

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

## Opportunities & Success

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

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## Love & Relationships

Thai	Transliteration	Literal Meaning	Interpretation
วัวแก่กินหญ้าอ่อน	Wua gâe gin yâa òn	<i>"An old cow eating young grass."</i>	An older person dating someone much younger.
รักวัวให้ผูก รักลูกให้ตี	Rák wua hâi pùuk, rák lûuk hâi dtii	<i>"If you love your cow, tie it; if you love your child, discipline them."</i>	Love requires responsibility and discipline.

## Life Lessons & Reality

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

## Crude but Clever – My personal favorite!

Thai	Transliteration	Literal Meaning	Interpretation
จับดีดีกว่าจับตด	Jàp khîi dii gwàa jàp dtòt	<i>"Better to grab shit than to grab a fart."</i>	It's better to deal with a real (even nasty) problem than chase something vague and invisible.

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## Social Conduct

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

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## Caution & Wisdom

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

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## Cunning & Deception

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

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