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Idioms and Phrasal Verbs

Ruth Gairns and Stuart Redman



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Idioms and Phrasal Verbs

Intermediate

Ruth Gairns and Stuart Redman



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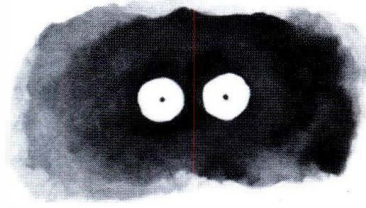
7 Different meanings of phrasal verbs

Many phrasal verbs can have more than one meaning.

Go off



The alarm **goes off** at 5.00. = rings.



The lights suddenly **went off**.
= stopped working.



The bomb **went off**. = exploded.

Put sth on



I **put** my best suit **on**. =
dressed myself. OPP **take sth off**.



He **put** the light **on**.
SYNS **turn sth on**, **switch sth on**.



I **put on** a lot of weight last year.
= became fatter.

Break down

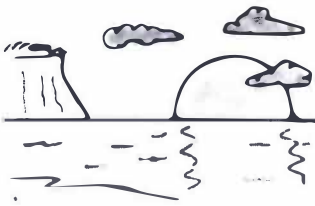


The car **broke down**. = stopped working.

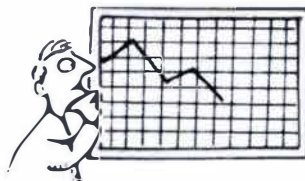


She **broke down** at the news. = started crying.

Go down



The sun's **going down**.
= disappearing below the horizon. OPP **come up**.



Prices **went down** by
10 per cent. = became lower.
OPP **go up**.

Do sth up

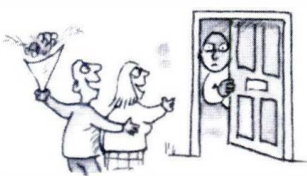


I can't **do** this zip **up**.
= fasten.



They're **doing** the flat **up**.
= redecorating.

Turn up



When did they **turn up**?
= arrive.



Look! My ring's **turned up**!
= be found by chance.

Tie sb up



They **tied** him **up**. = tied
his arms so that he
couldn't move.



She's **tied up** at the
moment. = very busy
(used in the passive).

B Assessing the lecturer

Here, the same students give their opinion of Peter Rose.

PATRICK: He's OK, and he **knows his stuff**, but he's not very encouraging. I always **do my best**, but he **doesn't think much of** me.

ERIN: At first I thought he **was** a bit **out of touch**, and he wasn't very friendly, but maybe we just **got off on the wrong foot**. He thought I **wasn't pulling my weight**, when in fact I was just too shy to say anything. But now I like him a lot more.

CHARLOTTE: I'm **getting on** well, and that's largely **thanks to** Peter Rose. He really **motivates me and brings out the best in** me.



Glossary

know your stuff
do your best
get on

thanks to sb/sth

bring out the best/worst in sb

be out of touch (with sth)

get/start off on the wrong foot

pull your weight

INF know a lot about a particular subject.

try as hard as possible to achieve sth.

make progress.

used to say that sb/sth is responsible for sth.

make sb behave in the best or worst way that they can.

not know or understand recent ideas in a particular subject or area.

INF make a bad start at a relationship.

work as hard as everyone else in a job or activity.

spotlight *think the world of sb/sth, not think much of sb/sth, etc.*

These idioms express a high or low opinion of somebody or something:

We don't think much of the boys. = We have a low opinion of them.

He thinks the world of his niece. = He feels great love or affection for her.

She thinks a lot of Patricia. = She has a high opinion of her.

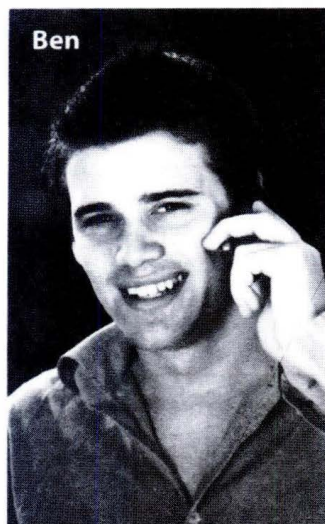
4 Complete the idioms with a suitable verb.

