

— CAMBRIDGE —  
**INTERNATIONAL  
DICTIONARY**  
*of*  
**IDIOMS**

**Photocopiable Worksheets**

**CAMBRIDGE**

## About these worksheets

These exercises and activities have been designed for use with the *Cambridge International Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs* and the *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*. They can be used with students from intermediate to advanced level.

Their aim is to give students practice in a variety of language areas connected with phrasal verbs and idioms, including vocabulary building, grammar, collocation and using different varieties of English and different registers. They are also designed to give students greater confidence and skill in using a monolingual dictionary.

The worksheets can be photocopied freely for classroom use or for self-study.

We hope you and your students enjoy using them.

For further information about these and other dictionaries, please contact ELT Marketing, The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK.

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Cambridge International Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs	PB	0 521 56558 8
	HB	0 521 56299 6

Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms	PB	0 521 62567 X
	HB	0 521 62364 2

# Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms

## Common idioms

**1 Some of the most common idioms in English are highlighted in the dictionary. Below on the left are some common idioms. Choose the correct meaning from the list on the right.**

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. be par for the course | a find compromises                                  |
| 2. give the game away    | b make people feel relaxed with each other          |
| 3. give and take         | c do something in a way that will give good results |
| 4. have it in for sb     | d choose what you want                              |
| 5. know sth inside out   | e be determined to hurt or criticize sb             |
| 6. break the ice         | f spoil a secret surprise or joke                   |
| 7. take your pick        | g know everything about a subject                   |
| 8. be on the right track | h happen as you would expect                        |

**2 Fill gaps in these sentences with the idioms in Exercise 1.**

1. A: Which one can I have? B: .....
2. The train was half an hour late but I suppose that ....., isn't it?
3. They weren't very talkative at first, then someone told a joke and that really .....
4. You have to ..... in these situations. There's always an element of compromise.
5. A: Peter's going to be there and there's going to be a band and you'll never guess ...  
B: Oh don't say anything else. You'll .....
6. You could ask Emma. She can recite most of the words in the film. She .....
7. We've got all the answers right so far so it looks as though we .....
8. My boss ..... She's constantly criticizing my work even when someone else has praised it.

## Grammar

**3 Fill in the gaps in these sentences with the correct form of the verb in brackets.**

1. She bends over backwards ..... them and they're not very grateful. (help)
2. I've half a mind ..... her to clean it again. It's still filthy. (tell)
3. A group of scientists report that they are on the brink of ..... a cure for cancer. (discover)
4. He's very disappointed. He had set his sights on ..... a pilot. (become)
5. You'd be hard put ..... a nicer house than the one you're in now. (find)
6. I'd give my right arm ..... a holiday at the moment. (have)
7. We did some mountain-biking and I had a stab at ..... as well. (waterski)
8. The company was at pains ..... that they had no intention of cutting jobs. (stress)

**4 The following idioms are missing prepositions. Can you guess which preposition goes where? Check in the dictionary.**

1. He didn't get any authority to take the action. He went ..... his boss's head.
2. Don't say a word to anyone, do you promise? Keep it ..... your hat.
3. Go easy ..... her. She doesn't understand. She's only a child.
4. She won't tell me anything. It's like trying to get blood ..... a stone.
5. Go on spoil yourselves. Push the boat ..... for a change.
6. She's got a good ear ..... languages and she's pretty musical as well.
7. That was quick. You're ..... the ball this morning.
8. I've had it ..... with him and we seem to have resolved most of the problems.


on	out	on	for	out	out of	over	under
----	-----	----	-----	-----	--------	------	-------

**Opposites**

**5 The entries for the idioms below all show their opposites too. Use the opposites to fill in the gaps in the appropriate sentences. Remember to use the correct form of the verbs.**

- a on the agenda
  - b open your eyes to sth
  - c nothing to write home about
  - d keep track
  - e get in my hair
1. We've been ..... to this problem for far too long.
  2. I wish you would ..... and leave me in peace for 5 minutes.
  3. If I won the lottery, now that would be .....
  4. Unfortunately, tennis is ..... until my leg gets better.
  5. Where are you living these days? You move so often I'm always .....

