

STREET TALK-3

THE BEST OF AMERICAN IDIOMS



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DETAILS INSIDE



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David Burke

Preface

To the outsider, idioms seem like a confusing “secret” code reserved only for the native speaker of English. Idioms are certainly tricky beasts because it is the *sum* of all the words in the phrase which must be interpreted, not each word by itself. In other words, the listener must never confuse the literal translation of an idiom with the underlying meaning of what is really being expressed or symbolized. If you are told “*Get me a pizza... and step on it!*” you are not being instructed to go trample on a round piece of cheesy bread. You are simply being told to hurry, since “*step on it*” refers to “pressing down on” the accelerator of a car.

In addition, a common idiom such as “*to bend over backwards*” has nothing to do with acrobatics or flexibility. It’s simply a colorful way of conveying that someone has to exert a great deal of effort in order to do something.

example: I **bent over backwards** trying to help Richard.

translation: I exerted a great deal of effort trying to help Richard.

In short, idioms are simply an imaginative and expressive way to communicate an idea or thought. In order to be considered proficient in English, idioms must be learned since they are consistently used in books, magazines, television, movies, songs, American homes, etc.

For the non-native speaker, learning the information in **STREET TALK -3** will equal years of living in America and reduce the usual time it takes to absorb the intricacies of slang and colloquialisms.

For the American, you’re in for a treat as we explore the evolution and variations of some of the most common and hilarious idiomatic expressions that have been with us, and will stay with us through the years.

STREET TALK -3 is a self-teaching guide made up of fourteen chapters, each divided into four primary parts:

- **DIALOGUE**

Ten popular American idioms (indicated in boldface) are presented as they may be heard in an actual conversation. A translation of the dialogue in standard English is always given on the opposite page followed by an important phonetic version of the dialogue as it would actually be spoken by an American. This page will prove vital to any non-native since Americans tend to rely heavily on contractions, reductions, and other shortcuts in pronunciation.

- **VOCABULARY**

This section spotlights all of the idioms that were used in the dialogue and offers two examples of usage for each entry, including synonyms, antonyms, and special notes.

- **PRACTICE THE VOCABULARY**

These word games include all of the idioms previously learned and will help you to test yourself on your comprehension. (The pages providing the answers to all the drills are indicated at the beginning of this section.)

- **DICTION (Test your oral comprehension)**

Using an optional audio cassette (*see coupon on back page*), the student will hear a paragraph containing many of the idioms from opening dialogue. The paragraph will be read *as it would actually be heard* in a conversation, using frequent contractions and reductions.

NOTE: Some chapters offer a special section where the reader will be given an up close look at common idioms pertaining to a specific category such as alliterations, repeating words, proverbs, and survival idioms.

At the end of each five chapters is a review exam encompassing all of the words and expressions learned up to that point.

If you have always prided yourself on being fluent in English, you will undoubtedly be surprised and amused to encounter a whole new world of phrases usually hidden away in the American-English language and usually reserved only for the native speaker...*until now!*