- ▶ **be** _____ out of touch
- 1 _____ on the wrong foot
- 2 _____ your stuff
- 3 _____ your best
- 4 _____ the world of someone
- 5 _____ the best in someone
- 6 not _____ much of something
- 7 _____ your weight

5 Complete the dialogues.

- 1 How are you _____ on? ~ Quite well, actually. I got good marks last term.
- 2 Is she good at her subject? ~ Not really. She's a bit _____ of touch.
- 3 Did she like the course? ~ No, she didn't think _____ of it.
- 4 What's the problem with Eric? ~ He's just not _____ his weight.
- 5 Is Mr Hall a good teacher? ~ Oh yes, he knows his _____.
- 6 Did Nadia pass the exam? ~ Yes, _____ to her uncle; he helped her a lot.
- 7 What went wrong between you and the teacher? ~ We started off on the wrong _____.
- 8 Good luck. ~ Thanks. I'll _____ my best.

14 I can talk about getting in touch



Ben

- BEN Have you **broken the news** to the family yet?
- EMILY Well, I've **been in touch with** most of them, but I can't **get hold of** Uncle Nick.
- BEN No, I **haven't heard from** him for a while either. Try **giving** his office **a ring**.
- EMILY I did, but he's not there at the moment, so I've had to **drop him a line**.
- BEN OK. So, shall I **keep quiet about** your move until it's **common knowledge**?
- EMILY Yes, please. I don't want anyone to feel they've **been kept in the dark**.
- BEN Sure. I promise I **won't breathe a word**.

Ben's cousin,
Emily

Glossary

break the news

get hold of sb

hear from sb

give sb a ring

drop sb a line

keep quiet (about sth)

be common knowledge

keep sb in the dark

not breathe a word (about/of sth)

be the first to tell sb about some important news.

INF find or make contact with sb by email or phone.

be contacted by sb by email, phone, or letter.

INF phone sb. SYN **give sb a call**.

INF write a short letter or email to sb.

say nothing about sth.

be sth that everyone knows.

If you **keep sb in the dark**, you don't tell them about sth important.

not tell anyone about sth that is secret. SYN **not say a word (about sth)**.

spotlight in touch

If you **are in touch with sb**, you are in contact with them by speaking or writing to them. If you **get in touch with sb**, you make contact with them. If you

keep in touch with sb, you continue to have contact with them. If you **lose touch with sb**, you no longer have contact with them.

1 Circle the correct answer(s). Both answers may be correct.

- Have you been *in* | *on* touch with Romi?
- Who *dropped* | *broke* the news to Mina?
- Don't *say* | *breathe* a word to the kids.
- Have you heard *by* | *from* Mari recently?
- I said we'd give Irina *a call* | *a ring*.
- I'll drop Vincent *a line* | *a call*.

2 Complete the dialogues. Then underline the full idiom in each dialogue.

- You mustn't say anything. ~ Don't worry, I'll keep _____ about it.
- He's upset because we _____ him in the dark. ~ Well, that's understandable.
- Have you got in _____ with Michael since last week? ~ No, not yet.
- Do they know you're getting married? ~ Yes, I _____ the news last night.
- Have you told the class you're having a baby? ~ Yes, it's common _____ now.
- Have you tried to get _____ of the manager? ~ Yes, I _____ her a ring earlier.

3 ABOUT YOU Write your answers in your notebook, or talk to another student.

- Which do you use most to get in touch with friends: phone, text, or email?
- If you thank someone for a present, do you give them a ring or drop them a line?
- How often do you hear from friends who live in a different town?
- How often do you get in touch with friends in other countries?
- Do people find you difficult to get hold of sometimes? If so, why?

27 I can describe my feelings

A Describing fear

When Bob first suggested we went up in his hot-air balloon, it never **crossed my mind** that I would be nervous. But on the morning of the flight, I was starting to **get butterflies in my stomach**. And by the time we were **on board** and **were about to** take off, I **was shaking like a leaf**. I tried to **take**

my mind off it by concentrating on my breathing, but I **was in a terrible state**. And I **jumped out of my skin** when I heard the noise from the gas burner – I just **couldn't help** it. In fact, it was amazing once we were up in the air, and I started to **calm down**. I realized Bob was very experienced and I **was in safe hands**.

Glossary

get/have butterflies in your stomach on board

be about to do sth

shake like a leaf

be in a state

jump out of your skin

can't help (doing) sth

calm down / calm sb down

be in safe hands

feel very nervous before doing sth.

on a ship, plane, hot-air balloon, etc.

be going to do sth very soon.

shake a lot because you are frightened or nervous.