**Interesting origins**

**6 Throughout the dictionary you will see a small symbol . This means that you will find some interesting background information about an idiom. Look at the dictionary (using the word underlined) and answer true or false to these statements. What is the idiom connected with each statement?**

1. Achilles was a man in Greek mythology who injured his arm.
2. Knights were soldiers in medieval times who rode on horses and helped rescue women in danger.
3. Card players throw in their hand when they know they can win a game.
4. A magic wand is a stick used in magic tricks.
5. A clam is a type of shellfish which is slow to react when it is attacked.
6. A beaver is a small animal which people believe to be hard-working and eager to help.

## Collocations

**7 Common collocations using idioms are highlighted in bold in the example sentences in the dictionary. Match the beginnings and ends of these collocations.**

- |                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. a last ditch       | a like a headless chicken |
| 2. way                | b the drain               |
| 3. make a clean break | c a hasty retreat         |
| 4. cheap shot         | d into your pockets       |
| 5. go down            | e attempt                 |
| 6. start with         | f out of line             |
| 7. running around     | g with the past           |
| 8. dig deep           | h a clean slate           |
| 9. beat               | i artist                  |

**Choose 4 of these idioms and think of an appropriate context you might use them in.**

## Different idioms for different situations

**8 Where would you expect to hear the following? In American, Australian or British English?**

1. They've been **coining it** in since they opened the shop on the corner.
2. I hear you're **a dab hand** with a paintbrush.
3. He's **as daft as a brush**. Don't believe a word he says.
4. I tried to make a cupboard for my bedroom and I made **a real dog's breakfast** of it.
5. She said that her job was **as easy as rolling off a log**.
6. He **hemmed and hawed** and then agreed to come with us.

**9 Some idioms are only used in certain contexts. Tick the correct column for these verbs.**

	<i>informal</i>	<i>formal</i>	<i>literary</i>	<i>humorous</i>	<i>old-fashioned</i>
get the hell out					
pearl of wisdom					
a hostage to fortune					
have a ball					
be knee-high to a grasshopper					
be that as it may					
by the sweat of your brow					
baker's dozen					

**Comparisons: As + adj + as noun**

**10 Match the two halves of the idioms**

- |             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. as blind | a as a cucumber |
| 2. as clear | b as mud        |
| 3. as cool  | c as a feather  |
| 4. as quick | d as a bat      |
| 5. as light | e as a flash    |

**Can you predict what the idioms containing these adjectives might be? Check your answers in the dictionary.**

cold	white	dry	safe	solid	hard
------	-------	-----	------	-------	------

**Themes**

**11 Look at the 'Business' theme panel at the back of the dictionary and answer these questions.**

How can you describe someone who:

1. is more successful than other people trying to achieve the same things as them?
2. is one of the most important people in a small organization (they would have much less power and importance if they were part of a larger organization)?
3. is good at their job and soon becomes rich?
4. demands a lot when making an agreement with someone?
5. is practical and determined?
6. is trying to get money or power in a dishonest way?
7. is stealing money from the place where they work?
8. has firm control over the organization they run?

**12 Look at the 'Happiness and Sadness' theme panel and fill in the gaps in these sentences. There may be more than one possible answer.**

1. Helena was ..... when she found out her exam results. She couldn't stop laughing.
2. It ..... my mother's ..... when my brother came home from Australia.
3. .... when I think how many people were killed in that earthquake.
4. He doesn't stop complaining. He's such a .....
5. What's the matter with you today? You look .....
6. I wish she'd take that smile off her face. She looks .....

