Strengthen English

IDIOMS

FOR SECONDARY LEVELS



- Idioms A–Z
- Contextual idiomatic meanings

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CHAPTER 1

A drop in the ocean

Practice 1.1 (a)

Circle the appropriate idioms.

1 Devin acted like _____ in the gift shop. He knocked over a couple of glasses and broke a few porcelain vases.

A a far cry
B a chance in a million
C a bull in the china shop
D a stumbling block

2 I prefer to buy a car that is unique compared to the ones that are already running on the road. The car I own should not be _____.

A an Achilles' heel
B a dime a dozen
C all honey and no sting
D an acid test

3 Even after spending six years in prison, Roth still went back to pickpocketing. It is no wonder people say that _____.

A all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy
B all roads lead to Rome
C accidents can happen in the best-regulated families
D a leopard cannot change its spots

4 Five men have been reprimanded for sand theft, but this is just _____. I am sure many others are involved in this syndicate but have escaped scot-free.

A all thumbs
B all well and good
C a drop in the ocean
D at one go

5 The nation is appalled by the judge's decision to give the convict only a five-year jail sentence. The punishment is like _____ for the crime he has done.

A adverse to
B according to plan
C across the board
D a slap on the wrist

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A

6 Yvonne is _____. She doesn't believe that you have actually bought a Gucci bag unless you show it to her.

A above board
B a doubting Thomas
C a priori
D above herself

7 John is silly to have spent all the money he had won in the lucky draw on branded outfits and parties with friends. He is now left with no money. As people say, _____.

A all that glitters is not gold
B absence makes the heart grow fonder
C a fool and his money are easily parted
D actions speak louder than words

8 Mrs Lim is unable to maintain a harmonious household because her two sons are always _____.

A at daggers drawn
B at rock bottom
C at their wits' end
D at the table

9 Shane was bedazzled just by looking at the photographs of Pulau Langkawi. Words were unnecessary to describe its scenic beauty. Truly, _____.

A all is fish that comes to the net
B all is well that ends well
C all lay loads on a willing horse
D a picture paints a thousand words

10 A country will fall if there is no unity within. We have to be united to fight the enemy because _____.

A a house divided against itself cannot stand
B an apple a day keeps the doctor away
C a watched pot never boils
D all that glitters is not gold

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Practice 1.1 (b)

Circle the appropriate idioms.

1 Most of the pupils passed the English test. They felt that the test was _____.

A as different as night and day
B as cool as a cucumber
C as white as a sheet
D a piece of cake

2 Rahim's hard work will be considered _____ if he does not spruce it up with an IT presentation.

A at a crawl
B a hill of beans
C at a low ebb
D at a loose end

3 It looks like you have _____ your _____! You look very excited. You have some hot gossips to share with me, don't you?

A at ... best state
B allowed ... heart to rule the head
C ants up ... pants
D all ... geese are swans

4 After being lost in the jungle for days, the boys came across a dilapidated chalet. Although it looked haunted, they decided that _____ will do.

A any port in a storm
B all roads lead to Rome
C all things are difficult before they are easy
D all over the place

5 It is cheaper to eat at a food stall than at a fancy restaurant. After all, _____.

A A is one thing, B is another
B an eye for an eye
C a penny saved is a penny earned
D all things are difficult before they are easy

6 It is no use sitting so forlornly and feeling guilty. It's not your fault that the tyre punctured, causing you and your brother to fall off the bike. _____, you know.

A A penny saved is a penny earned
B Actions speak louder than words
C A watched pot never boils
D Accidents do happen

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A

7 Philip will always treasure his dream car because he had to pay _____ to buy it!

A an arm and a leg
B a toss-up
C all ears
D a drop in the bucket

8 Miss Clark is _____ her _____ because no matter how well she plans her lessons, her students refuse to listen to her.

A an apple of ... student's eye
B a taste of ... own medicine
C at ... wits' end
D at ... bidding

9 It's so refreshing to see Tenusha and Jasmine behaving _____. Normally, the both of them will be squabbling over petty issues!

A as stubborn as a mule
B as nice as pie
C as blind as a bat
D as cool as a cucumber

10 The supermodel is waiting to be signed on as the spokesperson of a top-notch company and is willing to sign the contract _____.

A at the drop of a hat
B at a crawl
C at a gallop
D at close quarters

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Practice 1.2

A

Complete the idioms.