INF be very anxious or upset (also **be in a terrible state**).

INF make a sudden movement out of fear.

used to say that sb cannot stop or avoid doing sth.

become or make sb become more relaxed.

be with sb who will look after you very well.

spotlight Idioms with mind

*It never **crossed my mind** that we would lose.* = I never thought that we would lose. (Often used in negatives.)

*You've got a lot **on your mind**.* = There are a lot of things that you are thinking and perhaps worrying about.

*Going to the gym **took my mind off** the exams.* = made me stop thinking and worrying about them.

1 Rewrite the sentences, correcting the mistakes.

- 1 I've got flies in my stomach.
- 2 She's about for leave.
- 3 He ran out of his skin.
- 4 He's got something at his mind.
- 5 She won't help making mistakes.
- 6 Don't worry, you're on safe hands.

2 Complete the text.

I've got a big exam tomorrow and I know I'll be in a terrible (1) when I wake up. I get so nervous – I just (2) help it. It has crossed my (3) once or twice that I should really do something about it, and find a way to help myself (4) down. The only thing that seems to (5) my mind off it is food, unfortunately! But I know that tomorrow, I'll be outside the exam room, shaking like a (6), as usual.

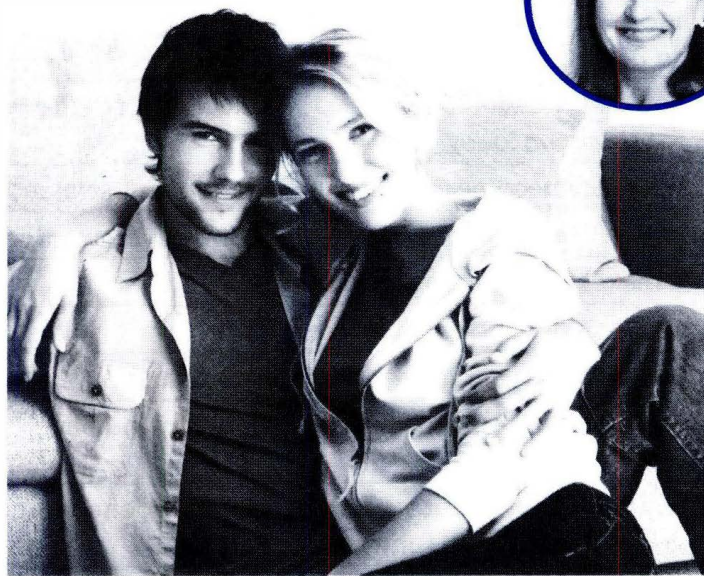
3 Complete the questions. (You will answer the questions in Exercise 4.)

- 1 Have you got a lot your mind at the moment?
- 2 When did you last get butterflies in your, and why?
- 3 Do you feel nervous when you're to go on a journey? Why?
- 4 If someone was board a plane and feeling very nervous, what would you suggest to them down?

4 ABOUT YOU Write your answers to Exercise 3 in your notebook, or talk to another student.

28 I can describe romantic relationships

A Young love



Ask Claire's advice

SUE: I was very flattered when Chris started **chatting** me **up** at a party because I didn't think I'd **be his type**. But we really **hit it off**, and then started seeing a lot of each other. The thing is, though, his mother **thinks the world of** him and has done everything she can to **come between us** and try to **split us up**. I'd be so upset if we **broke up** because of her – I'm just **crazy about** him.

CLAIRE REPLIES: Start by **putting yourself in** his mother's **shoes**. She can see you've both **fallen in love** and she probably thinks she's losing her son **for good**. Be patient, and try to make friends with her – it's the only solution.

Glossary

chat sb up	INF talk to sb in a friendly way because you are attracted to them.
be your type	INF be someone with the qualities that you find attractive.
hit it off	INF form a good relationship on first meeting (also hit it off with sb).
think the world of sb	INF feel great love or affection for sb.
come between people	cause an argument or difficulty between people.
split people up	cause two people to stop having a relationship.
break up	stop having a relationship (also break up with sb). SYN split up (with sb).
crazy about sb	INF very much in love with sb. SYN mad about sb INF.
put yourself in sb's shoes	imagine you are in the same situation as sb. SYN put yourself in sb's place .
fall in love	start to love each other (also fall in love with sb , SYN fall for sb INF).
for good	for ever.

