

to be in agony: to be in a lot of pain
"Did it hurt?" "Of course it hurt! I was in agony!"

to be in arrears: not to have paid sth you have to pay on a regular basis
He was horribly overdrawn at the bank and his rent was five months in arrears.

to be in bloom: if a plant or tree is in bloom, the flowers on that plant or tree are open
It was summer and all the flowers were in bloom.

in disarray: if sth (e.g. your clothes, your life, a country, etc) is in disarray, it is very untidy, disorganised or in a state of confusion
The strikes have left the country in complete disarray.

in (very) good condition: in a good state
We buy second-hand books, but only if they are in good condition.

to be in a foul mood: to be bad-tempered and easily annoyed
He was in a foul mood that morning.

to be in full swing: if a party is in full swing, all the guests have arrived and the party has reached its highest level of activity
It was late when we arrived and the party was in full swing.

in the heat of the moment: without thinking, rashly or impulsively
I didn't mean to quit. It was done in the heat of the moment.

in moderation: not to excess
She is not the kind of person who does things in moderation.

to be in order: if an official document (a passport, an export licence, etc) is in order, it is complete, legal and correct

I wasn't allowed to enter the US because the immigration officers said my passport wasn't in order.

(to be) in (very) poor taste: to be unacceptable and/or offensive

I thought his comments about her father were in very poor taste.

In short supply: when there is very little available

Basic foodstuffs were in such short supply that the government had to introduce a system of rationing.

In stock: if a shop has (got) sth in stock, they have it in the shop and it is available to buy

We do not have that size in stock, but we can order it for you.

In store (for sb): if sb has got a surprise in store (for them), they are going to get an unpleasant surprise

He thinks that he'll find it easy to get a job. Well, he has got a few surprises in store for him.

In the ... Prepositional Phrases

to see/meet sb in the flesh: to see/meet sb in real life (having previously only seen them in pictures/on television/in a film)

You met Brad Pitt?! In the flesh? What was he like?

to be in the limelight: to receive a lot of attention from the media

Even though he says he hates being in the limelight, you'll notice that he never actively shuns it.

In the long run: at some time in the distant future

These floors are okay for the time being. But in the long run we will have to replace them.

In the meantime: between now and a particular time in the future

Your teacher will be here in twenty minutes. So in the meantime, do the exercises on page twenty of your textbooks.

to be in the minority: to form less than 50% of a larger group

It is difficult to make your wishes heard when you are in the minority.

to be in the open: if a secret is in the open, everybody knows about it

The news about her promotion was finally in the open.

sth is in the pipeline: sth (a new law, an event, a change) is being prepared or discussed and will happen or be completed soon

The minister said that plans to build a new road were in the pipeline.

In the same breath: to say sth which directly contradicts sth you have just said

She said she was a vegetarian and then in the same breath she told me she had had steak for lunch!

In the same vein: similar in style and content

[Note: if sth written or spoken continues **in the same vein/in a similar vein**: it starts in a particular way and continues in that way]

"The Sabo" is not in the same vein as his other novels – it is much darker and far more political.

The letter starts with a torrent of abuse and continues in the same vein until the last paragraph.

to be in the wash: if clothes are in the wash, they are being washed

"Where are my new jeans?" "They are in the wash."

to be in the way: to be stopping you from moving/seeing sth

Could you move that vase of flowers, please? I'm watching TV and it's in the way.

In the wild: if an animal lives in the wild, it lives in its natural environment (i.e. not in a zoo or an environment controlled by human beings)

It is virtually impossible to see gorillas in the wild nowadays.

to be in the wrong: if you are in the wrong, you are to blame for an accident that has taken place, a mistake that has been made, etc

Seeing that he was in the wrong, he apologised immediately.

Practice

1. Complete the sentence beginnings in section A with an appropriate ending from section B.

Write the number of the section A beginning in the space next to its corresponding ending in section B.



