

CAMBRIDGE

ENGLISH IDIOMS IN USE

62 units of vocabulary
reference and practice

Self-study and
classroom use

Second Edition

Intermediate

Michael McCarthy
Felicity O'Dell

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A

What do you look up?

As it can be difficult to work out what an idiom means even when you know all the individual words in the idiom, you will often need to look up idioms in a dictionary. If you are working with an online dictionary, then you will have no problems finding the idiom in question, but working with a traditional dictionary, you have to find where the idiom is listed. As an idiom consists of several words, which of these do you look up in your dictionary? For example, do you try to find **kill two birds with one stone** under *kill*, *two*, *birds* or *stone*, or **let the cat out of the bag** under *let*, *cat* or *bag*?



If you are using either the *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms* (CIDI) or the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (CALD), then the easiest way of finding what you need is to look in the alphabetical index at the back of the book. This lists all the expressions included in the dictionary with the word where an entry for the expression will be found in the dictionary highlighted in bold. This shows that in CIDI **kill two birds with one stone** will be found under *two* and **let the cat out of the bag** will be found under *cat*. In CALD these two idioms will be found under *kill* and *cat*.



If you are using a different dictionary, read its introductory notes now to see how it deals with idioms. This will avoid the frustration you would otherwise feel on deciding to look up the wrong element of the idiom first.

B

What information does your dictionary give you?

Your dictionary will tell you a lot of other things as well as the meaning of the idiom. As idioms are used in such fixed ways, it is important to read the notes in your dictionary carefully if you want to use idioms as well as to understand them.

You will find all these things in a good dictionary of idioms:

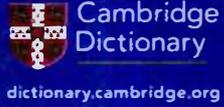
- information about words that are interchangeable, e.g. **drive/send sb round the bend**
- information about how the idiom is used – brackets, for example, show if any words in the idiom can be left out, e.g. **I (can) feel it in my bones.**
- notes about the grammar of the idiom – there may be notes, for example, to say that an idiom is usually used in a passive construction or in a continuous form or in a negative sentence
- examples of the idiom in use
- comments on register – the register labels used in CIDI are *informal*, *formal*, *very informal*, *old-fashioned*, *taboo*, *humorous* and *literary*
- notes about regional variations in use – this is important as many British idioms will sound very strange to an American and vice versa

Tip

It is not possible for this book to include as much information about each idiom as you will find in a dictionary. So, look up the idioms that you particularly want to learn from this book in a dictionary as well. In your vocabulary notebook, write any further information or other examples of the idioms in the context that you find in the dictionary.

Exercises

2.1 Look up the idioms in these sentences in your dictionary. What word is each idiom listed under?



- 1 It's the person in the street who **picks up the bill** for the government's mistakes.
- 2 She had a wonderful trip to Australia, but now she's **come back down to earth with a bump**.
- 3 John had a furious argument with his supervisor, but he managed to **stand his ground**.
- 4 He's feeling very miserable, so there's no need for you to **stick the knife in** too.
- 5 You're **banging your head against a brick wall** trying to get him to help you.
- 6 You **scared the living daylights out of** me by creeping up behind me like that.

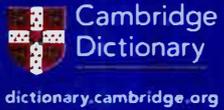
2.2 Which word(s) could be left out of the idioms in these sentences?

- 1 It's always hard when you have to **come back down to earth with a bump** after a holiday.
- 2 No one thought she could climb the mountain without oxygen, but she succeeded **against all the odds**.
- 3 She **hit him where it hurt most** by telling him that he had always been a disappointment to his parents.
- 4 The way he reacted **scared the living daylights out of** me!

2.3 Which word in each idiom could be changed for another word?

- 1 Don't worry about a thing – I'm sure the company will **pick up the bill**.
- 2 I **came back down to earth with a bump** when I saw the pile of post waiting for me after the weekend.
- 3 The army had lost many of its men, but it managed to **stand its ground**.
- 4 Why do critics seem to enjoy **sticking the knife into** untalented actors and writers?
- 5 I feel as if **I'm banging my head against a brick wall** with him at the moment.
- 6 It's a terrifying film – it **scared the living daylights out of** me!

2.4 What grammatical information does your dictionary give about these idioms? Read the information and then write a sentence with each idiom.