David Burke

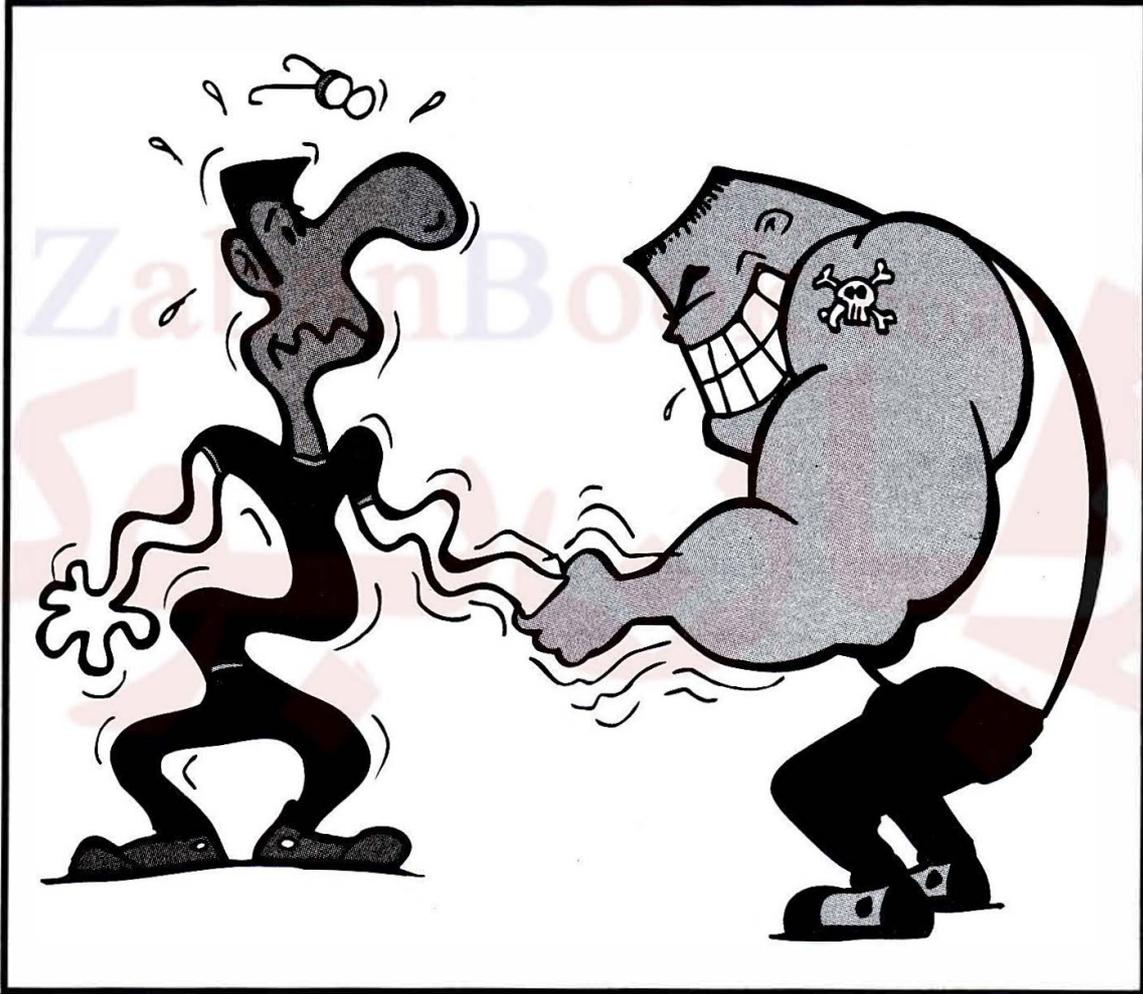
Author

NOTE

STREET TALK -1: How to Speak & Understand American Slang focuses on common slang and idioms used in everyday life. In addition, this first volume provides the reader with a thorough understanding of the frequent contractions, reductions and shortcuts in speech used by virtually every native speaker of English.

STREET TALK -2: Slang Used in Popular American Television Shows spotlights some of the most popular slang terms used in American television. Topics include slang and idioms used in today's television comedies, dramas, news reports, sports, traffic reports, commercials, weather reports, general entertainment, etc.

Lesson One - POPULAR IDIOMS



Bernie was always hoping for a "fair shake."

Lesson One - POPULAR IDIOMS

Dialogue In Slang

I'm sure they'll "give you a fair shake"

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DIALOGUE

Debbie and Valerie are at an audition for the school musical.

Debbie: I can't believe I let you **talk me into** auditioning for the school musical. When I get this nervous, I can't **carry a tune**. Look at me! I'm **breaking out in a cold sweat!**

Valerie: Would you please stop **going off the deep end** and try **to get a hold of yourself?**

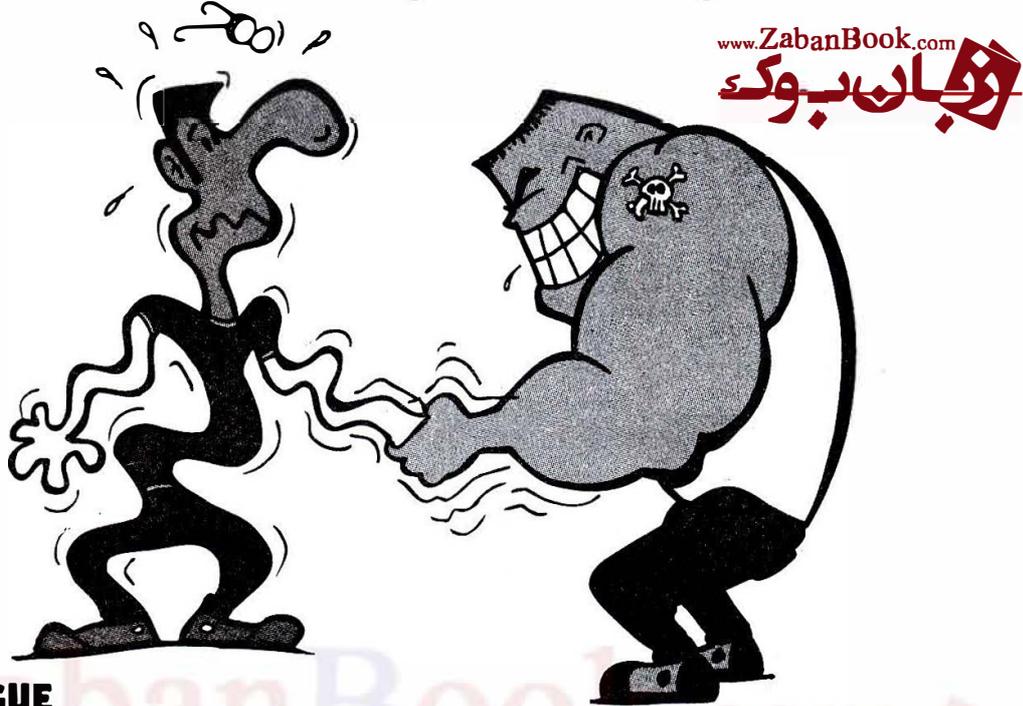
Debbie: You're right. I'm **blowing this all out of proportion**. It's just that every time I audition for anything, I feel like I've been **put through a wringer** when it's all over. I just want them **to give me a fair shake**. That's all I ask.

