

## MEETING 11

### LISTENING – SHORT CONVERSATION: IDIOMS

#### A. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this meeting, students will learn about idioms in short conversation. At the end of the lesson, students are expected to be able to:

1. understand the meaning of the idioms
2. explain the meaning of the idioms
3. use the idioms in daily conversation

#### B. MATERIAL DESCRIPTION

There are many kinds of idiomatic expressions in English. In TOEFL exams especially, many of the idiomatic expressions are two- or three-word verbs, such as *call off* and *look out for*. Look at the following sample item;

You will hear:

F1 : *I wonder where Mike is.*

M1 : *He'll show up as soon as the work is done, I bet.*

M2 : *What does the man say about Mike?*

You will read:

- (A) He probably won't arrive until the work is finished.
- (B) He went to a show instead of going to work.
- (C) He can show them how to do the work.
- (D) He'll probably work late today.

The correct answer is A. The idiom *show up* means "arrive." Choices (B) and (C) contain the word show, but it is not used in the idiomatic sense.

In most dialogs, the second speaker uses the idiomatic expression. Most questions about this type of dialog are questions about meaning ("What does the man mean?" for example), but some are inference questions or other types of questions. The correct answer often contains a synonym for the idiom (arrive for show up in choice (A) of the Sample Item). Incorrect choices often contain references to the literal meaning of idioms, as in choices (B) and (C).

However, memorizing these phrases does not guarantee that you will recognize all the idiomatic expressions that you will hear in the Listening Comprehension section. There are, after all, thousands of these expressions in English. You must develop "a good ear" for guessing the meaning of idioms. The context of the sentence will help you understand the expression, even if you're unfamiliar with it.

## C. EXERCISES

### PART I.

**Focus:** Recognizing synonyms for idiomatic expressions.

**Directions:** Listen to the spoken statements. Each contains an idiomatic or figurative expression which is written out. First decide which of the two choices best answers the question and mark the appropriate answer, (A) or (B). Then underline the phrase in the correct answer that has the same meaning as the idiom. If necessary, rewind the audio and listen to the exercise again. The first one has been done as an example.

))) Now start the audio.

1. Get into hot water

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) She was in trouble.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) She took a warm bath.

2. Run into

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) He met Caroline unexpectedly at the coffee shop.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) Caroline and I jogged to the coffee shop.

3. Hit it off

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) He and Chuck argued as soon as they met.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He and Chuck quickly became friends.

4. A piece of cake

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) The exam was simple.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) She had a snack after the test.

5. At the top of a hat

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) He can't leave until he finds his hat.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He's ready to leave immediately.

6. On edge

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) He walks back and forth when he's nervous.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He likes to walk along the edge.

7. Under the weather

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) She didn't want to practice because of the bad weather.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) She wasn't there because she felt a little sick.

8. Take after

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) He looks like his grandfather.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He takes care of his grandfather.

9. For good

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) He doesn't want the professor to quit teaching permanently.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He hopes Professor Holmes has a good reason for quitting.

10. give a hand with

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) Hand her the box.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) Help her carry the box.

11. A stone's throw from

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) He likes to throw rocks in the park.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He lives close to the park.

12. Not think much of

\_\_\_\_\_ (A) She didn't consider it.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) She didn't like it.

## PART II

**Focus:** Understanding dialogs involving idiomatic and figurative expressions.

**Directions:** Look over the idiomatic expressions listed before each set of items. If you are unfamiliar with any of the idioms, you may want to look them up in the Mini-Lessons for Section 1 that follow the Listening Comprehension section of this book (pages 81-100). The dialogs each contain one of the listed expressions. Listen to the dialogs and mark the one answer choice, (A) or (B), that best answers the question.

))) Now start the audio.

### Set A

clear up                      get off the ground      hours on end                      over one's head

push one's luck              run off the mill              short for                      turn in

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) He's not sure Max's business will succeed.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He doesn't know where Max has gone.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Gary is lucky to have such a good car.

\_\_\_\_\_ (B) It's time for Gary to get some new tires.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Go to bed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) Watch a different program.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She didn't understand all the jokes.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) She left before the performance was over.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) If the weather gets better.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) If she doesn't have any other plans.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Elizabeth is taller than Liz.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) People call Elizabeth "Liz."
7. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She's stopped listening to it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) She listens to it constantly.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) The service is very fast there.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) It's just an average restaurant.