- 1 look a gift horse in the mouth
- 2 be banging your head against a brick wall
- 3 be on the brink of
- 4 tie yourself up in knots
- 5 be man enough

2.5 Match the register labels in the box with the idioms in the sentences below.

formal humorous informal literary old-fashioned very informal

- 1 I really don't like him – he's such a **slime ball**.
- 2 OK. I'll do the washing-up. **There's no peace for the wicked!**
- 3 Her family has lived in that village **from time immemorial**.
- 4 My grandma always used to say that **an apple a day keeps the doctor away**.
- 5 The food was so delicious – we **stuffed our faces**.
- 6 I hope that what I have said will **give you pause for thought**.

3

Happiness and sadness

A

Extreme happiness

There are many informal idioms which mean *extremely happy*.

I'm thrilled to bits.

I am/feel on top of the world.



I'm on cloud nine.

I'm over the moon.

I'm in seventh heaven.

B

Other happiness idioms

idiom	meaning	example
get a (real) kick out of something	very much enjoy doing something (informal)	I get a (real) kick out of going for a run first thing in the morning before anyone else is up.
do something for kicks	do something because it is exciting, usually something dangerous (informal)	Kate is keen to have a go at bungee-jumping – just for kicks.
jump for joy	be very happy and excited about something that has happened	Rowena jumped for joy when she heard that she'd won first prize.
be floating/walking on air	be very happy about something good that has happened	I've been walking on air ever since Chris and I started going out together.
something makes your day	something makes you feel very happy	It's great to hear from you. It's really made my day.

C

Sadness

Dear Louise,

Hope all goes well with you. Unfortunately, everyone here is **out of sorts**¹. Will is **down in the dumps**² because he doesn't like his teacher this year. I've told him that **it's not the end of the world**³ and that he'd better **just grin and bear it**⁴, but I think he likes being a **misery guts**⁵ and so he complains about her every night. Pat is also suffering from **sour grapes**⁶ because I got the role in the school play that she wanted. This **puts a damper on**⁷ every meal, so I'm really looking forward to staying with you at the weekend.

Love,
Amelia



¹ slightly unhappy or slightly ill

² unhappy (informal)

³ what has happened won't cause any serious problems

⁴ accept a situation you don't like because you can't change it

⁵ someone who complains all the time and is never happy (very informal)

⁶ being jealous about something you can't have

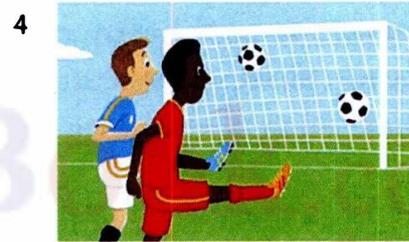
⁷ stop an occasion from being enjoyable (sometimes *dampener* is used instead of *damper*)

Exercises

- 3.1** Combine the words in the box in order to make five expressions meaning *extremely happy*. Use each word once only.

bits	cloud	heaven	in	moon	nine	of	on	on	over	seventh	the
the	thrilled	to	top	world							

- 3.2** Which idioms do these pictures make you think of?



- 3.3** Correct the mistakes in these idioms.

- The child was thrilled for bits to have her photo in the paper.
- I felt as if I was floating in air as I ran down the hill into his arms.
- Why does Marti look so out of sort today?
- Don't make such a fuss. It's not the finish of the world!
- Your telephone call has really done my day!
- Jill said she was on cloud seven and Jack agreed that he was in ninth heaven.
- Why does Mark always have to be such a miserable guts?
- Stereotypically, happy footballers say that they are over the sun.

- 3.4** Answer these questions.

- Would a piece of good news or a piece of bad news be more likely to make your day?
- If you got top marks in an exam, would you feel down in the dumps?
- Are people more likely to get a kick out of hot-air ballooning or cleaning their boots?
- Do you have to grin and bear it when you are happy or unhappy about something that has happened?
- If you are at someone's birthday party, what would be more likely to put a damper on the event – news of the illness of a close friend or a heavy shower of rain?
- Do people usually enjoy or not enjoy being in the company of a misery guts?
- You have a beautiful new sports car that a colleague is rather envious of. What is your colleague more likely to say out of sour grapes? 'I love its green colour!' or 'Of course, that model is very unreliable!'
- A damper is literally a thing put on piano strings to make the sound less loud. How does knowing this help you to understand the idiom using the word *damper*?
- Do you notice anything that a number of the images in the happiness idioms have in common?