Valerie: Hey, there's Nancy. She's the best singer in the entire school. I didn't know she was going to audition for the same part as you.

Debbie: **That does it!** I'm leaving. I **don't have a prayer**.

Lesson One - POPULAR IDIOMS

Translation of dialogue in standard English



DIALOGUE

Debbie and Valerie are at an audition for the school musical.

Debbie: I can't believe I let you **convince me to** audition for the school musical. When I get this nervous, I can't **sing a melody on pitch**. Look at me! I'm **starting to sweat from fear!**

Valerie: Would you please stop **panicking** and try **to get control of yourself?**

Debbie: You're right. I'm **starting to think that this is more important than it really is**. It's just that every time I audition for anything, I feel **totally exhausted** when it's all over. I just want them **to give me a fair chance**. That's all I ask.

Valerie: Hey, there's Nancy. She's the best singer in the entire school. I didn't know she was going to audition for the same part as you.

Debbie: **That's all I can tolerate!** I'm leaving. I don't have **any chance of succeeding**.

Lesson One - POPULAR IDIOMS

Dialogue in slang as it would be heard

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I'm sher they'll "give you a fair shake"

DIALOGUE



Debbie 'n Valerie 'r ad 'n audition fer the school musical.

Debbie: I can't b'lieve I let chew **talk me inta** auditioning fer the school musical. When I get this nervous, I can't **carry a tune**. Look 'it me! I'm **breaking oud 'n a cold sweat!**

Valerie: Would ju please stop **goin' off the deep end** 'n try **ta ged a hold 'a yerself?**

Debbie: Y'r right. I'm **blowin' this all oudda proportion**. It's jus' thad ev'ry time I audition fer anything, I feel like I've been **put through a wringer** when it's all over. I jus' want 'em **ta gimme a fair shake**. That's all I ask.

Valerie: Hey, there's Nancy. She's the bes' singer 'n the entire school. I did'n' know she was gonna audition fer the same pard as you.

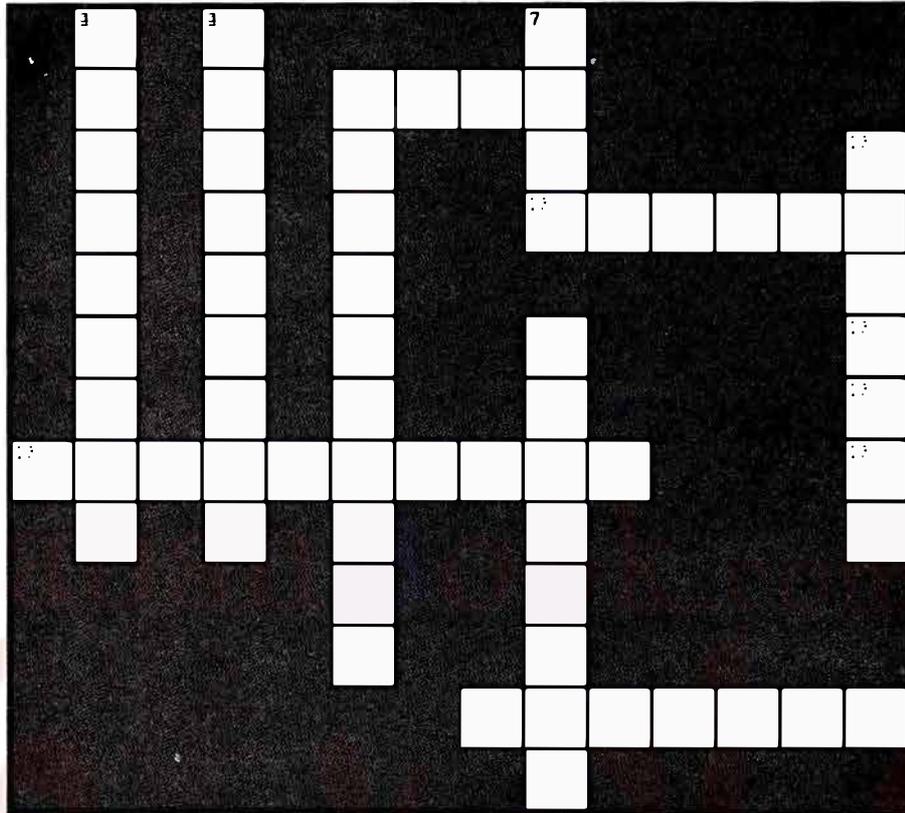
Debbie: **That does it!** I'm leaving. I **don' have a prayer**.