## Other languages used in English idioms

### 13 Choose one of the phrases from the box to fill in the gaps in the sentences

ad nauseum    raison d'être    déjà vu    pièce de résistance    in loco parentis

1. It was the first time I had been there but I had a strange feeling of .....
2. He talks ..... about football. I find it very boring sometimes.
3. While children are at school, teachers are .....
4. The ..... was when the orchestra and the fireworks began.
5. She'll never give up the theatre. It's her .....

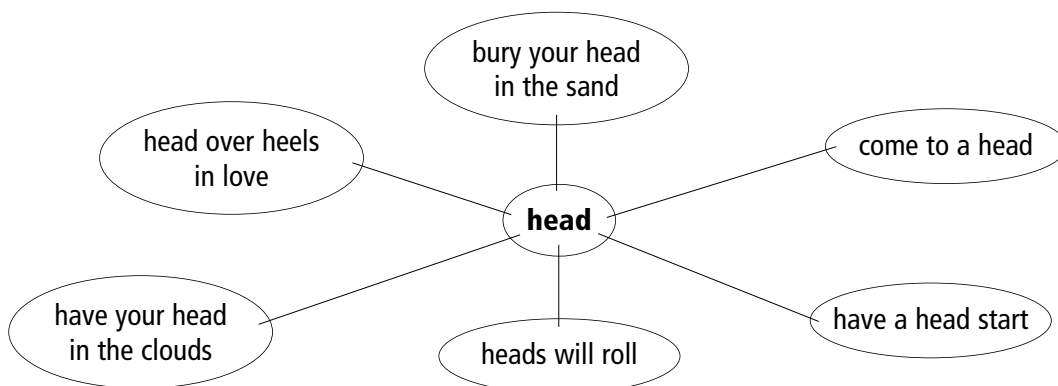
### Idioms from other idioms

#### 14 The dictionary entries for all of the idioms below also show other idioms which are formed from them. Verbs may be turned into nouns or adjectives, for example *waste your breath* → *a waste of breath*, or the verb may be changed with another verb *have the hump* → *get the hump*. In other cases nouns become adjectives.

Fill in the gaps using other idioms formed from the idioms in brackets.

1. (stab sb in the back) Finding out that your colleague was lying to your boss about you must have been .....
2. (blue blood) I'm not surprised he's related to royalty. He does behave like he's .....
3. (the grass roots) We've got the management on our side but we need more ..... support.
4. (have green fingers) Her garden is fantastic. She's very .....
5. (a hang-up) Men don't tend to ..... about their weight.
6. (make or break sth) This is ..... time. If the experiment doesn't work this time we'll have to give it up.

#### 15 A lot of idioms contain parts of the body. Here are just a few with the word 'head'. (This diagram is one good way of collecting new idioms when you read or hear them.)



Write an example sentence for each of these idioms. Now choose another part of the body or face and draw similar diagrams. Write example sentences for the idioms you have chosen.

## Key

### Phrasal verbs

#### 1

1. drop \_\_\_ by \_\_\_
2. abide \_\_\_ by ✓
3. ask ✓ out ✓
4. bear \_\_\_ up \_\_\_
5. breeze \_\_\_ through ✓
6. consist \_\_\_ of ✓
7. fasten ✓ up ✓
8. pore \_\_\_ over ✓
9. live \_\_\_ through ✓
10. take \_\_\_ against ✓

#### 2

1. She said she might drop by later this evening.
2. Fasten up your coat – it's freezing out there.
3. My grandparents lived through two world wars.
4. She phoned him to ask him out for a drink.
5. He breezed through the exam with no difficulty.
6. They pored over the map trying to discover where they were.

#### 3

1. ... comes from ...
2. ... fends for himself.
3. She doesn't hold with ...
4. They passed on to the next topic for discussion very quickly.
5. A long winding path led to the house.
6. ... set against doing ...
7. ... be sitting on ...
8. ... think back on/to ...