4

Anger

A

Being angry

These informal idioms can be used either about yourself or about a third person.

I'm **fed up (to the back teeth)** with trying to live on such a small wage.

I'm **at my wits' end** trying to keep things in order.

(wits = intelligence, brains)

I've **had it up to here** with this organisation!

These informal idioms are generally used about other people.

Your boss will **have/throw a fit** when he finds out you forgot to reply to those letters.

(You can also say **go off the deep end / go spare / do his nut / blow a fuse.**)

These less informal idioms describe other people's anger and are based on the word *blood*.

If **someone's blood is up**, they are very angry and may react in a violent way.

If you are **after someone's blood**, you want to catch them in order to hurt or punish them.

If you are **out for blood**, you are determined to find someone to attack or blame for something bad that has happened.



B

Angry relationships

idiom	meaning	example
drive someone up the wall	make someone very angry (or sometimes very bored)	The neighbours' loud music every night is driving me up the wall.
drive/send someone round the bend/twist	make someone very angry (or sometimes very bored)	His lack of consideration is driving me round the twist.
rub someone up the wrong way	make someone annoyed	Jill always manages to say something to rub her father up the wrong way.
get/put someone's back up	make someone annoyed	Roger put his sister's back up by saying she would never be a good driver.
ruffle someone's feathers	make someone annoyed	Jo says what she thinks without worrying about whether she might be ruffling anyone's feathers.
put/send the cat among the pigeons	do or say something that makes a lot of people angry or worried	Danny put the cat among the pigeons by suggesting that the company might have to make some redundancies.
not be on speaking terms	be so angry with each other that they refuse to speak to each other	They haven't been on speaking terms for years although neither can remember what they first quarrelled about.
give someone an earful	tell someone how angry you are with them (informal)	The old lady gave the children an earful for nearly knocking her over.
give someone a piece of your mind	tell someone how angry you are with them	He'll give the boys a piece of his mind if he catches them in his garden.

Exercises

4.1 Put the expressions in the box into pairs that mean more or less the same.

went off the deep end gave him an earful drove him up the wall gave him a piece of her mind
put his back up did his nut rubbed him up the wrong way sent him round the bend

4.2 Complete each of these idioms.

- 1 Ethan has had it up to with his work.
- 2 It's horrible living with two people who are not on speaking
- 3 It'll really put the among the pigeons if you try to bring that up at the meeting.
- 4 My sister spare when she found out I'd burnt her new top.
- 5 Joel is your blood now he knows it was you who told the police.
- 6 The demonstrators are furious and for blood.
- 7 Your father will throw a if you go out dressed like that.
- 8 The baby hardly sleeps at night and her mother is at her end.

4.3 Correct eight mistakes in this paragraph.

Yesterday I had terrible toothache. It hurt a lot and I guess that's why I was in a bad temper all day. Everything anyone said seemed to put the back up and, in the end, I threw a fuse with the person I share my office with. Even when I'm in a good mood, she sends me up the twist with her constant chatter and yesterday I had had it off to here with her after only ten minutes. I really gave her an eyeful and the result is that we are no longer in speaking terms. I know I'll have to apologise for doing my nuts like that, but perhaps I'll wait a while. It's much easier to work when she isn't talking to me! Perhaps I should give her a peace of my mind more often.



4.4 Answer these questions.

- 1 Name one thing that drives you up the wall.
- 2 Find two idioms on the left-hand page that conjure up images of birds.
- 3 Can you remember a teacher ever going off the deep end? If so, what caused it?
- 4 Find seven idioms on the left-hand page that are based on parts of the body.
- 5 Has anyone recently rubbed you up the wrong way? If so, how did they do this?
- 6 Which idiom in A on the left-hand page do you think is usually accompanied by a gesture?
- 7 Have you ever given someone a piece of your mind? If so, what about?
- 8 Find an idiom on the left-hand page connected with electricity.

Over to you

Think about a situation you have experienced in which someone became angry. What idioms from this unit can you use to describe what happened?

