

16 International Idioms That Describe Heavy Rain - Mental Floss



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Maybe you've heard about Hurricane Sandy. (In case you haven't, check out [The Weather Channel's live coverage](#).) The so-called Frankenstorm is expected to drop a few tons of water on the East Coast, which got us thinking: what do non-English-speaking people say when it's raining cats and dogs? Here are 16 idioms that mean "heavy rain" from around the world.

1. Argentina: "It's raining dung head-first."

In Spanish: *Esta lloviendo caen soretes de punta.*

2. China Hong Kong: "Dog poo is falling."

In Cantonese: 落狗屎

3. Denmark: "It's raining cobbler boys," or "raining shoemakers' apprentices."

In Danish: *Det regner skomagerdrenge.*

4. France: "It's raining like a pissing cow."

In French: *Il pleut comme vache qui pisse.*

5. Faroe Islands: “It’s raining pilot whales.”

In Faroese: *Tað regnar av grind.*

6. Finland: The direct translation (apparently) is “It’s raining as from Esteri’s ass,” but a better interpretation is “**It’s raining like Esther sucks,**” which can be used for both rain and snow. The origin is disputed here, but the phrase comes either from an old brand of water pumps used by firemen, or a goddess Esteri who has mostly disappeared from history except for in this idiom. (Anyone have additional info on this story?)

In Finnish: *Sataa kuin Esterin perseestä.*

7. Germany: “It’s raining puppies.”

In German: *Es regnet junge Hunde.*

8. Greece: “It’s raining chair legs.”

In Greek: *Rixnei kareklopodara.* (βρέχει καρεκλοπόδαρα)

9. Ireland: “It’s throwing cobblers’ knives.”

In Irish: *Tá sé ag caitheamh sceana gréasaí.*

10. The Netherlands: “It’s raining old women,” and “It’s raining pipestems.”

In Dutch: *Het regent oude wijven* and *Het regent pijpestelen.*

11. Norway: “It’s raining troll women,” or “It’s raining witches.”

In Norwegian: *Det regner trollkjerringer.*

12. Poland, France, Romania: “It’s raining frogs.”

In Polish: *Pada żabami.*

In French: *Il pleut des grenouilles.*

In Romanian: *Plouă cu broaște.*

13. Portugal, Brazil, and other Portuguese-speaking countries: “It’s raining pocketknives,” and “It’s raining frogs’ beards.”

In Portuguese: *Está chovendo canivetes* or *Está chovendo barba de sapo.*

14. Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia: “The rain kills the mice.”

In Serbian: *Pada kiša, ubi miša.* (Пада киша уби миша)

15. Slovakia, Czech Republic: “Tractors are falling.”

In Slovak: *Padajú traktory.*

16. South Africa and Namibia: “It’s raining old women with clubs.”

In Afrikaans: *Ou vrouens met knopkieries reen.*

If you’re curious where the phrase “raining cats and dogs” comes from, add your name to the list. Some think it originated in the 1500s, when roofs were commonly thatched. A downpour could send stray pets pummeling through rooftops. A less whimsical origin story notes that drainage systems in the 17th century were pretty substandard compared to today’s models; when the rain came in buckets, gutters would release whatever animal corpses were stuck in there since the last rain, including birds and rats. And yet another idea is that the phrase is a corruption of either the Old French word for waterfall, *catadupe*, or the Greek *kata doska*, meaning “contrary to expectation.” Whatever the source, if you’re in Sandy’s path, keep safe!

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