

50 MOST IMPORTANT Idioms and Phrases



50 Most Important Idioms and Phrases

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Practice Packet 1

Top 50 Idioms & Phrases

Above board

Meaning: Honest and open

Usage: His financial dealings were always above board.

50 Most Important Idioms and Phrases

- **At sixes and sevens**

Meaning: In a disordered manner

Usage: Mrs. Sharma is at sixes and sevens since the death of her husband.

- **Alpha and omega**

Meaning: The beginning and the end

Usage: He was forced to learn the alpha and omega of corporate law in order to even talk to the lawyers.

- **An acid test**

Meaning: A critical test

Usage: The politician made a lot of promises, but the acid test would come when he assumes office and starts delivering on them.

- **At a snail's pace**

Meaning: Very slowly

Usage: Things are moving along at a snail's pace here, but we'll finish on time- have no fear.

- **To burn one's bridges**

Meaning: Do something which makes it impossible to return to an earlier state

Usage: The army, which had burned its bridges behind it, couldn't go back.

- **A burning question**

Meaning: An important topic

Usage: There's a burning question that needs to be answered: Why did you leave your wife only after one month of your wedding?

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- **A big gun**

Meaning: An important person

Usage: She's big gun in city politics.

- **A brown study**

Meaning: Dreaming

Usage: Can you please come out of your brown study and start living in the practical world?

- **Take one to task**

Meaning: Rebuke, to scold, reprimand, lecture, or hold one accountable for some wrong or error they committed.

Usage: His performance during mid-terms has not been good. His father will not take him to task.

- **With a high hand**

Meaning: Oppressively

Usage: His master has been getting all things done through him with a high hand.

- **Play it by ear**

Meaning: Proceed instinctively according to the circumstances and results

Usage: Let us play it by ear because no one has given us any clear guidelines.

- **Be up with the lark**

Meaning: To be out of your bed or be awake early in the morning

Usage: My mother will get surprised to see me up with the lark.

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- **Go for the jugular**

Meaning: Be aggressive or unrepressed in making an attack or to criticize someone unkindly by talking about something that can hurt those most

Usage: The lawyer in the court went for the jugular of the victim to prove that suspected charges were wrong.

- **Stir up a hornet's nest**

Meaning: To create a lot of trouble

Usage: By speaking ill about the victim, he stirred up a hornet's nest.

- **Come hell or high water**

Meaning: Possible obstacles in your path that will not stop you

Usage: You have decided to come hell or high water to become an engineer.

- **A bad egg**

Meaning: A dishonest or ill-behaved person

Usage: He has been in prison for several times, he's a bad egg.

- **Adam's ale**

Meaning: Referring to water

Usage: It is blistering hot outside; I could really do with an iced cold glass of Adam's ale.

- **Chicken hearted**

Meaning: Cowardly or easily frightened

Usage: He is too chicken-hearted for that, or for anything else that requires pluck.

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- **Draw the longbow**

Meaning: Exaggerate in telling stories, overstate something

Usage: He's sure to draw the longbow on the size of his catch of fish.

- **Under a cloud**

Meaning: Under suspicion

Usage: The cabinet minister left office under a cloud after a fraud scandal.

- **Sweeping statement**

Meaning: Generalized statements

Usage: It was such a sweeping statement that one wonders just why the president floated it at this time.

- **Let the grass grow on one's feet**

Meaning: To remain idle

Usage: He has never been one to let the grass grow under his feet.

- **Fight shy of**

Meaning: To try to avoid something

Usage: Until now television had fought shy of covering by-elections.

- **In a jiffy**

Meaning: A very short period of time

Usage: I'll be with you in a jiffy.

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- **To steal a march**

Meaning: Gain an advantage over unexpectedly or secretly

Usage: Our rival company managed to steal a march on us by bringing out their software ahead of ours.

- **In a family way**

Meaning: Expecting a baby, pregnant

Usage: Poor woman do hard manual labor even when they are in the family way.

- **Beat about the bush**

Meaning: To approach the matter in a roundabout way

Usage: Your worries have nothing to do with the new proposal. Stop beating about the bush, and cast your vote!

- **Have a finger in every pie**

Meaning: Be involved in a large and varied number of activities

Usage: He very much likes to have a finger in every pie.

- **Not to mince matters**

Meaning: To speak (about something) very bluntly and directly, without regard to whether one's words may cause upset or controversy

Usage: Wow, your aunt really doesn't mince matters when she discusses politics, huh?

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- **Hobson's choice**

Meaning: No choice at all

Usage: It's a case of Hobson's choice, because if I don't agree to their terms, I'll lose my job.

- **Out of print**

Meaning: No longer available from the publisher

Usage: The book has gone out of print.