A

Knowing and not knowing

knowing	meaning
She knows the system inside out .	She knows every detail of it.
When it comes to geography, he certainly knows his stuff .	He has a very good knowledge of it.
That book title has a familiar ring to it . I think I read it a long time ago.	It sounds familiar / I think I've heard it before.
I'm not sure if I know her, but the name rings a bell . (very commonly used with <i>name</i>)	I have a vague memory of someone with that name, but can't remember exactly.

not knowing	meaning
I haven't (got) / don't have a clue how to get to her house.	I don't know at all.
I haven't (got) / don't have the faintest idea where she lives.	I really don't know at all.
I haven't (got) / don't have the foggiest (idea) what this switch is for.	I absolutely don't know at all.
I can't for the life of me remember her first name.	I can't remember at all.
I'm a bit out of touch with computers these days.	I used to know about them, but don't know the latest developments.
I'm sorry, that name doesn't ring any bells with me . (very commonly used with <i>name</i>)	I don't think I've ever heard it before; it is unfamiliar.

B

Coming to conclusions

I didn't actually know where you were staying, but Mark said you were with a relative. So I **put two and two together** and guessed it was that aunt of yours in Manchester. [concluded from the facts I knew]

I'm sorry, I **got (hold of) the wrong end of the stick**. I thought you were complaining about something. [came to the wrong conclusion]



'I think he's got hold of the wrong end of the stick.'

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A

Describing the problem

I've **come up against a brick wall**.

[something is blocking me from doing what I want to do]

I **put my foot in it**.

[said something tactless and embarrassing]

I'm **in dire straits**.

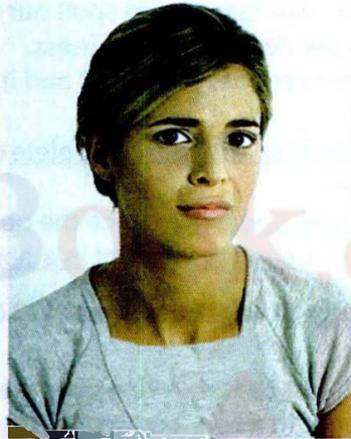
[in a very difficult or dangerous situation]

I've **dug myself into a hole**.

[have myself caused a problem that will be difficult to escape from (informal)]

I've **spread myself too thin**.

[am trying to do too many things at the same time, with the result that I can't give any of them the attention they need]



I've been **left holding the baby**.

[others have left me to deal with a problem alone]

They've got me **over a barrel**.

[have put me in a situation where I have no choice over what I can do]

I've come up against a **stumbling block**.

[a problem which stops me from achieving something]

I'm **clutching at straws now**.

[am in such a difficult situation that I will try anything]

I've **drawn a blank**.

[am unable to find information or to achieve something I'd hoped for]

So now we are all going to have to **face the music**.

[accept criticism or punishment for what you have done]

B

Fact of life

Taxes are, unfortunately, a **fact of life**. [an unpleasant situation which has to be accepted because it cannot be changed]

A **fact of life** must not be confused with the phrase *the facts of life*, which is a slightly indirect (humorous) way of referring to information about sexual reproduction.

C

Easier said than done

Why don't you take the train to work? Then you'd avoid all the traffic jams.

Easier said than done! There are no trains at the right time. [something you say when something seems like a good idea, but is difficult to actually do]

Tip

Make a 'problems' idioms page in your vocabulary notebook. You will find examples of other idioms that can be used for talking about problems in other units of this book too. As you find them, add them to this page of your notebook.

Exercises

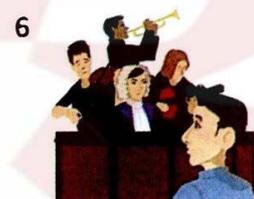
8.1 Match the beginning of each idiom on the left with its ending on the right.

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1 left holding the | <input type="checkbox"/> | a wall |
| 2 brick | <input type="checkbox"/> | b block |
| 3 stumbling | <input type="checkbox"/> | c music |
| 4 dire | <input type="checkbox"/> | d baby |
| 5 draw a | <input type="checkbox"/> | e barrel |
| 6 have you over a | <input type="checkbox"/> | f straits |
| 7 face the | <input type="checkbox"/> | g blank |

8.2 Put the words in the right order and make sentences.

- done / said / Easier / than
- too / to / Try / spread / thin / not / yourself
- I / I / foot / it / wish / my / put / hadn't / in
- a / life / older / of / Getting / fact / is
- straits / The / is / company / dire / in
- life / primary / facts / of / the / Children / taught / in / school / are