AUTHOR NOTE

The reductions encountered above (as well as throughout the rest of this book) are used by virtually every native-born American. It is also common among many people to reduce the *-ing* ending to *-in'* such as *fishin'*, *golfin'*, *walkin'*, etc. (*I'm goin' fishin' today*). However, it is important to note that the reduction of *-ing* is considered to be somewhat unrefined.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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D. Complete the dialogue using the appropriate idioms from the list below.

[all] out of proportion
fair shake
get a hold of yourself
go off the deep end

prayer
put through a wringer
talk me into
that does it

Peter: I've never seen you this angry before! You've got to

(1) _____ . You've been

screaming at everyone all day. It's not like you to

(2) _____ like this.

Greg: I know you must think I'm blowing everything
 (3) _____ but I wasn't
 given a (4) _____ at my job interview today.
 I never should have let you (5) _____ going.

Peter: (6) _____! I'm tired of being blamed for
 everything that happens to you!

Greg: I'm sorry. It's just that I feel like I've been (7) _____
 _____. I guess I knew I
 didn't have a (8) _____ of getting
 the job anyway.

E. DICTATION



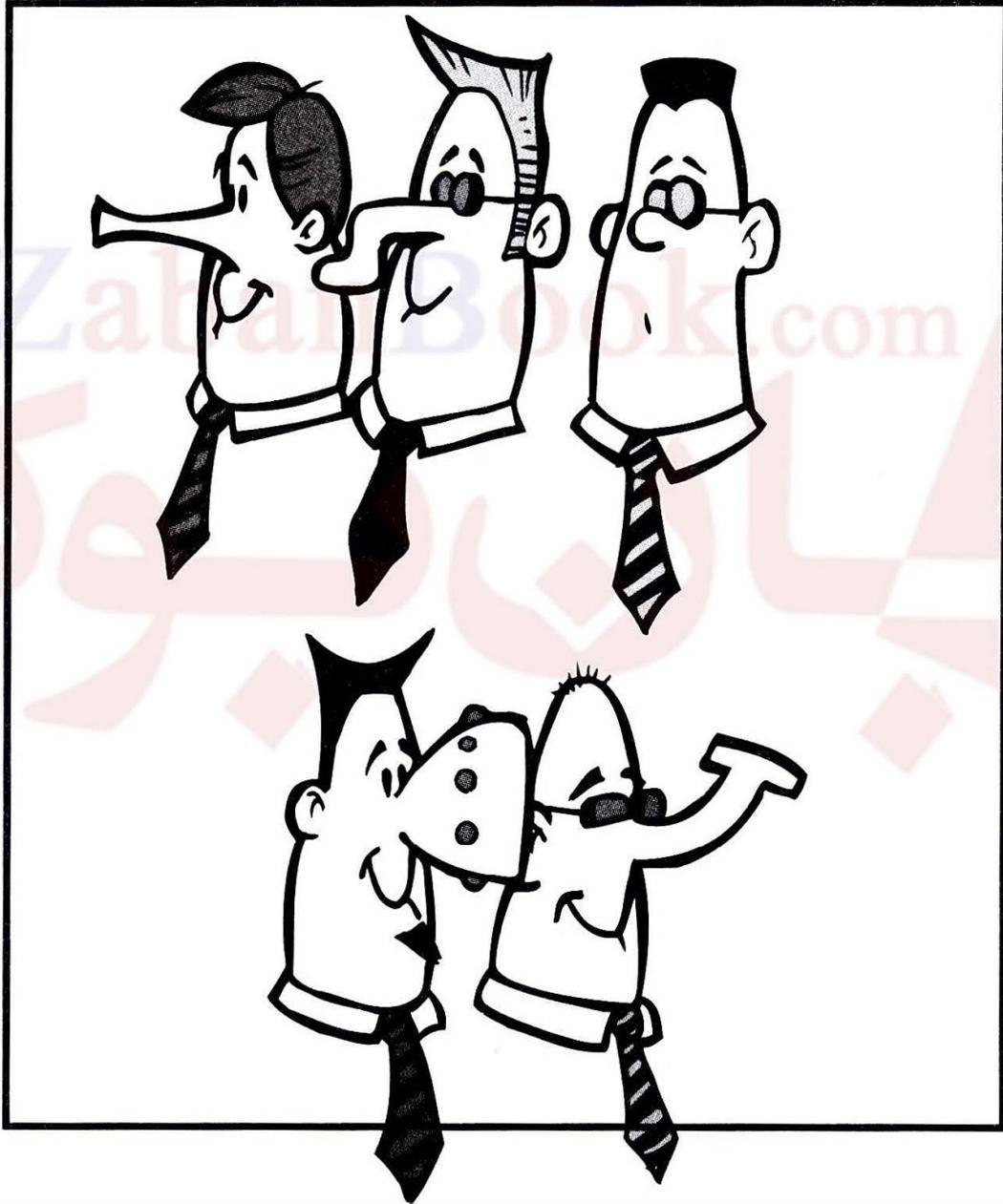
Test Your Oral Comprehension

(This dictation can be found in Appendix A on page 275).