Section A

- 1 When we arrived, the party was
- 2 It isn't worth very much because it isn't
- 3 He said those hurtful things
- 4 I'm sorry. We sold the last red cardigan ten minutes ago and we don't have any more
- 5 I'm not surprised she was offended. Your last remark was
- 6 This garden is particularly beautiful when the roses are
- 7 It won't do you any harm as long as you do it
- 8 If she thinks it is going to be easy, then she's got a few surprises
- 9 Before you travel, make sure that all your documents are
- 10 I wouldn't talk to him at the moment. He'll bite your head off. He's
- 11 The actual extraction didn't hurt, but when the anaesthetic wore off I was
- 12 His wife had left him, he'd just lost his job and he was being evicted from his flat. His life was
- 13 They are being evicted from their home because their rent is six months
- 14 You could get hold of basic foodstuffs, but so-called luxury goods - caviar, chocolate, etc - were

Section B

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| in bloom. | ..... |
| in stock. | ..... |
| in a foul mood. | ..... |
| in very good condition. | ..... |
| in moderation. | ..... |
| in very poor taste. | ..... |
| in order. | ..... |
| in agony. | ..... |
| in full swing. | ..... |
| in disarray. | ..... |
| in short supply. | ..... |
| in the heat of the moment. | ..... |
| in store. | ..... |
| in arrears. | ..... |

2. Complete the sentences with an appropriate word or phrase from the box below.

limelight - pipeline - meantime - way - wild -
long run - minority - wrong - wash -
same breath - same vein - open - flesh

- 1 I saw Robert de Niro yesterday **in the** I was sitting next to him in the theatre.
- 2 "Mum, have you seen my tennis shoes?" "They are **in the** They were filthy".
- 3 He pretends that he doesn't like all this media attention, when in fact he likes nothing better than to be **in the**
- 4 No, it wasn't my fault. It was the other driver who was **in the** He was the one who pulled out without looking.
- 5 I'm very happy here in Italy, but I think, **in the**, I'd like to return to England and settle down there.
- 6 I can't see a thing. Your head is **in the**
- 7 For some reason, these animals only live for ten years in captivity. **In the**, however, they can live for as long as twenty-five years.
- 8 With the publication of his letters by a major newspaper, his secrets were well and truly out **in the**
- 9 Some of the shareholders want to close down our Latin American subsidiaries, but they are **in the** as most of us would never hear of such a thing.
- 10 We've run out of coffee and the supermarket doesn't open for another hour. **In the**, you'll have to make do with tea.
- 11 There are many other changes **in the** These changes will transform this once ailing company into Europe's leading car manufacturer.
- 12 You're not making sense. You say that voting should be made compulsory and yet, **in the**, you say that you would refuse to vote. You are contradicting yourself.
- 13 If you liked his first film, then you'll like his second, because it is very much **in the**



90 On ... Prepositional Phrases

(to win) on aggregate: (to have) a higher total score in a game/competition with more than one round/stage

With more points than anyone else, Ricky Crowther wins on aggregate.

on alert: ready to deal with anything (used for the police, the army, etc)

After the recent spate of forest fires, the fire brigade has been put on alert.

on arrival: when one arrives (e.g. at an airport)

The President was greeted on arrival by a brass band.

on balance: all things considered

The government's record is, on balance, good.

on behalf of: as a representative of

On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank you for all your hard work.

on condition that: (formal) if, and only if

I will lend you my car on condition that you return it by ten o'clock.

on offer: available to be bought or used

There are far too many medical schemes on offer; I can't tell which one's the best.

on paper: theoretically

It is a wonderful plan on paper, but will it work in practice?

(to refuse to do sth) on principle: to refuse to do sth because of a moral code one believes in

I will not buy any of their products on principle. They import from countries that use child labour.

on purpose: intentionally

He says it was an accident, but I'm sure he did it on purpose.

on second thoughts: a phrase used to say that you have changed your mind about sth

A cheese and tomato sandwich, please ... No, on second thoughts, I'll have egg mayonnaise.

(to be) on tenterhooks: to be very excited and a little nervous while waiting for sth to happen [Note:

to keep sb on tenterhooks: to make sb excited and nervous keeping them waiting for sth]

Howard had been on tenterhooks all day, waiting for his exam results.

(to be) on good terms with sb: to have a good relationship with sb

I'm not on very good terms with him.

On the ... Prepositional Phrases

on the air: being broadcast on TV or radio **Opp:** off the air

Are we on the air?

to live on the breadline: to be extremely poor

Over half the population of the country live on the breadline.

to be on the brink of: to be very close to

on the brink of collapse/war/a breakthrough/a successful career

Negotiations between the two countries are on the brink of collapse.

to be on the cards: it looks as if sth is likely to happen [Note: sth has been **on the cards for ages:** sth is no surprise because it always seemed likely that it would happen]

With three goals to one, it looks like another United victory is on the cards.

on the contrary: no, the opposite is true

"... but you hate modern art, don't you?"