- **Tall talks**

Meaning: Exaggeration

Usage: Rita has such a habit of indulging in tall talk that everybody listens to her stories but no one believes them.

- **Yeoman's service**

Meaning: Efficient or useful help in need, with utmost sincerity

Usage: His trusty sword did him yeoman's service.

- **Get into hot water**

Meaning: Difficult situation

Usage: He found himself in hot water over his comments about immigration.

- **Talk through one's hat**

Meaning: Foolishly, blindly or ignorantly

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Usage: Nothing of what he said made sense - he was talking through his hat.

- **Gather roses only**

Meaning: To seek all enjoyments of life

Usage: Not caring for the family, he wanted to gather roses only.

- **When pigs fly**

Meaning: Something that's never happening

Usage: When pigs fly, she will tidy up her room.

- **Break a leg**

Meaning: Good luck

Usage: Break a leg Sam, I'm sure your performance will be great.

- **The last straw**

Meaning: The last in a series of bad things that happen to make someone very upset, angry, etc

Usage: It had been a difficult week, so when the car broke down, it was the last straw.

- **Put cards on the table**

Meaning: Be open and honest

Usage: When John met up with Jane on their first date, John laid his cards on the table for Jane to know what he wanted.

50 Most Important Idioms and Phrases

1. Second wind

Meaning: Another burst of energy when you had been too tired to finish

Usage: Come on, let's have that shovel again. I'm getting a second wind now.

1. Chip off the old block

Meaning: That a person is similar in behavior or actions like his parents

Usage: When grandmother saw her grandson collecting coins like her son used to do, she knew he was a chip off the old block.

1. Fair and square

Meaning: Direct or fair

Usage: To tell you fair and square, I did everything that I was meant to do, but I still feel unfulfilled.

1. A black sheep

Meaning: Being disgrace for the family

Usage: They don't talk about Olive anymore, turns out he was the black sheep for the family, he married someone else while he was still arranged to his fiancé.

1. Looking to your laurels

Meaning: Not be lost in your achievements and losing the sight of what is supposed to happen

Usage: Look to your laurels but do not rest on it.

1. Down for the count

Meaning: Tired; giving up

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Usage: My pet dog is down for the count after playing the whole day with the frisbee.

1. Up a creek without a paddle

Meaning: In an unlucky situation

Usage: Dan tried to dine and dash yesterday at a Chinese place but he was stopped by the waiters, guess he was up a creek without a paddle yesterday.

1. In the fast lane

Meaning: A life filled with excitement

Usage: When Chris turned forty, he decided to live his life in the fast lane and quit his job for his hobbies.

1. Snug as a bug in a rug

Meaning: Warm and cozy

Usage: The baby looks as snug as a bug in a rug next to her mother.

Practice Packet

Directions: In the following question, out of four alternatives, select the one which best expresses the meaning of the idiom/phrase given in the bold.

Q.1) I do not mind what he was saying, he was only talking through his hat.

- (a) Talking insultingly
- (b) Talking irresponsibly

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(c) Talking ignorantly

(d) Talking respectfully

Answer: (c)

Q.2) You will get into hot water if you commit the same mistake again.

(a) Be in trouble

(b) Be arrested

(c) Be in a fix

(d) Accused

Answer: (a)

Q.3) One should not indulge in tall talks.

(a) Flattery

(b) Idle talk

(c) Irrelevant talk

(d) Boasting

Answer: (d)

Q.4) The doctor rendered yeoman's service to the earthquake victims.

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- (a) Excellent service
- (b) Free, generous help
- (c) Epitome of service
- (d) Dedicated service

Answer: (d)

Q.5) Yesterday she and Davies were up the creek without a paddle.

- (a) Unable to do cycling
- (b) No one is ready to help
- (c) In a serious predicament
- (d) Down to earth

Answer: (c)

Q.6) I'll get you to the airport by noon, come hell or high water!

- (a) Obstructions
- (b) Determined to perform
- (c) Excessive trouble
- (d) Lethargic

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Answer: (b)

Q.7) Her weird attitude has left me at sixes and sevens as to what the matter could be.

- (a) Anxiety**
- (b) Confusion or disarray**
- (c) Smooth journey**
- (d) Feeling enthusiastic**

Answer: (b)

Q.8) That bad egg was recognized by policemen although he disguised himself well.

- (a) Persistent**
- (b) Dishonest**
- (c) Infallible**
- (d) Tasteless**

Answer: (b)

Q.9) He played well in the last match, but the acid test will come when the team plays the stronger opponents.

- (a) A critical test**

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(b) Feeling sorrowful

(c) Reluctant

(d) Tough way

Answer: (a)

Q.10) By blowing up the road, the spies had burned their bridges behind them.

(a) Resolute

(b) No going back

(c) Dogged

(d) Obstinate

Answer: (b)



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