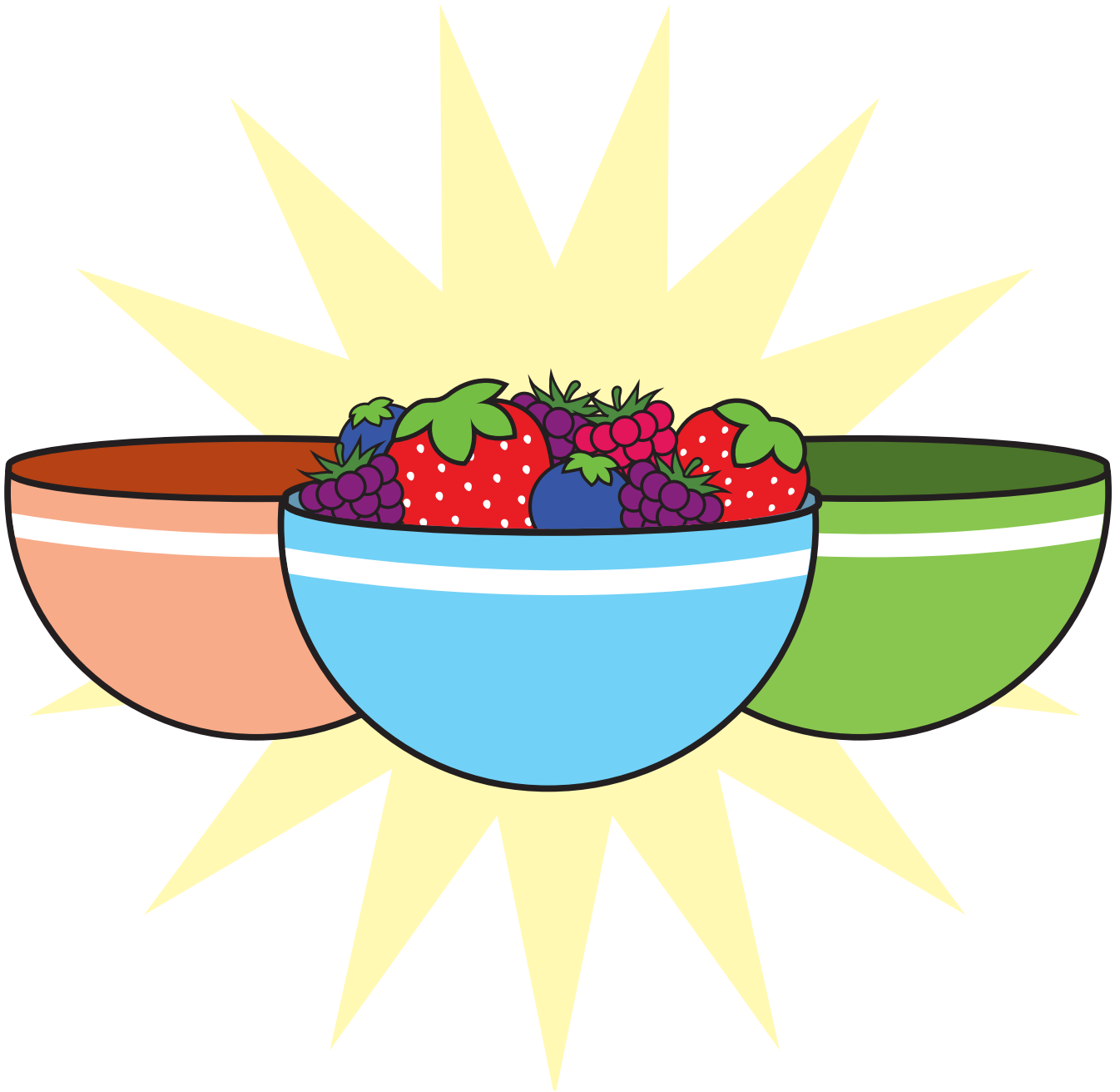


**MEANING:** More than one way to complete a task

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**HARMFUL:** Put all your eggs in one basket