"No, on the contrary. I love it."

on the dot: exactly; at an exact time, punctually

The performance will begin at 8 o'clock on the dot.

on the grounds that: (formal) because [Note: **on what grounds ...?:** for what reason ... ?]

He was refused entry into the US on the grounds that his visa had expired.

on the house: if food or drinks are on the house, they cost you nothing because they are given to you by the owner/manager of the restaurant that serves them

Coffee's on the house tonight!

on the line: at risk [Note: **to put your job on the line:** to risk losing your job]

one's job/life/career/reputation can be on the line

I'm putting my job on the line by giving you this information.

on the market: that you can buy; available

It's the cheapest sports car on the market.

on the outskirts of: in the parts of the town/city that are furthest away from the centre [Note: (with the same meaning) **in the suburbs**]

I live on the outskirts of Paris, not in the centre.

to be on the point of (doing sth): to be about to do sth

We were on the point of signing the contract when he said he had changed his mind.

on the ... side: a little bit too ...

[Note: **to be a bit on the short/heavy/long/thin/cold, etc side:** to be a little too short/heavy/long/thin/cold, etc]

This essay is thought-provoking and well-written. However, I think it is a little bit on the short side.

on the trot: one after the other in succession

He has missed six classes on the trot.

to be on the verge of: to be very close to

on the verge of tears/extinction/a nervous breakdown

Seeing she was on the verge of tears, I changed the subject.

Practice

1. Complete the sentences with an appropriate word/phrase from the box below.

dot - market - short side - paper - trot - brink/verge - cards -
 grounds - contrary - condition - principle - very good terms -
 tenterhooks - breadline - outskirts - line -
 second thoughts - purpose - behalf



- 1 That's twenty-five defeats **on the** ! Face it, Frank! Your team are rubbish!
- 2 There are so many computers **on the** nowadays that I really don't know which one to buy.
- 3 They always close at six o'clock **on the** , not one minute earlier and not one minute later.
- 4 City beat United 3 - 1, and I have to say that I'm a little bit surprised. **On** , United are a much stronger team than City.
- 5 I live in Birmingham, not in the very centre, but **on the**
- 6 **On** of the college, I'd like to thank you for your fund-raising efforts.
- 7 With 25% of this city's inhabitants living **on the** , isn't it time we faced up to the fact that we've got a major problem on our hands?
- 8 You can't be surprised that they're calling a general election. It has been **on the** for ages.
- 9 I'll have a soda... no... hang on, **on** , I'll have a glass of mineral water.
- 10 We were **on the** of a major scientific discovery when the government took away our funding.
- 11 "So, what you are saying is that doing a course like that is a waste of time." "No, **on the** Courses like that can be very useful indeed."
- 12 The reader is kept **on** until the last chapter, anxiously waiting to find out who killed the unfortunate movie star.
- 13 Of course I did it **on** I only pretended to trip. Well, it made them laugh, didn't it?
- 14 She was refused a visa **on the** that she didn't meet the requirements.

- 15 All our jobs are **on the** so the important thing is that we all stick together and try to do something to stop the closure.
- 16 You can borrow my car, but only **on** that you promise to look after it.
- 17 I don't think Simon will lend us his van. We're not **on** at the moment.
- 18 I won't shop there **on** They sell products that have been tested on animals and animal testing is something that I strongly disagree with.
- 19 The play was a bit **on the** , more of a sketch than a proper play, really.

2. The phrases in bold have been jumbled. Swap them around so as to make sense.



- 1 The court room was **on tenterhooks**, with everybody pushing and shouting.
- 2 Your composition is a bit **on the outskirts**, but otherwise it is very good.
- 3 He prefers to live **on the verge of chaos** of the city and travel into work.
- 4 If you intend to upgrade your computer, look for the best deal **on the short side**.
- 5 It looks as if a devaluation of the dollar is **on the market**.
- 6 She is **on the cards**, waiting to see whether she has passed the interview.

3. Circle the correct item.

- 1 I went to the sales to see what was on **arrival** / **on offer**.
- 2 With more stormy weather being forecast, the coastguard is **on the air** / **on alert**.
- 3 **On what grounds** / **On the contrary** is he being prosecuted?
- 4 We paid for our main course but our puddings were **on the house** / **on the air**.
- 5 **On aggregate** / **On balance**, I think it was a very productive meeting.
- 6 That's the third match **on the trot** / **on the line** United has lost.