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Idioms and Phrases



The rules for Idioms and phrases are frequently the same.

Idioms, in general, demonstrate human behaviour, reaction to certain things, habits, and traditions. An idiom is a group of words that, when used together, produces a meaning that is entirely different from the meaning of each word when used individually.

To explain phrases, think of them as the inverse of idioms. This means that idioms and phrases can be used interchangeably and in conjunction with one another.

Idioms and phrases are literal terms that imply a meaning that would otherwise be hidden behind the words themselves.

- They have a cultural value that is attached to them.
- They are metaphorical in the sense that extracting the literal meaning of all the words stated would be too unusual to believe, if not farcical.
- Idioms and phrases can add flavour to boring prose or book, and authors use them to add something interesting or remove monotones from their writing.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IDIOMS AND PHRASES

The difference is that in an idiom, the meaning is derived from common usage. A phrase, on the other hand, is a small group of words that, when taken together, has some meaning.

Idioms

Understand With Example



- **Being comfortable in one's skin:**

If you take the literal meaning, it would be impossible to explain.

However, the actual meaning here is: 'the feeling of being at ease with yourself.'

One's skin refers to one's own skin, or, to put it another way, 'yourself.'

- **Beat around the bush:**

This idiom does not mean to take a bat and beat the bush, but rather to discuss everything surrounding the topic while attempting to ignore or avoid the main topic, the person, or a specific thing

Phrases

Understand With Example



- Deep down—deeper feelings
- Group of men and women—a group of men and group of women
- Challenge of imagination—challenging to be imaginative
- Latin and Greek—some strange meaning

Tips and tricks and shortcuts for idioms and phrases

We have some tips and tricks for idioms and phrases that will help you with the questions, but first, let's start with the definition.

Idioms are the collections of words and phrases that have a figurative meaning. They are mostly used in the text's linguistic sections. A phrase is defined as a small group of words that form



one unit and are spoken or written as such. Phrases are not like idioms in that they are to the point and provide direct meaning.

Tip 1:

Understand the idioms and phrases and do not limit yourself to meaning alone

Tip 2:

Try to relate the idiom and phrase with visual and real image

Tip 3:

Do not try to merge it at once or learn many idioms and phrases.

Some key points to improve your cache of idioms and phrases for their more flowing use are:

1. Continuous reading

Reading as many books as possible is the only way to gain expertise and to acclimatise with the use of idioms and phrases in daily life. Reading not only entertains us but is also a great way to exercise our brain.

2. Understand the meaning of each idiom and phrase

The next step is to not only learn new idioms and phrases, but also to comprehend their

List of idioms and phrases

1. A blessing in disguise: When a misfortune turns into a blessing
2. A dime a dozen: A very common, regular thing which is not unique
3. A piece of cake: Something elementary in nature which is easy to do
4. Above water: Free of trouble or difficulty, generally used for financial terms
5. Accident of birth: When one gets lucky because of the family or place one was born in
6. Accident waiting to happen: When any action is obvious to create trouble or mishap
7. According to Hoyle: Doing something by sticking to the procedures/or the certain way it was supposed to happen
8. Ace in the hole: An advantage which is hidden
9. Ace up one's sleeve: A surprising advantage that nobody is aware of
10. Achilles' heel: One weak spot of a powerful person, that can be lethal

meaning by investigating their origin and the context in which they are commonly used.

3. Avoid cramming

Avoid learning too many idioms at once by focusing on understanding the basic concept behind that particular idiom or word.

One should limit oneself to 6-7 phrases per day. However, one can categorise idioms with similar meanings/or themes and memorise them section or theme-wise.

4. Using visual imagination

The final and most important tip is to use our visual imagination because the origins of the majority of the idioms are fascinating. One should not only investigate the origins of these items but also relate them to specific images and link them to specific stores. This is the most effective method for memorising a wide range of idioms and phrases.

Jot down the ready reckoners (most commonly used Idioms and words) for revision:

Another simple way to gain expertise in understanding such questions is to make a list of commonly used idioms, words, or phrases, along with their respective meanings, and revise them on a regular basis.