8.3 Which idioms do these pictures make you think of?



8.4 Complete each of these idioms with one word.

- You'd better stop talking or you'll dig yourself into a deeper
- I hoped I'd find the address I needed in the library, but I drew a
- If you take on any more work, you'll be spreading yourself far too
- Stranded on the island with no money and no luggage, we were well aware that we were in dire
- The police explored a number of leads, but each time they came up against a brick
- Not having enough savings to set up a business was a major stumbling
- I wish I could leave my job, but they've got me over a

Over to you

Magazines often have articles about people's problems or question and answer pages dealing with problems of different kinds. Find an article or a question and answer page like this and make a note of any idioms that you find there.

A

Trying to solve a problem

Rafael needed a bookcase. He had been **making do**¹ with planks of wood on bricks, but he wanted something nicer now. His sister, Ana, suggested buying a self-assembly bookcase where the pieces came in a flat pack for him to put together himself. Rafael knew he wasn't much good at that sort of thing, but he decided to **give it a shot/whirl**². When he opened the pack, it all looked very confusing, but he was determined to **get to grips with**³ it.



After a couple of hours, he had something that looked a bit like a bookcase but was rather wobbly. **To be on the safe side**⁴, he asked Ana to check it for him. 'There's something not quite right about this,' she said. 'I think we'd better **get to the bottom of**⁵ it before you put your books on it.'

- ¹ managing with something that isn't as good as you would like
- ² give something a try (informal)
- ³ make an effort to understand or to deal with a problem or situation
- ⁴ to protect himself even though it might not be necessary
- ⁵ try to discover the truth about something



B

Light and understanding

The recent release of fifty-year-old documents has **shed a great deal of light** on the political crises of the 1950s. Some unexpected information about the government of the day has been **brought to light** and some surprising facts about the politicians of the time have also **come to light**.

The concept of *light* is often used to represent mental illumination or understanding. The idiom **bring something to light** (usually used in the passive – see above) means to discover facts that were previously unknown. Often, though not always, these facts are about something bad or illegal. **Come to light** gives a similar idea of unknown facts becoming known. **Shed/Throw light on something** means to help people understand a situation.

It's been a very difficult year, but at last I feel I can see the **light at the end of the tunnel**. [something makes you believe that a difficult and unpleasant situation is coming to an end]



C

The problem's over

The Democratic Party is behaving as if victory was already **in the bag**. [certain to be achieved (informal)]

I was in despair until Chris turned up – **the answer to my prayers**. [something or someone that you have needed for a long time]

I want to **wave a magic wand** and make things better. [find an easy way to solve a problem]

I've got to **tie up a few loose ends** before I go on holiday. [deal with the last few things that need to be done before something is completed]

Once Sara explains why she acted as she did, everything **will fall into place**. [be understood or go well]

After the flood, it took us some time to **pick up the pieces**. [try to return to normal]

Idioms with *act* have two main meanings, one connected simply with doing things, the other with acting as in a theatre or drama. Idioms with *action* can refer to what is happening or to whether something/someone is working/functioning normally.

A

Act

Here, the second speaker uses an idiom to repeat or sum up what the first speaker says.

Josh: The boss saw Rory and Emma kissing in the office yesterday. He was furious.

Jack: Yes, I heard about it. They were **caught in the act**. Amazing!

Kim: Lisa should fill out her application for university or she'll be too late.

Erica: Yes, it's time she **got her act together**.

Paul: Keith wants to join us now that we're doing well.

Oscar: Yes, now that we're successful he wants to **get in on the act!**

Edith: Brian is crying and saying he's ill. I don't believe him.

Georgie: I don't either. I think he's just **putting on an act** because he doesn't want to work.

Note these other idioms with *act*:

It's always a difficult **balancing act** to please the younger people and the older ones at the same time. [a situation where you try to treat the two groups of people equally]

A lot of people think the tabloid newspapers should **clean up their act** and stop destroying famous people's lives. [stop doing something a lot of people don't like or agree with]

Stop behaving like a child! You're over 18 now. **Act your age!** [don't behave in a childish way]

Stop **acting the fool/goat!** This is a serious matter. [playing around / not taking things seriously]

B

Action and activity

Note that it would normally be very unusual to find all these similar idioms together in one text.