If you are following along with your cassette, you will now hear a paragraph containing many of the idioms from this section. The paragraph will be read by a native speaker at normal conversational speed (which may seem fast to you at first). In addition, the words will be pronounced *as you would actually hear them in a conversation*, including many common reductions.

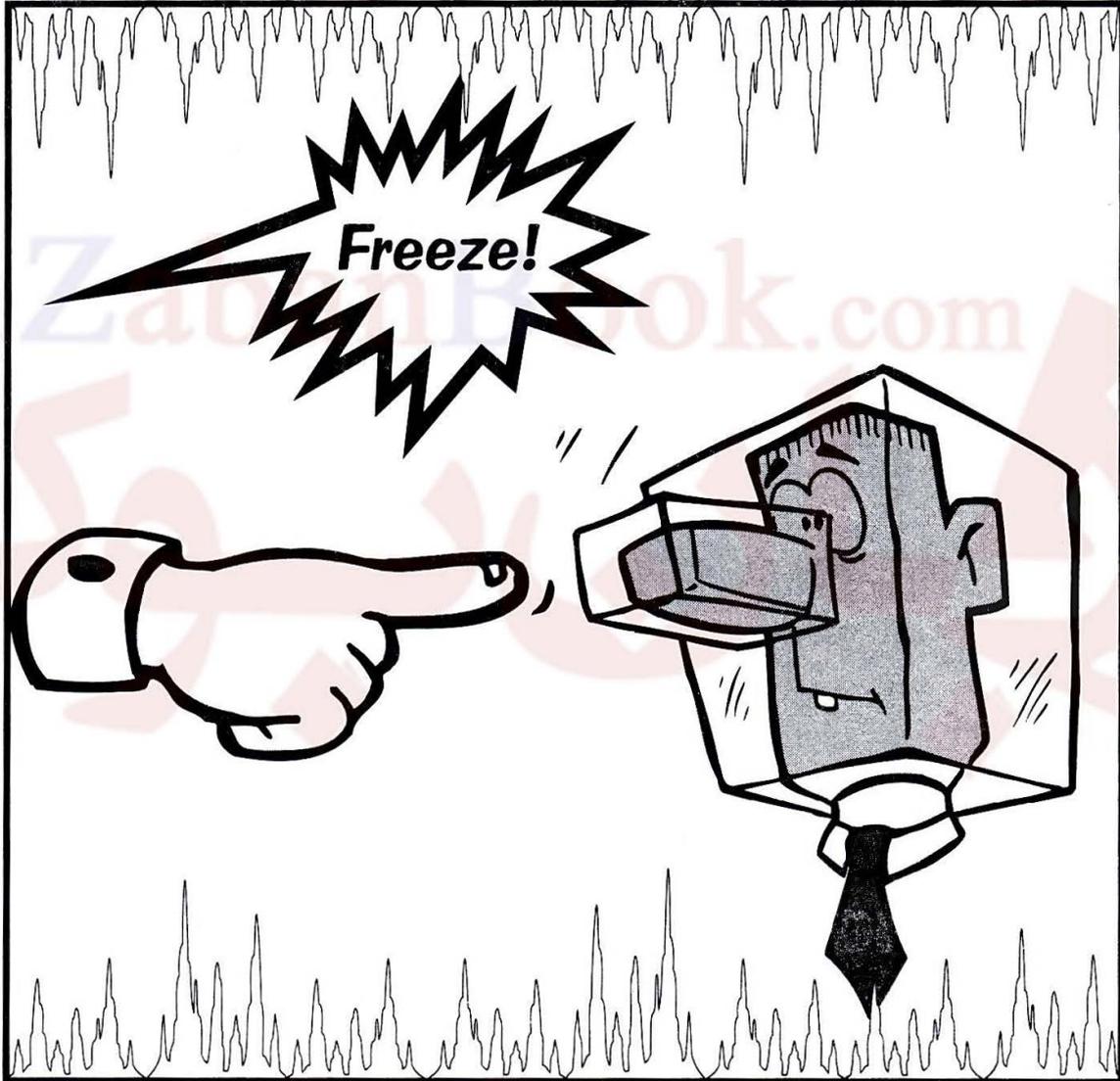
The first time the paragraph is presented, simply listen in order to get accustomed to the speed and heavy use of reductions. The paragraph will then be read again with a pause after each group of words to give you time to write down what you heard. The third time the paragraph is read, follow along with what you have written.

Lesson Two - POPULAR IDIOMS



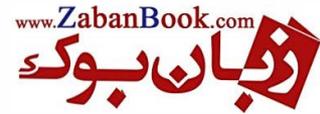
"It's as plain as the nose on your face!"

Lesson Fourteen - SURVIVAL IDIOMS & PHRASES



Lesson Fourteen - SURVIVAL IDIOMS & PHRASES

Dialogue In Slang



“Freeze!”

