

Here are some common fixed phrases that express **failure** of one sort or another. As with many other unpleasant subjects, people often prefer not to refer to failure directly. Note that these expressions also make it possible to emphasize the seriousness of the failure, or to make light of it. Check out the panel on **success** to find phrases with the opposite meaning.

**to fail**

go down like a lead balloon  
have had your chips  
bite the dust  
come to grief  
go up in smoke  
go to the wall  
go down the drain

draw a blank  
come a cropper  
fall flat  
miss the mark  
fall between two stools  
come unstuck

**to cause your own failure**

blow it (*slang*)  
blow your chance  
fluff it  
make a muck of something  
miss the boat

burn your boats  
sign your own death warrant  
dig your own grave  
make a pig's ear of something  
score an own goal

**to be doomed to failure**

not have a hope in hell  
not have a cat in hell's chance  
be a dead duck  
not have a ghost of a chance

be fighting a losing battle  
not have a snowball's chance in hell  
be a non-starter