Normally, the office is a **hive of activity**¹, but the boss has **been out of action**² for a week, so everyone's taking it easy. He'll probably **be back in action**³ next week. He says there are opportunities for huge sales on the Internet and that we should **get a slice/piece of the action**⁴. But usually he's **all talk and no action**⁵, so unless he **follows/takes a different course of action**⁶ from his usual way of doing things, then nothing will happen.

¹ a very busy place (like a beehive) with people working hard all the time

² not been working in the normal way, perhaps because he's ill

³ be back at work again

⁴ take part in something exciting, profit from it

⁵ be someone who promises/says they will do a lot of exciting things, but doesn't do them

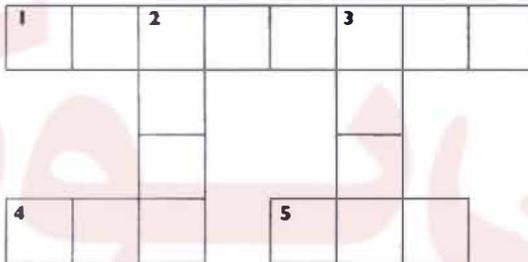
⁶ acts in a particular way (rather formal)

Exercises

59.1 Use an idiom to repeat or sum up what the other person says.

- 1 A: James has been off work for a couple of weeks, hasn't he?
B: Yes, he's been for a while now.
- 2 A: Lucy is so silly. She's 31, but she acts like a teenager sometimes.
B: Yes, I agree. She should learn to
- 3 A: Eva is always saying what fantastic plans she has to travel round the world, but she never actually does it.
B: Yes, she's
- 4 A: Bob should go and get a job. He finished university over a year ago and has never had a job.
B: Yes, it's time
- 5 A: I think we always have to try to give the kids a lot of fun, but at the same time show their parents we're giving them a serious education.
B: Yes, it's a very delicate

59.2 Complete the crossword.



Across

- 1 Time to get your act
- 4 Don't on an act!
- 5 I want to in on the act.

Down

- 2 Don't act like this animal.
- 3 Bees are busy there.

59.3 Rewrite the underlined part of each sentence with an idiom from this unit.

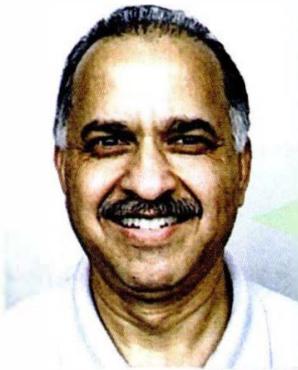
- 1 He was stealing a car, and the police caught him just at the moment when he was getting into it.
- 2 I was out of the team for three weeks with a knee problem, but now I'm playing again.
- 3 I think it's time we acted in a different way.
- 4 The film industry should change its present wrong way of doing things and stop making violent films.
- 5 Everyone wants to be part of the exciting situation now that we are making a lot of money. (Give two answers.)
- 6 Our office is a very busy place these days as we prepare for the launch of our new products.

Over to you

Try to follow a particular theme and learn as many idioms as you can connected with it. For instance, *act* gives us idioms connected with the theatre. Look up other theatre words (*stage, curtain, scene*) and see if you can find any new idioms.

A

Good and better



Our daughter, Tamsin, wanted to be an actress. I used to be involved in amateur theatre and I think Tamsin wanted to **go one better**¹. **Against our better judgement**², we agreed that she could go to drama school. However, we managed to persuade her to do a secretarial course first – she agreed that this would always **stand her in good stead**³. After completing the course and rather to our relief, she **thought better of**⁴ a life on the stage and decided to go for a job in theatre management instead.

- ¹ do more or do something better than it has been done before
- ² although we did not think it was a sensible thing to do
- ³ be useful in the future
- ⁴ decided not to do what she had intended to do

B

Best

idiom	meaning	example
second best	not as good as the thing you really want	If you know what kind of job you want, you really shouldn't settle for second best.
get the best of both worlds	have the advantages of two different things at the same time	Living in France and working in Switzerland gives them the best of both worlds – Swiss salaries and a French lifestyle.
for the best	unpleasant now but will turn out well in the future	It may well be that the break-up of their relationship is for the best.
make the best of a bad job	be positive about a situation that you do not like but cannot change	It was difficult for her to move to such an isolated place, but she made the best of a bad job and slowly began to enjoy it.
be on your best behaviour	make an effort to behave as well as possible	Jack hates formal parties, but he has promised to be on his best behaviour at the reception tonight.

