

IDIOMS

You can do
it!



DEFINITION

- An idiom is a group of words whose meaning must be known as a whole because it cannot be learned from the meaning of the same words used separately.
- There is a problem when you cannot look up individual words in a dictionary and find the meaning. That's what you usually do with unfamiliar words. With idioms, you must learn the whole group of words.

WHY LEARN IDIOMS FOR RECOGNITION?

It is really valuable to recognize idioms when you hear them or read them. Knowledge of idioms is essential for understanding spoken English. People use them all the time instead of more formal ways of expressing themselves. You will hear them often in movies, on TV, in songs, and through people's everyday language use.

WHY USE THEM YOURSELF?

- Idioms add life and vitality to language. Without idioms, language can be correct, but it may be very dull.
- When you are able to use idioms comfortably in your own speech and writing, then you have achieved a higher level of mastery and fluency in the language.

THIS PRESENTATION

- Here is a sample of 30 commonly-used idioms in 10 groups.
- The dialogues show what kind of situation an idiom may be used in. After each dialogue, an equivalent of each missing idiom is provided to help you.
- There's a short test handout at the end (with answers).

TIME

- in due course
- in a row
- ahead of time



- *She's had headaches four days _____ because of tension about tomorrow's Accounting test. (one after another, consecutively)*
- *He handed in that assignment _____ because he wanted to take time off. (before, in advance)*
- *They'll get their grades _____, about two weeks from now when processing is complete. (in the usual amount of time)*

TIME (the answers)

- in due course
- in a row
- ahead of time

ANSWERS

- *She's had headaches four days IN A ROW because of tension about tomorrow's Accounting test.*
- *He handed in that assignment AHEAD OF TIME because he wanted to take time off.*
- *They'll get their grades IN DUE COURSE, about two weeks from now when processing is complete.*

BEING REALISTIC

- they can't have their cake and eat it too
- it makes sense
- let's not kid ourselves



- _____ for you to share your apartment and save money. *(it seems reasonable)*
- _____
There's no easy way for us to complete this work. (let's be realistic)
- They party all night and still want top grades, but _____

_____ • *(they can't have both things)*

BEING REALISTIC (the answers)

- they can't have their cake and eat it too
- it makes sense
- let's not kid ourselves

ANSWERS

- *IT MAKES SENSE for you to share your apartment and save money.*
- *LET'S NOT KID OURSELVES. There's no easy way for us to complete this work.*
- *They party all night and still want top grades, but **THEY CAN'T HAVE THEIR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO.***

BEING CRITICAL

- it serves you right
- rubs people the wrong way
- don't hold your breath



- *You cheated and were caught, so _____
_____ • (you deserve it)*
- *You'd like to win \$1 million on the lottery? Well, _____
_____ • (don't expect it to happen quickly)*
- *That teacher works hard, but is unpopular because she _____
_____ • (annoys other people)*

BEING CRITICAL (the answers)

- it serves you right
- rubs people the wrong way
- don't hold your breath

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- *You cheated and were caught, so IT SERVES YOU RIGHT.*
- *You'd like to win \$1 million on the lottery? Well, DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH.*
- *That teacher works hard, but is unpopular because she RUBS PEOPLE THE WRONG WAY.*

ENCOURAGING OR PRAISING

- hang in there
- never mind
- good for you



- *You were sick during the exam but got the highest grade.* _____.
(congratulations)
- _____ *if you didn't get that job. I know you tried hard and learned a lot.* (don't worry about it; it doesn't matter)
- *You find college work hard, but I think you'll succeed, so* _____ (don't give up; stay with it)

ENCOURAGING OR PRAISING (the answers)

- hang in there
- never mind
- good for you



- *You were sick during the exam but got the highest grade. GOOD FOR YOU!*
- *NEVER MIND if you didn't get that job. I know you tried hard and learned a lot.*
- *You find college work hard, but I think you'll succeed, so HANG IN THERE!*

MONEY MATTERS

- under the table
- moonlighting
- cheapskate



- *Steve is _____ at the mall because his day job doesn't pay a good income.*
(doing another job in the evenings)
- *His boss is a _____ and doesn't pay Steve enough.* *(someone who isn't generous with his money)*
- *Joe fixes cars and sometimes makes good money if he works _____.*
(without keeping records or paying taxes)

MONEY MATTERS (the answers)

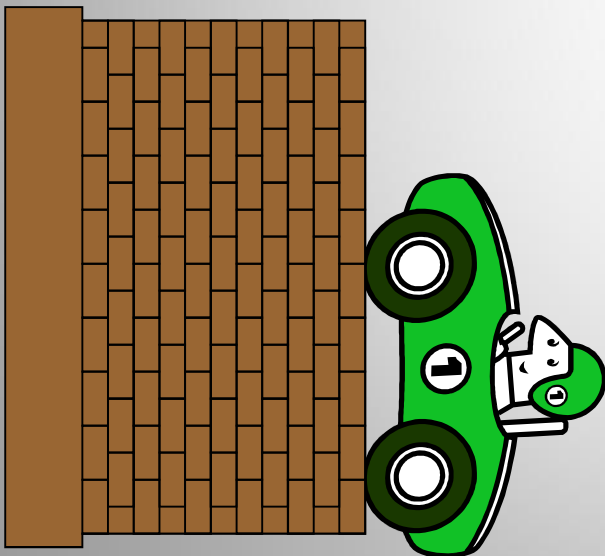
- under the table
- moonlighting
- cheapskate