DIALOGUE

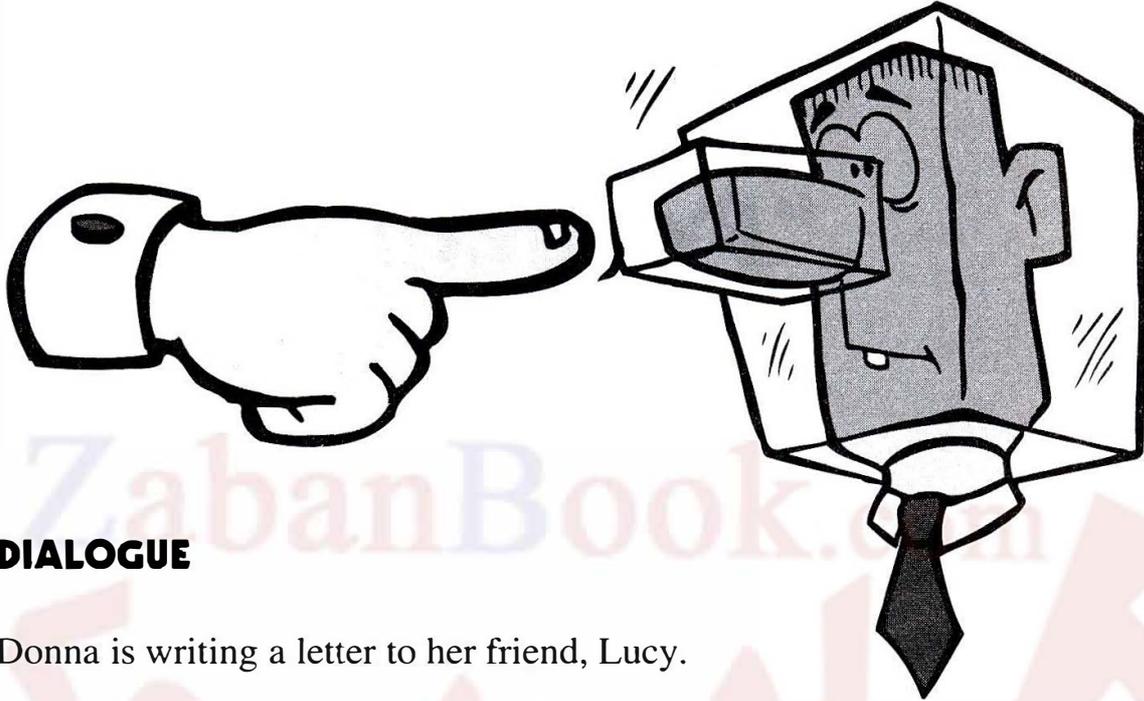
Donna is writing a letter to her friend, Lucy.

Dear Lucy:

You won't believe what happened yesterday. I was **held up**! First I heard someone yell “**Freeze!**”so I stopped. Then a man's voice from behind me said “**Shut up** and **hand over your wallet.**” I didn't want to make him mad so I did exactly what he wanted. Then all of a sudden, I heard a cop yell, “**We've got you covered.** Drop the weapon.” At first, the robber didn't respond. Then the **cops** approached him and ordered him to lean against his car and “**spread 'em.**” Then they **cuffed** him, read him his **Mirandas**, and **took him in**. They probably **booked him** and threw him in jail. What a day!

Lesson Fourteen - SURVIVAL IDIOMS & PHRASES

Translation of dialogue in standard English



DIALOGUE

Donna is writing a letter to her friend, Lucy.

Dear Lucy:

You won't believe what happened yesterday. I was **robbed!** First I heard someone yell "**Don't move!**" so I stopped. Then a man's voice from behind me said "**Stop talking and give me your wallet.**" I didn't want to make him mad so I did exactly what he wanted. Then all of a sudden, I heard a **police officer** yell, "**We're aiming our guns at you. Drop the weapon.**" At first, the robber didn't respond. Then the **police officers** approached him and ordered him to lean against his car and "**spread his arms and legs apart.**" Then they **put handcuffs on** him, read him his **constitutional rights**, and **took him to the police station.** They probably **registered him as a suspect** and threw him in jail. What a day!



Don't move! I've got you covered.

cuff someone (to) *exp.* to put handcuffs on someone.

usage example: **Cuff 'im.**

translation: Put handcuffs on him.

