

13 Alliteration in idioms

Activity A

Same sound

Alliteration is a feature of the spoken or written language when words beginning with the same letter of the alphabet are used close together. For example: *The rugby match was fast and furious.*

There is plenty of alliteration in these tongue twisters! Try to say them quickly aloud, just for fun! Then discuss the meanings of the idiomatic phrases in bold with another student. Look up any that are new to you in the dictionary.

Say the tongue twisters.

- 1 Sarah **signed and sealed** the letter which was **short and sweet**, and sent it.
- 2 Puffing and panting is **part and parcel** of Olympic power lifting.
- 3 Though all the **tried and tested** methods failed, they toughed it out **through thick and thin**.
- 4 **First and foremost**, let's find out about the French firm's **facts and figures**.
- 5 Henry left us **hale and hearty**, having **eaten us out of house and home**!
- 6 The directors are going to get **down and dirty** over the deal before it's **done and dusted**.
- 7 The British boxer, **born and bred** in Bradford, is **black and blue** from his bout with Boris Budanov.
- 8 The reporter **ranted and raved** about the royal residence **going to rack and ruin**.

Activity B

Here are more examples of alliteration in idioms. Choose the correct meaning; A or B. Then check your answers in the dictionary.

- 1 Her enthusiasm for the subject seems to **wax and wane**.
A She is growing more and more enthusiastic about the subject.
B Sometimes she is very enthusiastic and sometimes she isn't.
- 2 I was relieved to find the hotel room **spick and span**.
A very clean
B very expensively furnished
- 3 The firefighter **risked life and limb** to save the child from the burning building.
A was fatally injured
B was prepared to be injured or die
- 4 I wish everyone would arrive together at 8pm when the lesson starts, rather than **in dribs and drabs**.
A in groups of two or three, over a period of time
B late, in a large group
- 5 That couple have been together for years though they're like **chalk and cheese**.
A have some different tastes
B are not similar at all
- 6 What do you do for a living? Oh, **this and that**.
A I'm unemployed
B various unspecified activities