**SET B**

believe one's eyes    a breeze    chip in    get in one's blood  
lend a hand    look who's talking    music to one's ears    what the doctor ordered

9. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Ice water sounds perfect.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) The doctor told her to drink a lot of water.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Skiing can be a dangerous sport.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) It's easy to get into the habit of skiing.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She enjoys the sound of nature.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) She wishes she'd brought a radio.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She wants to talk to Norman.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) Norman doesn't study much himself.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) There's not enough wind to go sailing today.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) It won't be too hard to learn to sail.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Lend him some money.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) Give him some help.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) They'll all pay for the gasoline.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) Gasoline is very inexpensive.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She doesn't think the man is telling the truth.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) She was surprised to see the snow.

**SET C**

by heart                      call it a day                      come around                      go without saying  
ring a bell                      slowly but surely                      take a lot of nerve                      take into account

17. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She seems too nervous.  
                \_\_\_\_\_ (B) She took a bold approach.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) He doesn't want to do any more painting today.  
                \_\_\_\_\_ (B) He'll phone the woman later today.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She spoke the lines in an emotional way.  
                \_\_\_\_\_ (B) She's memorized all the lines
20. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) At some point, they'll agree to let her go.  
                \_\_\_\_\_ (B) They'll come with her to Alaska.
21. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Rob Martin hasn't called him yet.  
                \_\_\_\_\_ (B) He doesn't think Rob Martin was on the team.
22. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) He didn't count his money carefully.  
                \_\_\_\_\_ (B) He forgot about the tax.
23. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She's making steady progress.  
                \_\_\_\_\_ (B) She thinks the work is going too slowly.
24. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Of course she was sorry that Molly left.  
                \_\_\_\_\_ (B) Molly left without saying goodbye.

**PART III**

**Focus:** Using the context of dialogs to understand the meaning of idioms.

**Directions:** Listen to the following dialog. Decide which of the choices (A), (B), or (C) that best answers the question about the dialog and mark the appropriate answer.

))) Now start the audio.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Go to work with Jim.  
                \_\_\_\_\_ (B) Go out for coffee.  
                \_\_\_\_\_ (C) Get some exercise.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) If the woman will go to the party with him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) If the red tie looks good with his shirt.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) If he should wear a tie to the party.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She missed Friday's class, too.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) They both missed class because they went sailing.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) He should take better notes during Professor Morrison's class.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) He cut himself while he was preparing food.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He doesn't want to work in a restaurant.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) He's planning to open up his own restaurant.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) He wants to know if the woman is joking.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He wants the woman to leave him alone.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) He'd like to know what the quiz will be about.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) The program was canceled.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) The shuttle was launched yesterday.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) The launch was delayed.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She stood up and left the lecture.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) She was waiting outside the lecture hall.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) Her sweater made her easy to spot.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) He deserved to get a ticket.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He was going to a good restaurant.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) He probably wasn't speeding.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) He'll be glad to help.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) If he helps, it will save the man some money.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) He won't be very cooperative.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) It's about buying large real estate properties.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) There are too many students in his class.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) In general, he likes his real estate class.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) The man didn't get Jill a watch.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) The weather will be cool on graduation day.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) Jill won't be graduating.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She ordinarily works in a florist shop.

- \_\_\_\_\_ (B) In the end, she won't have a problem.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) She wears too much perfume to work.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She doesn't want any fruit.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) She doesn't want to celebrate her birthday.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) She doesn't like candy.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) He doesn't have any questions for her.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He won't be able to take a trip.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) He can't study during spring break.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Mick's father told him to go to medical school.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) Mick's father studied medicine.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) Mick and his father walked to the school.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) Fred would be upset if he'd lost money.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) Fred shouldn't be paid for singing.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) Fred is generally very sympathetic.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) If Wally has been injured.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) If Wally has been informed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) If Wally's trip has been canceled.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) He can't find some of his pictures.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) He didn't go to the Grand Canyon.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) Not all of his photos were good.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) She thinks they're certain to do well.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) She thinks they're talented but lack experience.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) She doesn't like their style of photography.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ (A) The lake is not very scenic.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (B) Her parents won't let them use the cabin.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (C) The cabin is not luxurious.

#### PART IV

**Exercise:** Fill in the blanks in the sentences or dialogs with idioms from the list below. There will be one word per blank. It may be necessary to change the verb forms in order for the sentence to be grammatically correct.