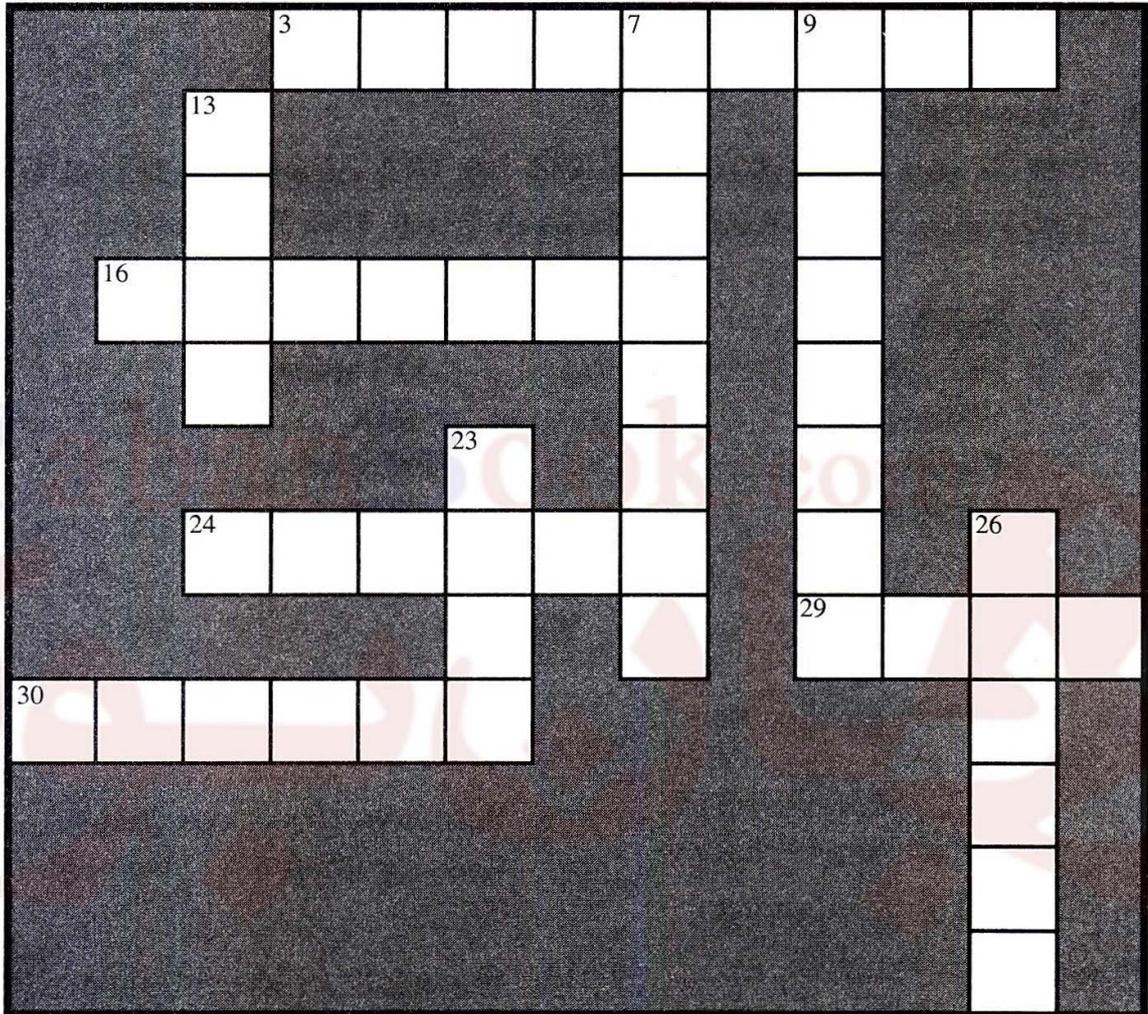
NOTE: "'Im" is a common reduction for "him."

freeze (to) *interj.* to stop and hold completely still.

usage example: **Freeze** or I'll shoot!

translation: Stop and hold completely still or I'll shoot!

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



B. Choose the correct phrase that best fits the idiom.

1. The police officer read the suspect his **Mirandas**.
 a. Then the officer put him to bed.
 b. Then the officer let him go.
 c. Then the officer took him to the police station.
2. I got **held up** today by a man with a gun!
 a. I must have been in the air for five minutes!
 b. Then it was my turn to lift *him* up.
 c. He took all my money.
3. The officer arrested the suspect and **took him in**.
 a. I guess he'll be spending the night in jail.
 b. I guess the officer lost him accidentally.
 c. They must have gone back to the officer's house.
4. Come out! We've got you **covered**!
 a. We're all aiming our guns at you.
 b. We have a nice warm blanket here for you.
 c. We don't have any guns.
5. **Hand over** your money!
 a. Don't give it to me!
 b. Give it to me, now!
 c. Give it to someone else!
6. **Shut up**!
 a. I said to keep talking!
 b. Why are you always so quiet?
 c. Don't you ever stop talking?
7. The officer **cuffed** the suspect.
 a. That way the suspect won't be able to use his arms.
 b. That way the suspect can use his arms easier.
 c. Then the officer rolled up his own sleeves.
8. **Freeze**!
 a. Keep moving!
 b. It's getting cold in here.
 c. Stop everything you're doing!

REVIEW EXAM FOR LESSONS 11-14**Practice the Vocabulary**

- A. 1. tip-top
 2. up-and-up
 3. bygones be bygones
 4. taste
 5. pours
 6. up
 7. Book
 8. R-and-R

B. CROSSWORD

- C. 1. False
 2. False
 3. True
 4. True
 5. True
 6. False
 7. False
 8. False
 9. True
 10. True
- D. 1. J
 2. B
 3. D
 4. H
 5. I
 6. E
 7. C
 8. F
 9. A
 10. G

"One good turn deserves another" *exp.*

"A good deed should be rewarded with another good deed."

usage example: I really appreciate you helping me move yesterday. Since **one good turn deserves another**, I'd like to give you these free airplane tickets to Europe.

translation: I really appreciate you helping me move yesterday. Since one good deed should be rewarded with another, I'd like to give you these free airplane tickets to Europe.

