

# Popular Thai Idioms & Proverbs - Wisdom with a Thai Twist!

## Opportunities & Success

<b>Thai:</b> น้ำขึ้นให้รีบตัก (Nám khùn hâi rîip tàk)	<b>English:</b> "When the water rises, hurry to scoop it up."	<b>Meaning:</b> Seize opportunities when they arise.
<b>Thai:</b> ได้หน้า ลืมหลัง (Dâai nâa luem lâng)	<b>English:</b> "Gain the front, forget the back."	<b>Meaning:</b> Someone who achieves success but forgets those who helped them.
<b>Thai:</b> ช้า ๆ ได้พร้าเล่มงาม (Cháa cháa dâai práa lêm ngaam)	<b>English:</b> "Slowly, you'll get a beautiful knife."	<b>Meaning:</b> Patience leads to good results.
<b>Thai:</b> กันไว้ดีกว่าแก้ (Gan wái dee gwàa gâe)	<b>English:</b> "Preventing is better than fixing."	<b>Meaning:</b> Prevention is better than cure.

## Life Lessons & Reality

<b>Thai:</b> ชีช้างจับตั๊กแตน (Khîi cháang jàp dták-gà-dtaen)	<b>English:</b> "Riding an elephant to catch a grasshopper."	<b>Meaning:</b> Using excessive effort for a small reward.
<b>Thai:</b> วัวหายล้อมคอก (Wua hâai lóm khôrk)	<b>English:</b> "Losing the cow, then building a fence."	<b>Meaning:</b> Taking action only after a problem has occurred.
<b>Thai:</b> งูกินหาง (Nguu gin hǎang)	<b>English:</b> "The snake eats its own tail."	<b>Meaning:</b> A never-ending cycle of problems.
<b>Thai:</b> น้ำร้อนปลาเป็น น้ำเย็นปลาตาย (Nám rón bplaa bpen, nám yen bplaa dtaai)	<b>English:</b> "Hot water keeps fish alive; cold water kills them."	<b>Meaning:</b> Being too soft on someone can lead to their downfall, while challenges can help them thrive.
<b>Thai:</b> ปลาใหญ่กินปลาเล็ก (Bplaa yài gin bplaa lék)	<b>English:</b> "Big fish eat little fish."	<b>Meaning:</b> The strong dominate the weak.
<b>Thai:</b> เสียน้อยเสียยาก เสียมากเสียง่าย (Sǎa nôi sǎa yâak, sǎa mâak sǎa ngâai)	<b>English:</b> "Losing a little is hard; losing a lot is easy."	<b>Meaning:</b> People often hesitate to spend small amounts wisely, but they easily waste large amounts.

## Social Conduct

<b>Thai:</b> เดินตามผู้ใหญ่หมาไม่กัด (Dooen taam phûu yài mǎa mǎi gát)	<b>English:</b> "Follow the elders, and the dogs won't bite."	<b>Meaning:</b> Listen to experienced people, and you'll stay out of trouble.
<b>Thai:</b> ปิดทองหลังพระ (Bpít tong lǎng prá)	<b>English:</b> "Gilding the back of the Buddha."	<b>Meaning:</b> Doing good deeds without seeking recognition.
<b>Thai:</b> น้ำพึ่งเรือ เสือพึ่งป่า (Nám pèung ruea, sǔea pèung bpàa)	<b>English:</b> "Water depends on boats, tigers depend on the forest."	<b>Meaning:</b> Everyone depends on something or someone.

---

## Caution & Wisdom

<b>Thai:</b> รู้หน้าไม่รู้ใจ (Rúu nǎa mǎi rúu jai)	<b>English:</b> "You know a person's face, but not their heart."	<b>Meaning:</b> You can't judge a person's true intentions just by their appearance.
<b>Thai:</b> กันไว้ดีกว่าแก้ แก้ไขดีกว่าเสียใจ (Kan wái dee gwàa gâe, gâe khǎi dee gwàa sǎa jai)	<b>English:</b> "Preventing is better than fixing; fixing is better than regretting."	<b>Meaning:</b> It's always better to take precautions and fix problems before they become worse.
<b>Thai:</b> เข้าตามตรอก ออกตามประตู (Khǎo taam tròk òrk taam prà-dtuu)	<b>English:</b> "Enter through the alley, leave through the door."	<b>Meaning:</b> Follow proper procedures and etiquette in everything you do.
<b>Thai:</b> สืซอไห่ควายฟัง (Sii sor hǎi khwaai fang)	<b>English:</b> "Playing the violin for a buffalo."	<b>Meaning:</b> Wasting wisdom on someone who won't appreciate it.

---

## Crude but Clever – My personal favorite!

**Thai:** จับขี้ดีกว่าจับตด (Jàp khǐi dii gwàa jàp dtòt)

**English:** "Better to grab shit than to grab a fart."

**Meaning:** It's better to deal with a real (even nasty) problem than chase something vague and invisible.

## Love & Relationships

<b>Thai:</b> วัวแก่กินหญ้าอ่อน (Wua gàe gin yâa òn)	<b>English:</b> "An old cow eating young grass."	<b>Meaning:</b> An older person dating someone much younger.
<b>Thai:</b> รักวัวให้ผูก รักลูกให้ดี (Rák wua hâi pùuk, rák lûuk hâi dtii)	<b>English:</b> "If you love your cow, tie it; if you love your child, discipline them."	<b>Meaning:</b> Love requires responsibility and discipline.

---

## Cunning & Deception

<b>Thai:</b> ตีงูให้หลังหัก (Dtii ngu hâi lǎng hâk)	<b>English:</b> "Hit the snake until its back is broken."	<b>Meaning:</b> If you take action against an enemy, do it thoroughly so they can't strike back.
<b>Thai:</b> จับปลาสองมือ (Jàp bplaa sǎawng mue)	<b>English:</b> "Catching fish with two hands."	<b>Meaning:</b> Trying to do too many things at once may lead to failure.
<b>Thai:</b> ตีนถีบปากกัด (Dtiiin thîp bpàak gát)	<b>English:</b> "Kicking with your feet while biting with your mouth."	<b>Meaning:</b> Doing everything possible to survive or fight back.
<b>Thai:</b> ตำนานพริกละลายแม่น้ำ (Dtam nám prík là-laai mâe nám)	<b>English:</b> "Pounding chili paste and throwing it into the river."	<b>Meaning:</b> Wasting time and resources on something useless.

---

Curated by *Thrive in Thailand*

A playful yet practical guide to Thai Wisdom

[www.ThriveInThailand.com](http://www.ThriveInThailand.com)