11. Acid test: A way of testing the worthiness of something
12. Acknowledge the corn: To admit one's mistake, even if it's not of major significance
13. Acquired taste: When one learns to appreciate something, on a frequent/regular use of it
14. Across the board: It denotes all the categories, types or people
15. Across the pond: On or to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean
16. Act high and mighty: To believe oneself to be better than the rest
17. Act of Congress: Hard to get, said of authorisation
18. Act one's age: Used for a mature person acting childishly to act maturely
19. Actions speak louder than words: The intentions of a person are more expressed through his actions, not just words
20. Add fuel to the fire: To worsen the existing tension
21. Add insult to injury: Ridiculing a person who is already injured.
22. After one's own heart: To like or dislike similar to one's own
23. After the fact: After something is finalised, when it's too late
24. After the lord mayor's show (UK): Anticlimactic, occurring after something impressive
25. At daggers drawn: To be extremely hostile to each other
26. Bark up the wrong tree: To have a wrong idea about something
27. Be in touch: To communicate via call or text each other
28. Beat around the bush: Avoid sharing your true viewpoint or feelings because it is uncomfortable
29. Beating a dead horse: Giving time or energy to something that has ended or over
30. Best of both worlds: To enjoy the advantages of two contrasting things at the same moment
31. Between the devil and the deep blue sea: In a very tough situation
32. Bite the bullet: To get an unfavourable situation or chore over with now because it will need to get finished eventually
33. Biting off more than you can chew: To take over an assignment or a task which is out of your capacity
34. Break a leg: is to wish luck (often said to actors before they go on stage)
35. Burn the candle at both ends: To overwork yourself until you're exhausted
36. By the skin of your teeth: To barely make it through
37. Call a spade a spade: To express frankly about what you see
38. Call it a day: Stop working on something
39. Can't make an omelette without breaking some eggs: You can't make everyone happy
40. Caught between a rock and a hard place: Making a choice between two unpleasant choices.
41. Clouds on the horizon: Trouble is coming or is on its way
42. Costs an arm and a leg: Something that is overpriced or very expensive
43. Cry for the moon: Ask for something impossible
44. Devil's advocate: To take the side of the counter-argument, or offer an alternative point of view
45. Doing something at the drop of a hat: Doing something at the moment of being asked
46. Don't count your chickens before they hatch: Not to count on something happening until after it has already happened
47. Don't judge a book by its cover: Not judging something by its initial appearance
48. Fall on your sword: To resign or get out of a project after failing
49. Feeling under the weather: To feel sick
50. Fit as a fiddle: To be fit and healthy
51. Get off of work: To get done or finish your work/shift
52. Getting a second wind: To become energetic again after a tiring phase
53. Getting a taste of your own medicine: To get treated the same way you treated others
54. Gift of the gab: Remarkable oratory skill.



- 55.** Giving someone the cold shoulder: Snubbing someone
- 56.** Giving the benefit of the doubt: To believe a baseless story even though it seems unbelievable
- 57.** Going on a wild goose chase: Doing a pointless task
- 58.** Harbinger of doom: A sign that something bad is about to happen
- 59.** Hat in hand: To beg for favour from someone
- 60.** Have your heart in your mouth: To be very frightened and scared
- 61.** Heard it on the Grapevine: To hear a rumour
- 62.** Hit the road: To leave
- 63.** Hitting the nail on the head: To perform a task to its exactness
- 64.** In hot water: In serious difficulty
- 65.** Killing two birds with one stone: To accomplish two tasks by one action
- 66.** Laugh like a drain: To laugh coarsely
- 67.** Let someone off the hook: To allow someone, who has been caught, to not be punished.
- 68.** Let the cat out of the bag: To accidentally reveal a secret.
- 69.** Letting someone off the hook: To not holding someone responsible for something
- 70.** Make a long story short: To explain something in brevity
- 71.** No pain, no gain: Means that you have to do the hard work to achieve something worthwhile
- 72.** On the ball: To do a great job, being prompt, or being responsible
- 73.** Once in a blue moon: An event that happens not very frequently
- 74.** Out of the woods: To be safeguarded from
- 75.** Pulling someone's leg: Joking with someone
- 76.** See eye to eye: To accept something
- 77.** Sitting on the fence: To avoid decision-making
- 78.** Speak of the Devil: The person who you were talking about arrives
- 79.** Spitting image: A perfect resemblance
- 80.** Stealing someone's thunder: Stealing someone else's credit for work
- 81.** Straight from the horse's mouth: Hearing or reading the content from the original source.
- 82.** Take a leaf out of one's book: To emulate someone
- 83.** Take a powder: To leave quickly
- 84.** The best of both worlds: It means you can enjoy two different opportunities at the same time.
"By working part-time and looking after her kids two days a week she managed to get the best of both worlds."
- 85.** The elephant in the room: An issue, person, or problem that someone is trying to avoid
- 86.** The last straw: The last difficulty or annoyance that makes the entire situation unbearable
- 87.** Throwing caution to the wind: Being reckless or taking a risk
- 88.** To cut corners: To do something badly or cheaply.
- 89.** To hide one's light under a bushel: To be modest about your achievements
- 90.** When pigs fly: Something that will never happen.
- 91.** Wrap your head around something: Understand something that is complicated
- 92.** You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink: You can't force someone to make what is seemingly the right decision
- 93.** You can't judge a book by its cover: To not judge someone or something based solely on their appearance
- 94.** Your guess is as good as mine: To not know something