"One's bark is worse than one's bite"

exp. said of someone who is threatening but not dangerous.

usage example: Our new boss yells a lot but don't worry. **His bark is worse than his bite.**

translation: Our new boss yells a lot but don't worry. He's threatening but not dangerous.

"Out of sight, out of mind" *exp.* "That which you don't see, you don't think about."

usage example: I haven't received a letter from her in over four months and she's my best friend! **Out of sight, out of mind.**

translation: I haven't received a letter from her in over four months and she's my best friend! If I'm not in front of her, she doesn't think of me.

out of this world (to be) *exp.* to be extraordinary.

usage example: This dinner is **out of this world.**

translation: This dinner is extraordinary.

out-and-out *exp.* complete, total (may be used to modify a noun or a verb).

usage example: He's an **out-and-out** liar!

translation: He's a complete liar!

over-and-over *exp.* repeatedly.

usage example: I've told you **over-and-over** to take your shoes off before you walk on the new carpet.

translation: I've told you repeatedly to take your shoes off before you walk on the new carpet.

VARIATION: **over-and-over again** *exp.*

P**pad the bill (to)** *exp.* to add extra charges to a bill.

usage example: How could this restaurant bill be so expensive? I wonder if the waiter **padding the bill.**

translation: How could this restaurant bill be so expensive? I wonder if the waiter added extra charges to the bill.

pee-pee (togo) *exp.* (originally baby talk but also used in jest by adults) to urinate.

usage example: I have **to go pee-pee** before we leave.

translation: I have to go urinate before we leave.

ping pong *exp.* table tennis (originally a trademark for table tennis equipment).

usage example: Do you know how to play **ping pong?**

translation: Do you know to play table tennis?

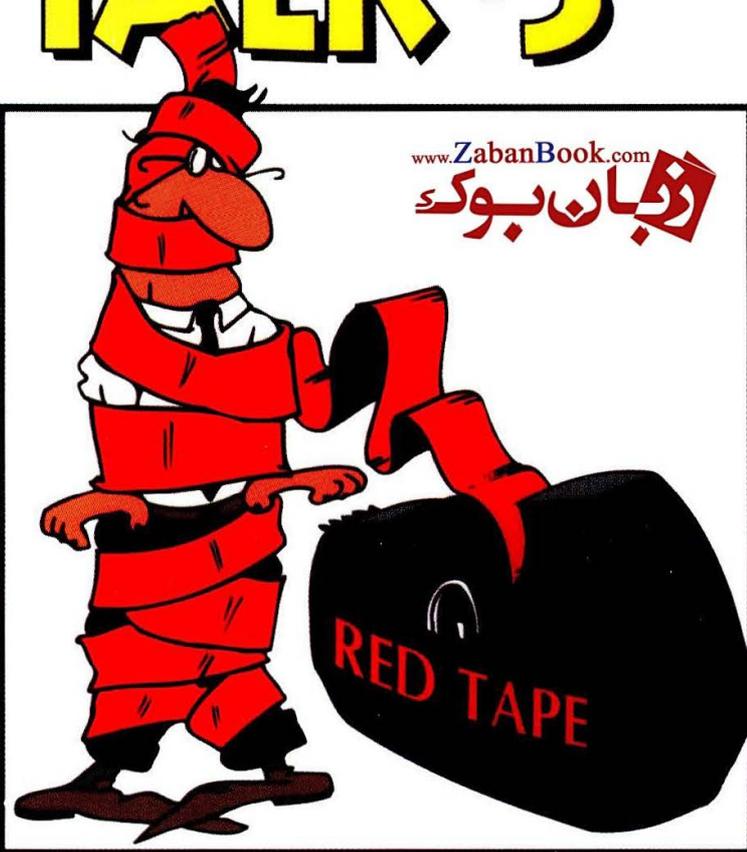
PLUS
SURVIVAL
IDIOMS!

Introducing the ultimate step-by-step
guide to popular American idioms...

STREET TALK-3



Eva is finally
"showing her true colors!"



Earl often gets caught
in company "red tape."

STREET TALK-3 explores some of the most common idioms that are used and understood by virtually every American. This entertaining step-by-step guide includes dialogues, vocabulary sections, word games, crossword puzzles, dictation, & more!

DAVID BURKE is also the author of **STREET TALK -1: How to Speak & Understand American Slang**, **STREET TALK -2: Slang Used in Popular American Television Shows**; **BIZ TALK -1: American Business Slang & Jargon**, **BLEEP! - A Guide to Popular American Obscenities**; as well as **Street French**, **More Street French**, **Street Spanish**, & **Street German-1**.



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