4 1c 2b 3d 4a 5b 6c

#### 5

1. poured down
2. were put away
3. pop off
4. pick on
5. loosened up
6. cut back

- 6 get through a proposal / get on for 90 / get in with the right people / get into a habit / get over an operation  
make up an incredible story / make up for the loss /  
make for the mountains / make away with \$2000

#### 7 Possible answers:

They got the proposal through by a good majority at the last meeting.

He got in with the right people and did very well in his job.

She's young and fit and should get over the operation very well.

I've got into the habit of going for a swim on Sunday mornings.

He made up the most incredible story to explain why he was late for work this morning.

I bought her new glasses to make up for the loss of the ones I broke.

The burglars made away with \$2000 in cash as well as a few other valuable items.

They started the search early in the morning, making for the mountains.

8 1d 2a 3g 4h 5f 6c 7e 8b

9 1b 2a 3a 4b

#### 10

1. splashed out
2. ran up
3. pay back
4. tide ... over
5. dip into / break into
6. get by / scrape by

11 1f out 2e down 3a off 4c up 5b on 6d in

#### 12

1. British and Australian
2. American
3. American
4. American
5. Australian
6. British

13 depart from: *formal*      consign to: *formal*  
conk out: *informal*      be crying out for: *informal*  
creep over: *literary*      do for: *old-fashioned*  
kick about: *informal*      dine out on: *humorous*

#### 14

1. back-up
2. cast-offs
3. up-and-coming
4. go-ahead
5. handout
6. intake
7. set-up
8. leftovers



## Idioms

1 1h 2f 3a 4e 5g 6b 7d 8c

### 2

1. Take your pick
2. 's par for the course
3. broke the ice
4. give and take
5. give the game away
6. knows it inside out
7. 're on the right track
8. has got in it for me

### 3

1. to help
2. to tell
3. discovering
4. becoming
5. to find
6. to have
7. waterskiing
8. to stress

### 4

1. over
2. under
3. on
4. out of
5. out
6. for
7. on
8. out

### 5

- 1 b closing our eyes to
- 2 e get out of my hair
- 3 c something to write home about
- 4 a off the agenda
- 5 d losing track

### 6

- 1 false; Achilles heel
- 2 true; Knight in shining armour
- 3 false; throw your hand in
- 4 true; (wave) a magic wand
- 5 false; shut up like a clam
- 6 true; an eager beaver

7 1e 2f 3g 4i 5b 6h 7a 8d 9c

### 8

1. British and Australian
2. British and Australian
3. British
4. British and Australian
5. American
6. American and Australian

- 9 get the hell out: informal  
pearl of wisdom: humorous  
a hostage to fortune: formal  
have a ball: old-fashioned  
be knee-high to a grasshopper: humorous  
be that as it may: formal  
by the sweat of your brow: literary  
baker's dozen: old-fashioned

10 1d 2b 3a 4e 5c

- as cold as ice  
as white as snow / a sheet  
as dry as a bone  
as safe as houses  
as solid as a rock  
as hard as nails

### 11

1. They are ahead of the pack.
2. They are a big fish in a small pond.
3. They are a high flier.
4. They drive a hard bargain.
5. They are hard-nosed.
6. They are on the make.
7. They've got their fingers / hands in the till.
8. They run a tight ship.

### 12

1. on top of the world / on cloud nine / full of the joys of spring / in seventh heaven / thrilled to bits / over the moon / tickled pink / floating/walking on air
2. made (my mother's) day
3. My heart sinks
4. misery guts
5. down in the dumps / out of sorts / in the doldrums
6. like the cat who got the cream

### 13

1. déjà vu
2. ad nauseum
3. in loco parentis
4. pièce de résistance
5. raison d'être

### 14

1. a stab in the back
2. blue-blooded
3. grass-roots
4. green-fingered
5. get hung up
6. make-or-break

15

*A range of answers are possible for this question.*

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