<p><b>about to</b> : almost ready to</p> <p><b>above all</b> : most importantly</p> <p><b>add up</b> : make sense; be logical</p> <p><b>all at once</b> : suddenly; without warning</p> <p><b>all of a sudden</b> : all at once; suddenly</p> <p><b>as a matter of fact</b> : in reality; actually</p> <p><b>as a rule</b> : generally; customarily</p> <p><b>at ease</b> : not nervous; calm</p> <p><b>at the drop of a hat</b> : quickly; without any preparation time</p> <p><b>back out (of)</b> : withdraw an offer</p> <p><b>bank on</b> : depend on; count on</p> <p><b>be my guest</b> : do what you want; feel free; help yourself</p> <p><b>be rusty</b> : need practice or review</p> <p><b>beats me</b> : I don't know; I have no idea (often used in response to a question)</p> <p><b>better off</b> : in an improved condition.</p> <p><b>bite off</b> : more than one can chew take on more responsibility than one can handle</p> <p><b>bound to</b> : certain to; sure to</p> <p><b>break down</b> : stop functioning (a machine, for example)</p>	<p><b>break in (on)</b> : interrupt</p> <p><b>break the ice</b> : break through social barriers (as at a party)</p> <p><b>break the news (to)</b> : inform; give bad news</p> <p><b>break up</b> : end (a meeting, for example)</p> <p><b>break up (with)</b> : stop being a couple (a boyfriend and girlfriend, for example)</p> <p><b>a breeze</b> : something very simple and easy to do</p> <p><b>bring about</b> : cause to happen</p> <p><b>bring up</b> : raise (a child), introduce (a topic, for example)</p> <p><b>brush up on</b> : review; study; practice</p> <p><b>bump into</b> : meet unexpectedly; run into</p> <p><b>by and large</b> : mostly; generally; on the whole</p> <p><b>by heart</b> : by memory; learned word for word</p> <p><b>by no means</b> : in no way; not at all</p>
--	---

- "Can you talk now?"  
"No, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ go to the grocery store, but I'll call you as soon as I get back."
- "You're probably too tired to play another game of racquetball, right?"  
"I'm not that tired, really. \_\_\_\_\_ I'd enjoy another game."
- "Will you support my proposal at the meeting?"  
"Certainly. You can \_\_\_\_\_ my support."
- I was talking to my aunt when suddenly my cousin George Ann \_\_\_\_\_ our conversation.
- "I understand Diane lost her job."



- "Yes, but she's actually \_\_\_\_\_. She found a more interesting job with a higher salary."
6. \_\_\_\_\_, Carlos is very punctual, but he sure was late tonight.
7. My car \_\_\_\_\_ last week, and I had to take the bus to work until it was repaired.
8. I was taking a quiet walk last night when, \_\_\_\_\_, there was a loud explosion.
9. Kent is \_\_\_\_\_ fail that class if he doesn't start studying.
10. They \_\_\_\_\_ their children to be honest.
11. There were a few things I didn't like about Professor Wong's class, but \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoyed it.
12. "I think Matthew was cheating on that quiz."  
"That doesn't \_\_\_\_\_. Why should the best student in the class cheat?"
13. "Can I have another sandwich?"  
"Sure, \_\_\_\_\_. I made plenty."
14. Actors and actresses must know their lines \_\_\_\_\_
15. If you don't want to talk about this problem, why did you \_\_\_\_\_ it \_\_\_\_\_?
16. Many accidents are \_\_\_\_\_ by carelessness.
17. Their team won the game, but they \_\_\_\_\_ dominated it. It was a very close game.
18. "What a boring party. No one is talking to one another."  
"Maybe we should put on some music and start dancing. That might \_\_\_\_\_."
19. "Have you studied Spanish before?"  
"Yes, but it's been years since I took a Spanish class, so I'll need to \_\_\_\_\_ it before I go to Venezuela."
20. "You're taking five classes this term?"  
"Yes, and I'm having trouble getting caught up. I'm afraid I \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_ this time."
21. "You're all packed and ready to go, I see."  
"I could leave \_\_\_\_\_."

22. "Do you know what the name of this street is?"  
"\_\_\_\_\_. This is the first time I've ever been in this town."
23. "How's that biology class you're taking?"  
"So far, it's been \_\_\_\_\_. We've just been going over things I studied last semester."
24. "What time did the party \_\_\_\_\_ last night?"  
"I don't know. It was still going on when I went home."
25. "I was awfully nervous when I gave that speech."  
"Really? You hid it well. I thought you were completely \_\_\_\_\_."

#### **D. REFERENCES**

Rogers, Bruce. 2011. *The Complete Guide to the TOEFL Test PBT Edition*. USA:  
Heinle Cengage Learning