C

Bad, worse and worst

The company has been **in a bad way** ever since it lost a major order last July. [in a poor condition]

The situation at school was dreadful last Christmas when a number of teachers were fired and it has **gone from bad to worse** since then. [got even worse than it was before]

I was learning the piano, but I've **given it up as a bad job**. I couldn't find time to practise. [stopped because I felt it was not worth continuing]

If the worst comes to the worst, we'll sell the house and move back to my parents. [if the situation becomes very difficult or serious]

Tip

Use the example sentences on this page as models, but alter them a little if possible so that they describe something in your own life.

Exercises

60.1 Complete each of these idioms with *good, bad, better, best, worse or worst*.

- 1 Learning a little Japanese should stand you in stead when you visit Japan.
- 2 Chris has been in quite a way ever since he had flu in January.
- 3 I didn't want to have a karaoke machine at our party, but, against my judgement, I agreed.
- 4 People who live here enjoy the of both worlds: the peace of the countryside, and fast and frequent rail connections with the city.
- 5 If the comes to the, we can always walk home.
- 6 The headmaster warned the children to be on their behaviour while the inspectors were in the school.
- 7 When Elliot was made redundant, he decided to make the of a job and use his extra time by taking a computer course.
- 8 The situation at the scene of the disaster seems to be going from to

60.2 Put the words in order and make sentences.

- 1 else / to / better / Sarah / has / one / go / everyone / always / than
- 2 to / to / worse / going / be / bad / Conditions / seem / from
- 3 the / tried / to / best / we / was / make / bad / a / job / weather / The / of / bad / but
- 4 it / I / I / the / of / her / better / nearly / thought / told / but / truth
- 5 very / As / he / never / ambitious / second / Mark / settle / is / for / will / best
- 6 gave / Rose / as / job / up / tried / ski / a / it / learn / soon / but / bad / to / to
- 7 worst / ask / If / a / we / worst / always / Dad / comes / the / to / can / loan / for / the
- 8 the / happens / Whatever / for / best / happens

60.3 Look at the pictures and answer the questions.



- 1 Is the boy on his best behaviour?
- 2 What might happen if things go from bad to worse?



- 3 How are the people at number 10 trying to go one better than their neighbours?



- 4 In what sense is Mike in a bad way?
- 5 How might he make the best of a bad job?

60.4 Choose two idioms from each of the three sections on the page opposite. Then write sentences about your own personal experiences.

example: I'm studying English because I'm sure it will stand me in good stead in the future.

by the skin of your **teeth** 17, 53
 fed up (to the back **teeth**) 4
 get/have/take the bit between your **teeth** 37
 grit your **teeth** 53
 in the **teeth** of sth 53
 lie through your **teeth** 1, 53
 nine times out of **ten** 32
 in the short/medium/long **term** 31
 come to **terms** with 15
 not be on speaking **terms** 4
 an acid **test** 11
 stand the **test** of time 31
Thanks a million! 12
That's life! 12
then and there 32
there and then 32
There's nothing to it! 12
 be **thick** on the ground 61
 Blood is **thicker** than water. 29
 a **thin**/fine line 58
 be **thin** on the ground 61
 spread yourself too **thin** 8
 do your own **thing** 19
 make a big **thing** of 23
 one **thing** leads to another 16
 the best/greatest **thing** since sliced bread 40
 never/not do **things**/anything by halves 14
 the shape of **things** to come 31
think better of sth 60
think big 23
think nothing of 15
This is the life! 12
 a train of **thought** 30
 give sb food for **thought** 6
 give you pause for **thought** 2
 have second **thoughts** 1, 6
 hang by a **thread** 17
 be on the **threshold** of sth 31
 be **thrilled** to bits 3
 be at each other's **throat** 51
 bring a lump to your **throat** 15
 ram sth down sb's **throat** 51
throw a curveball 36
throw sb in the deep end 33
throw the baby out with the bathwater 14
throw/have a fit 4
throw/put a spanner in the works 45
throw/shed light on 9
 a rule of **thumb** 47
 be under sb's **thumb** 47
 give sth the **thumbs** down/up 47
 stand/stick out like a sore **thumb** 47
tick over 45
 the **tide** turns 33