**HELPFUL:** Put all your berries in one bowl



**MEANING:** Bet everything on one possibility

**HARMFUL:** Cry over spilled milk

**HELPFUL:** Cry over burnt toast

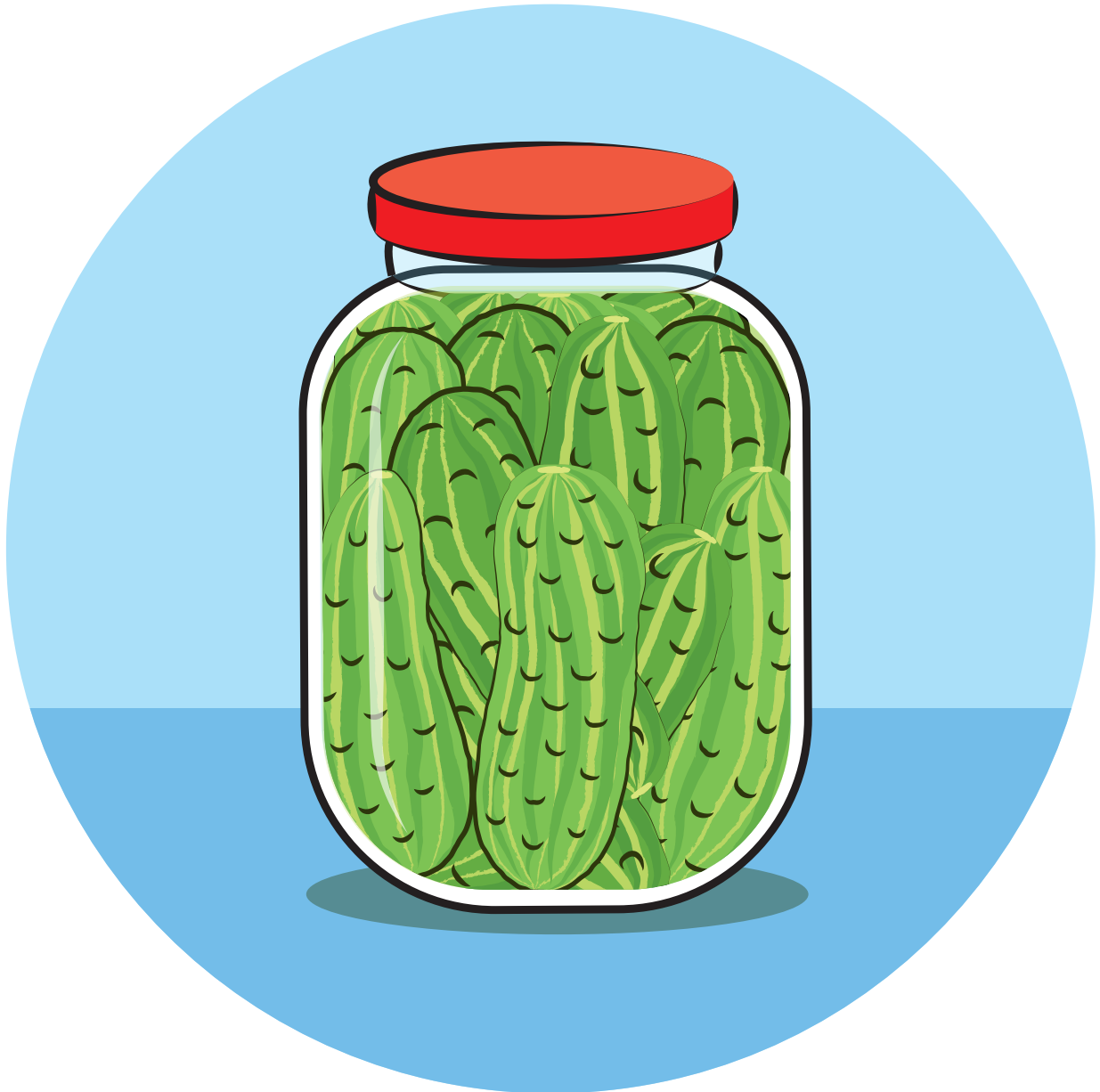


**MEANING:** Be upset about something that has already happened and can't be changed

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**HARMFUL:** Packed in like sardines