1 Mr Leong accepted the job promotion eagerly.

Accept with _____

2 Although Tim and Kim fought constantly, they missed each other when Kim went overseas.

Absence makes _____

3 Despite being a cautious driver, Dev was involved in an accident.

Accidents can _____

4 Anita enjoyed eating caviar after trying it a few times.

Acquired _____

5 Tina teased Andy when he was not chosen as team captain.

Add insult _____

6 The new waitress had broken a plate and spilled a few drinks in just a few hours.

All fingers _____

7 Nina regrets investing in the project that at first seemed so appealing.

All that glitters _____

8 Initially, Betty had a hard time fitting in. Now, she is happy and has lots of friends.

All is well _____

9 You should go out and have some fun instead of studying all the time.

All work _____

10 Sheila is very happy with her marital life and has not faced any problems so far.

All honey _____

11 The volunteers accept any form of donations to help the hurricane victims.

All is fish _____

12 The tourists were confused because they did not know how to read the map.

At sixes _____

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A Practice 1.3

Choose the most suitable idiom for each of the situations below.

at loggerheads	as a last resort
apple of his eye	as white as a sheet
away from his desk	at the back of my mind
as one man	at all costs
all is not lost	at death's door

1 Peter promised to get Alicia a diamond ring _____, regardless of what he had to do to get the money to afford it.

2 Mr Davis gives Andrew special privileges in class because Andrew is considered the _____.

3 Thomas was having a hard time paying his credit card bills. _____, he borrowed money from illegal moneylenders. That was the greatest mistake of his life.

4 The doctor convinced his patient that _____ if you are diagnosed early for cancer.

5 Denise's face turned _____ when she heard of her father's death.

6 Agnes, who was _____ for months, passed away peacefully in the wee hours of the morning.

7 Mr and Mrs Renee are often _____ when it comes to managing their finances.

8 We can win this game if we work together _____.

9 It is always _____ to visit my old friends. We haven't seen each other since December 2000.

10 I tried to call Mike at work today but he was _____.

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CHAPTER 1

Practice 1.1 (a)

1 C
2 B
3 D
4 C
5 D
6 B
7 C
8 A
9 D
10 A

Practice 1.1 (b)

1 D
2 B
3 C
4 A
5 C
6 D
7 A
8 C
9 B
10 A

Practice 1.2

1 both hands
2 the heart grow fonder
3 happen in the best regulated families
4 taste
5 to the injury
6 and thumbs
7 is not gold
8 that ends well
9 and no play makes Jack a dull boy
10 and no sting
11 that comes to the net
12 and sevens

Practice 1.3

1 at all costs
2 apple of his eye
3 as a last resort
4 all is not lost
5 as white as a sheet
6 at death's door
7 at loggerheads
8 as one man
9 at the back of my mind
10 away from his desk

Practice 1.4

1 ahead of schedule
2 aches and pains
3 against his wishes
4 all and sundry
5 all alone
6 all ears
7 all time low
8 answer the door
9 arm in arm
10 along the lines

Practice 1.5

1 against the law
2 absent minded
3 advanced in years
4 alive and kicking
5 all sorts of
6 all hours
7 around the corner
8 all skin and bones
9 as different as night and day
10 at the eleventh hour

Practice 1.6

1 (e) Analogous to
2 (d) As you sow, so shall you reap
3 (f) At stake
4 (h) Likely to
5 (i) Act high and mighty
6 (b) Excited
7 (j) At one go
8 (a) At a snail's pace
9 (c) Easily
10 (g) At ease

Practice 1.7

1 As cool as a cucumber
2 Absence makes the heart grow fonder
3 Against the clock
4 Act as a brake
5 At one with something
6 At a stretch
7 Act high and mighty
8 Along the lines
9 At a discount

CHAPTER 2

Practice 2.1 (a)

1 C
2 B
3 D
4 D
5 A
6 D
7 C

Practice 2.1 (b)

1 B
2 C
3 A
4 D
5 B
6 A
7 C
8 B
9 C
10 D

Practice 2.2 (a)

1 wrong horse
2 boy
3 her own trumpet
4 house down
5 his senses
6 bars
7 new ground
8 travels fast

Practice 2.2 (b)

1 head of a dog than the tail of a lion
2 late than never
3 hand that feeds you
4 thicker than water
5 friends should be few but good
6 seldom bite
7 a feather flock together
8 breezy

Practice 2.3 (a)

1 backfired
2 bad egg
3 beating around the bush
4 behind the scenes
5 broke the ice
6 back-breaking
7 bail him out
8 believe my ears
9 bitter pill to swallow
10 born and bred

Practice 2.3 (b)

1 bite each other's head off, buried the hatchet
2 By hook or by crook
3 backseat driver
4 blanket ban
5 blind leading the blind
6 bread and butter
7 back and forth
8 bursting with pride
9 burnt to ashes
10 black and white

Practice 2.4

1 Building castles in the air
2 By hook or by crook
3 By leaps and bounds
4 Bookworm
5 Bag and baggage
6 Bad blood
7 Bear in mind
8 Besides the point
9 Blacked out
10 Bona fide
11 Broke
12 Butt in

Practice 2.5

1 (d) Beauty is but skin deep
2 (h) Better an egg today than a hen tomorrow
3 (f) Burnt child dreads fire
4 (i) Boomeranged
5 (b) By fair means or foul
6 (c) Before you can say Jack Robinson
7 (e) Beyond question
8 (a) Blind spot
9 (g) Blow off steam
10 (j) Bring home the bacon

Practice 2.6

1 hearted
2 of roses
3 the times
4 into tears
5 in the stomach
6 into someone
7 up
8 in the dark
9 a fuse / one's top
10 heart

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