SOLVED EXAMPLES

One proverb or idiom is mentioned below along with its meaning. Choose the correct meaning of that particular idiom from the given options.

1. All in all
A. Each person
B. Every one
C. Call everyone at the same time
D. Most important

Answer: D

Explanation: All in all, signifies the crux, the minutes of any meeting, or the most important points of any discussion. Hence, option D is the correct one.

2. Add fuel to the flames
A. To burn something
B. To do or say something that makes someone react more strongly
C. To consider something
D. None of the above

Answer: B

Explanation: To add fuel to flames means to over-exaggerate anything that worsens a situation.

3. To smell a rat
A. To see a rat
B. To suspect foul dealings

- C. To find plague in a specific area
D. None of the above

Answer: B

Explanation: To smell a rat means to suspect a nasty dealing or sensing something wrong in a particular situation. This can be better explained with the help of an example given below:

If I don't go to school today, then the teacher will smell a rat.

4. Strike while the iron is hot
A. To beat the hot iron
B. To act promptly when the situation is in favour
C. To alleviate an already tense situation
D. To raise objections

Answer: B

Explanation: It means to take advantage of any opportunity as and when it arises without waiting. It can be better explained with the help of an example:

Sam told Martha, You've got such a great job opportunity. If I were you, then I'd rather strike while the iron is hot.



PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. The shareholder was in news for 'tipping off' the creditors and investors.
A. Bribed
B. Kill someone
C. Given advance information
D. Threatened
2. Alia 'set her face against' the idea of participating in the quiz.
A. To oppose with determination
B. To criticise others
C. To be very angry
D. To victimise someone
3. The psychiatrist could finally 'hit the nail right on the head', in her session today with Arjun on identifying his difficulty understanding his own emotions because of people-pleasing habits.
A. To teach someone a lesson
B. To destroy one's reputation
C. To forget about past
D. To do the right thing
4. He will 'smell a rat' if I keep meeting you post-work hours.
A. To suspect foul dealings
B. To see signs of plague epidemic
C. To get bad smell of a bad dead rat
D. To get something of bad quality
5. It's difficult for Sam to achieve his dreams, 'he is a man of straw'.
A. A very active person
B. A worthy fellow
C. A lonely person
D. A man of no substance
6. He left the band to collaborate with other artists, 'leaving his band in the lurch'.
A. To put someone at ease
B. To come to a compromise with someone
C. To desert someone in his difficulties
D. A constant source of annoyance to someone
7. It is the common practice of the team head 'to pick holes' in the pitch prepared by the Interns in this company.
A. To find some reason to quarrel
B. To cut some part of item
C. To criticise someone
D. To destroy something
8. The best way to start a conversation with a stranger is to ask a general question about their day, or something of common knowledge, even if you have to cry wolf.
A. To turn pale
B. To keep off starvation
C. To give a false alarm
D. None of the above
9. The goon thought I didn't shoot him because I was scared, but he doesn't know yet that he is 'caught in a tartar'.
A. To deal with a person who is more than one's match
B. To catch a dangerous person
C. To meet with disaster
D. None of the above
10. The strategy to get hold of the don is to first expose the illegal business of 'his right-hand man'.
A. An honest person
B. Most efficient assistant
C. A competent and hardworking person
D. A foolish person
11. The director 'fell flat on his face' on receiving such harsh reviews for his film.
A. Very important
B. Fails completely
C. Quarrel
D. Retreat
12. With the discrepancies in the group, it is expected that the 'heads will roll'.
A. Appraising situation
B. Punishment
C. People will die
D. Transfers will take place