tie up loose ends 9
tie yourself (up) in knots 2, 11
 could do sth with one arm/hand **tied** behind your back 56
tighten your belt 24
 How **time** flies! 12
 be only a matter of **time** 31
 before your **time** 31
 for the **time** being 31
 from **time** immemorial 2
 give sb a hard/rough/tough **time** 13, 15
 have a lot of **time** for sb 31
 hit the big **time** 7
 in a **time** warp 31
 in no **time** at all 32
 in the nick of **time** 31
 Long **time** no see. 57
 make up for lost **time** 31
 stand the test of **time** 31
 from **time** to **time** 32
 be a sign of the **times** 31
 nine **times** out of ten 32
 (be) on the **tip** of your tongue 30, 53
to hand 47
toe the line 48
 keep sb on their **toes** 48
toffee-nosed 21
 get your act **together** 59
 put two and two **together** 5
 as if there was/were no **tomorrow** 31
 like there's no **tomorrow** 31
 a slip of the **tongue** 27
 (be) on the tip of your **tongue** 30, 53
 bite your **tongue** 53
too many cooks 29
 have a sweet **tooth** 40
 at the **top** of sb's/the agenda 16
 at the **top** of the (career) ladder 25
 be on **top** of the world 3
 be over the **top** 16
 climb to the **top** of the career ladder 25
 off the **top** of your head 50
 be **touch**-and-go 20
 be out of **touch** with 5
 be/get/stay in **touch** with sb 22
 I wouldn't **touch** sb/sth with a barge pole. 19
 be a **tough**/hard act to follow 13
 give sb a **tough**/hard/rough time 1, 13, 15
 be off the beaten **track** 41
 be on the right **track** 41
 be on the wrong **track** 41
 keep **track** 26
 a **train** of thought 30
 the **travel** bug 37

do the **trick** 7
 take a **trip**/stroll down memory lane 30
 be asking for **trouble**/it 13
 wear the **trousers** 35
 (not) ring **true** 27
try a different tack 44
try your hand at sth 47
 change your **tune** 46
 light at the end of the **tunnel** 9
 not **turn** a hair 51
turn a blind eye 52
turn heads 50
turn your hand to sth 47
turn your nose up 53
 when/while sb's back is **turned** 56
 the tide **turns** 33
 drive/send sb round the **twist**/bend 1, 2, 4, 41
twist sb's arm 49
twist the knife 39
two-time sb 22
 kill **two** birds with one stone 1, 2, 38
 stand on your own **two** feet 48
 the lesser of **two** evils 16
 put **two** and **two** together 8
 be as **ugly** as sin 62
 be **under** sb's thumb 47
 be **under** your feet 48
 go **under** your own steam 45
 an **unknown** quantity 23
up-and-coming 21, 25
 an **uphill** battle/fight/struggle 41
 be (right) **up** your alley/street 41
 be **up** in arms 39
 be **up** in the air 43
 make it **up** to sb 22
 on your way **up** 21
upper-crust 43
 take sth at face **value** 51
 a **vicious** circle 11
 sb/sth is a **victim** of their/its own success 7
 be **walking**/floating on air 3
 a fly on the **wall** 37
 be banging/hitting your head against a brick **wall** 2, 50
 come up against a brick **wall** 8
 drive sb up the **wall** 4
 wave a magic **wand** 9
 for **want** of a better word 27
 in a time **warp** 31
wash your hands of sb/sth 47
 be (like) **water** off a duck's back 1, 38
 be in deep **water** 33
 be in hot **water** 33
 be like a fish out of **water** 62
 Blood is thicker than **water**. 29

ENGLISH IDIOMS IN USE

Intermediate

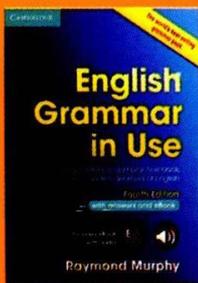
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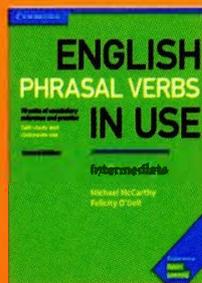
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