**HELPFUL:** Packed in like pickles



**MEANING:** Squeezed tightly together

**HARMFUL:** On a wild goose chase

**HELPFUL:** Out chasing rainbows

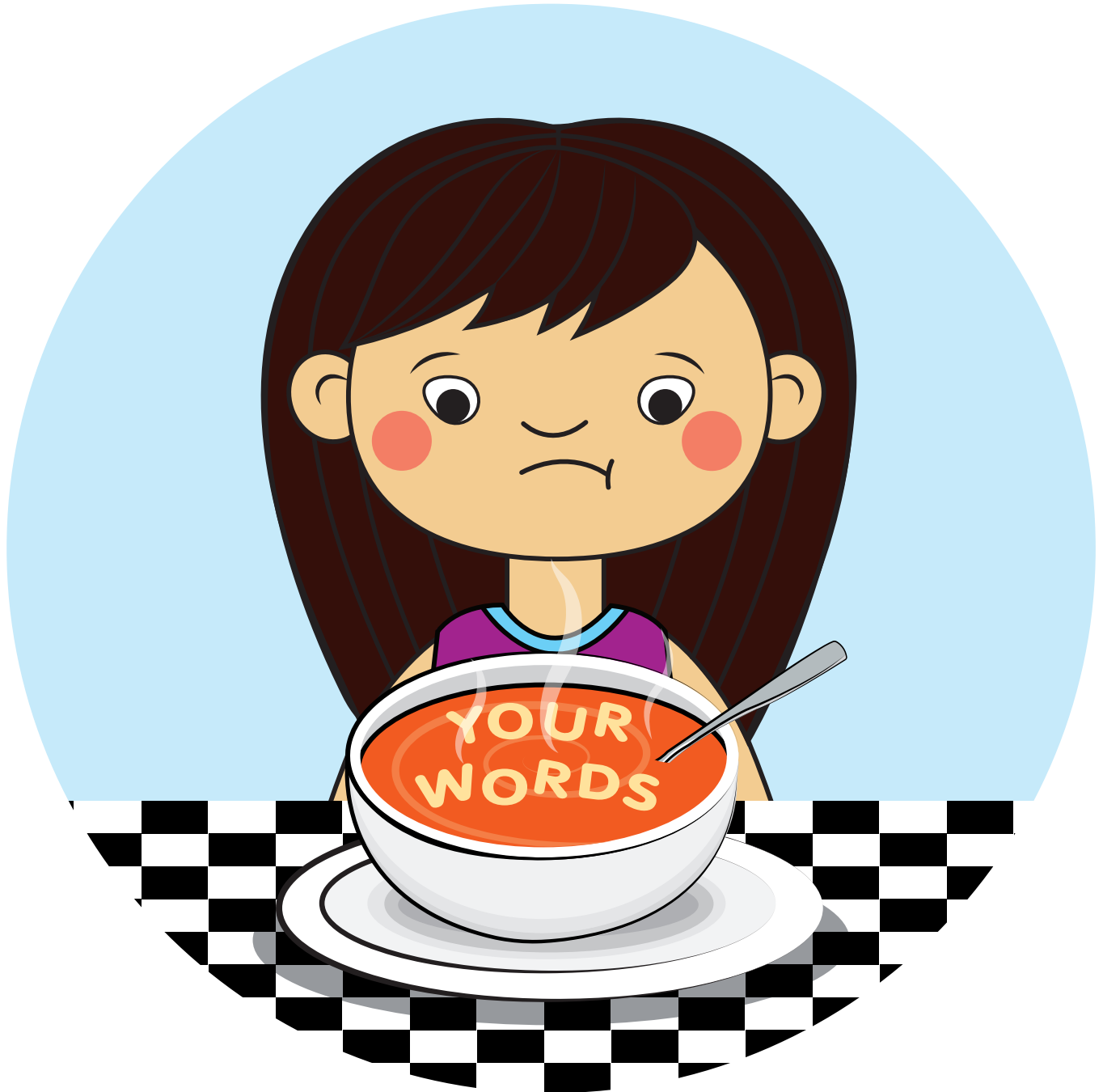


**MEANING:** Looking everywhere for something that can't be found

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**HARMFUL:** Eat crow

**HELPFUL:** Eat your words

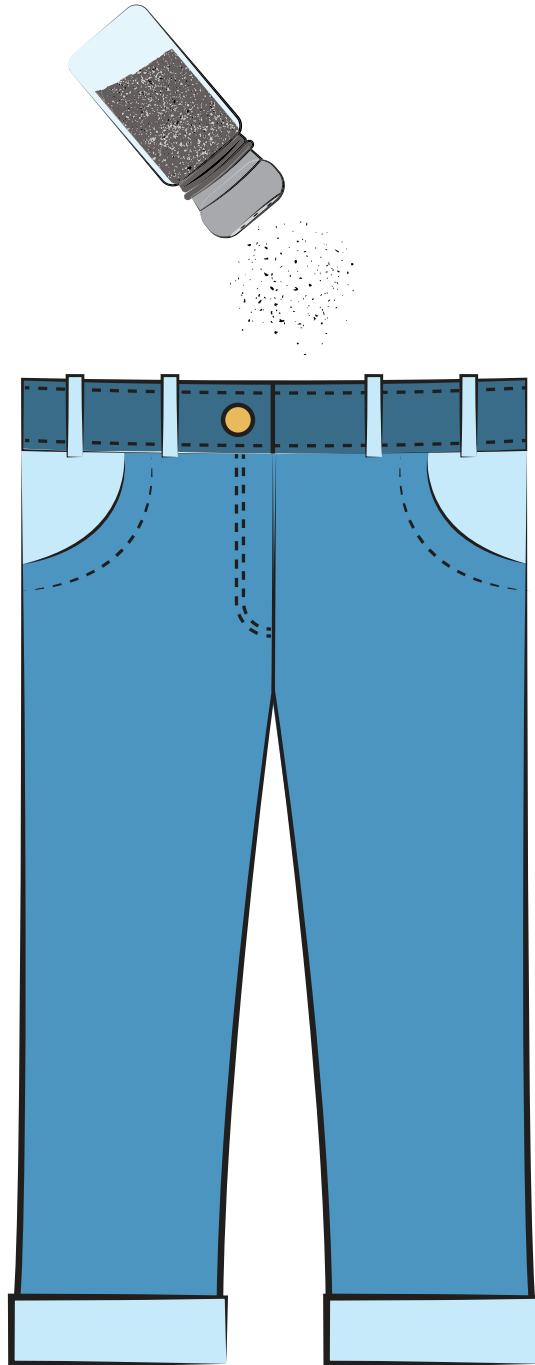


**MEANING:** Admit to being wrong



**HARMFUL:** Ants in your pants

**HELPFUL:** Pepper in your pants



**MEANING:** Inability to sit still

**HARMFUL:** Walk on eggshells  
**HELPFUL:** Walk on broken glass



**MEANING:** Be careful not to offend someone

**HARMFUL:**

Run around like a chicken with its head cut off

**HELPFUL:**

Run around like a clock with no hands



**MEANING:** Run around in a frantic, distracted manner

**HARMFUL:**

Have bigger fish to fry

**HELPFUL:**

Have bigger kites to fly



**MEANING:** Have higher priorities to attend to

**HARMFUL:**

**Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.  
Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.**

**HELPFUL:**

**Give people apples and you feed them  
for a day. Teach people to grow apple trees  
and you feed them for a lifetime.**



**MEANING:** Teach people, and you give them invaluable skills that last a lifetime.