- 13.** To avoid future confusion on the specifics of a deal, one must deal 'above board'.
A. To have a high opinion of oneself
B. Hate others
C. To be honest in any deal
D. Indulges in dream
- 14.** The student felt like 'a fish out of the water' for a week in the new school.
A. Homeless
B. Frustrated
C. A sad thing that appears suddenly
D. Painful
- 15.** Samuel's invitation to Tanya at his wedding, after their breakup, felt like 'heaping coals of fire on her head'.
A. To sort out the old from the new
B. To agitate someone
C. To annoy someone very much
D. Put someone to shame
- 16.** In the professional world, everyone must not be gullible to share their own work, people often use it to 'feather their own nest'.
A. To enrich oneself by using one's influence or position or with other people's money.
B. To win a race by a short distance
C. To be shouted at for something one has done
D. To give oneself the courage or strength to do something
- 17.** She demanded a raise because she knew the 'worth of her salt' in the company.
A. To constantly worry about something
B. Competent and deserve
C. To feel physical discomfort because of nervousness
D. To have an edge over other contenders in a competition
- 18.** They 'burnt their fingers' by giving out their bank details to a stranger on the call.
A. To be guarded in your speech
B. To think clearly before taking a decision
C. Got himself into trouble
D. To obstinately stick to your viewpoint.
- 19.** The miserable demeanour of ducks during thunder has been proverbial since the late 18th century. You did look for all the world like 'a dying duck in a thunderstorm'.
A. Something stupid or mad
B. A distressing situation
C. Confused or puzzled
D. Spontaneous
- 20.** Sid 'got cold feet' before checking his all-India Rank in NEET.
A. Very clear about something
B. To lose confidence
C. Wasting of time and money
D. Paying attention to less important issues

SOLUTIONS

- 1. (C)** Given advance information. Tipped off means to give someone a warning or secret information about something.
- 2. (A)** To oppose with determination. The idiomatic expression 'to set one's face against something' means to strongly disapprove of something.
- 3. (D)** To do the right thing means to hit the nail right on the head: to describe exactly what is causing a situation or problem.
- 4. (A)** To suspect foul dealings means to suspect or realise that something is wrong in a particular situation.
- 5. (D)** A man of no substance means a man whose character is weak and who lacks definite beliefs.
- 6. (C)** To desert someone in his difficulties means to abandon or desert someone in difficult straits.
- 7. (C)** To criticise someone means to make



- an effort to find flaws or negative aspects in something through excessive analysis or criticism.
8. **(C)** To give a false alarm means to cry wolf means to ask for assistance when you don't need it.
 9. **(B)** To catch a dangerous person means to deal with someone or something that proves unexpectedly troublesome or powerful.
 10. **(B)** Most efficient assistant means someone's right-hand man or right-hand woman is their close assistant and the person they trust to help and support them in everything they do.
 11. **(B)** Fails completely, 'fall flat on one's face' means to fail completely, especially in an embarrassing way.
 12. **(B)** Punishment, if you say that heads will roll as a result of something bad that has happened, you mean that people will be punished for it, especially by losing their jobs.
 13. **(C)** To be honest in any deal in a straightforward manner: openly
 14. **(A)** Homeless, if you feel like a fish out of water, you do not feel comfortable or relaxed because you are in an unusual or unfamiliar situation.
 15. **(D)** Put someone to shame, if someone felt bad because they forgot to get you a Christmas gift, for you to buy them an especially nice gift is heaping coals on their head.
 16. **(A)** To enrich oneself by using one's influence or position or with other people's money.
 17. **(B)** Competent and deserved. The expression 'to be worth one's salt' means you're competent and deserve what you're earning.
 18. **(C)** Got himself into trouble. The phrase 'to burn one's fingers' means to suffer unpleasant results of an action
 19. **(B)** A dying duck in a thunderstorm. It means a distressing situation where you are dejected and pessimistic.
 20. **(B)** Getting cold feet means losing confidence.