ANSWERS

- *Steve is MOONLIGHTING at the mall because his day job doesn't pay much money.*
- *His boss is a CHEAPSKATE and doesn't pay Steve enough.*
- *Joe fixes cars and sometimes makes good money if he works UNDER THE TABLE.*

ANGER OR FRUSTRATION

- driving me up the wall
- that bugs me
- can't stand



- We _____ that teacher as he is so boring. (dislike strongly)
- He was _____ when he told us how clever he is. (making me angry)
- One thing _____ is his voice. I hate shouting. (that annoys me)

**ANGER OR
FRUSTRATION (the
answers)**

- driving me up the wall
- that bugs me
- can't stand

ANSWERS

- *We CAN'T STAND that teacher as he is so boring.*
- *He was DRIVING ME UP THE WALL when he told us how clever he is.*
- *One thing THAT BUGS ME is his voice. I hate shouting.*

SURPRISE

- no wonder
- can't get over
- sit up and take notice



- _____ *they*
didn't recognize their old house. They haven't been there for 20 years. (it is not surprising)
- *Her green hair made him*
_____ • (pay attention)
- *He* _____ *how*
strange she looks. (finds it difficult to believe)

SURPRISE (the answers)

- no wonder
- can't get over
- sit up and take notice

ANSWERS

- *NO WONDER* they didn't recognize their old house. They haven't been there for 20 years.
- *Her green hair MADE HIM SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE.*
- *He CAN'T GET OVER* how strange she looks.

PAIRS

- weigh the pros and cons
- last but not least
- by trial and error



- *We learn best _____, from our mistakes.* (by learning while taking action)
- *Mr. Zhang is the _____ of the candidates, in fact possibly the best qualified.* (final but not less important than others)
- *Before a big decision, _____* • (consider both the advantages and disadvantages)

PAIRS (the answers)

- weigh the pros and cons
- last but not least
- by trial and error

ANSWERS

- *We learn best BY TRIAL AND ERROR, from our mistakes.*
- *Mr. Zhang is LAST BUT NOT LEAST of the candidates, in fact possibly the best qualified.*
- *Before a big decision, CONSIDER THE PROS AND CONS.*

SOCIAL LIFE

- did me a good turn
- no hard feelings
- lost track of



- *The boy _____ by returning my wallet.* (helped me)
- *She forgives me, with _____.* (without regret)
- *I missed the test when I _____ time.* (I forgot about)

SOCIAL LIFE (the answers)

- did me a good turn

- no hard feelings

- lost track of

- *The boy DID ME A GOOD TURN by returning my wallet.*

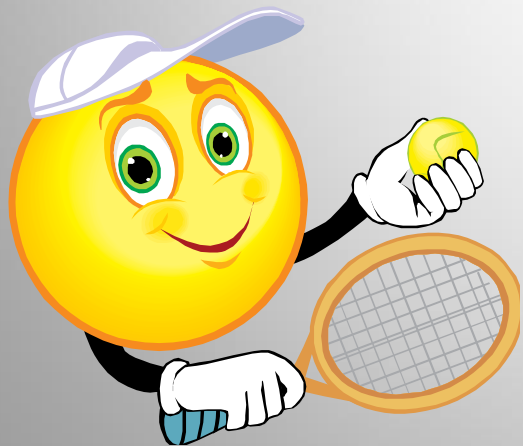
- *She forgives me, with NO HARD FEELINGS.*

- *I missed the test when I LOST TRACK OF time.*

ANSWERS

SPORTS

- keep them on their toes
- the ball's in your court
- to get even



- *You must make this decision, not her. The _____.*
(it's your turn to take action)
- *He's a strong leader and will _____.* • *(make sure they're ready)*
- *I beat Jo in the last game, so Jo wants _____.* • *(to retaliate, pay me back)*

SPORTS

(the answers)

- keep them on their toes

- the ball's in your court

- to get even

ANSWERS

- *You must make this decision, not her. The BALL'S IN YOUR COURT.*
- *He's a strong leader and will KEEP THEM ON THEIR TOES.*
- *I beat Jo in the last game, so Jo wants TO GET EVEN.*

LET'S SEE IF WE KEPT YOU ON YOUR TOES.

HAVE SOME FUN. TAKE THE HANDOUT TEST.

IF YOU PASS, GOOD FOR YOU.

IF YOU DON'T, IT MAKES SENSE FOR YOU TO
WORK ON ...

IDIOMS