1 Tick (✓) the correct phrases. Be careful: one, two, or all three may be correct.

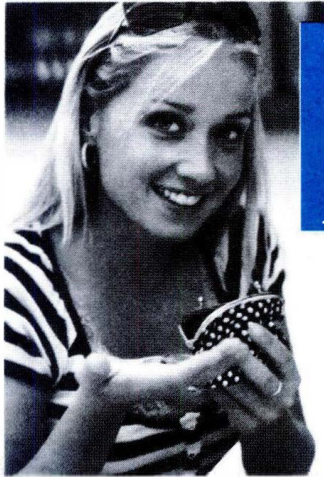
- I think she's fallen in love ☐ mad about ☐ fallen for ☐ him.
- I won't let anyone come between ☐ split up ☐ break up ☐ us.
- Why don't you try and put yourself in his shoes ☐ eyes ☐ place ☐.
- Do you think Max and Jan will hit off it ☐ hit it off ☐ fall for each other ☐.
- I'm not sure he will be Lucy's type ☐ chat Lucy up ☐ come between Lucy ☐.
- She is crazy about ☐ is mad about ☐ thinks the world of ☐ him.

2 Replace the underlined words with a phrasal verb or idiom.

- He's a terrible liar; I hope she leaves him and never comes back.
- He really loves his little niece.
- She's not the kind of person I find attractive.
- We met at a conference and we really got on very well.
- I wish you would imagine you were in my situation.
- He seemed attracted to me and talked to me in the bar.
- It's sad, but they've decided to separate.
- They're very much in love with each other.

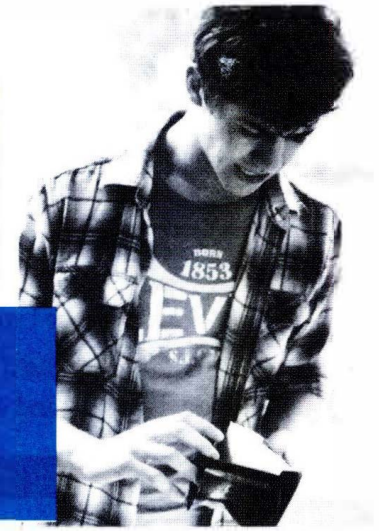
33 I can talk about spending and saving

A Different kinds of spender



← Chloe's very **careful with money**. She's not very **well off**, but she makes sure she's never **in the red**, so if she can't afford something, she just **saves up for** it. She **pays off** her credit card debt immediately, and when times are bad, she just **cuts back on her spending**.

→ The way he behaves, you'd think Luke was **rolling in money**, but he isn't. He finds it hard to **make ends meet**, he's often **in debt**, and he won't admit that he's **hard up**. Some of the time, he **lives off** his parents and I'm sure he never **pays them back**.



Glossary

careful with (your) money
well off
in the red

save up (for sth)
cut back on sth

rolling in money/it
make ends meet

be in debt
hard up
live off sb

spending money only when it is necessary.
having a lot of money. OPP **badly off**.
having spent more money **than you** have in the bank. OPP **in the black**. (See page 144.)
keep money so that you can use it later.
reduce the amount of sth that you spend, use, etc.
INF having a lot of money.
manage to buy the things you need with the money you have or earn.
owe money to sb.
INF not having much money.
rely on sb else to provide you with food, money, etc.

spotlight Phrasal verbs with pay

*I **paid off** my debts.* = finished paying the money I owed.
*She **paid me back**.* = gave me the money that she had borrowed from me.
*I **paid in** £1000.* = put £1000 into my bank account. OPP **take out**.

1 Correct the mistakes with the particles.

- I'm afraid I'm at the red.
- I cut back in my spending.
- Pay out the money you borrowed.
- He's been on debt for years.
- How will he pay over his debts?
- Go to the bank and pay the cheque on.
- She's absolutely rolling on money.
- You have to save out for it.

2 Complete the sentences.

- I take money _____ of my account once a week.
- I'm not very _____ with money; I just spend whatever I have.
- I find it very difficult to _____ back on my spending.
- Doctors live comfortably and are _____ off, but nurses are _____ off.
- Most elderly people are quite _____ up.
- Young people live _____ their parents till they are about 18.
- People who are _____ in money have to pay higher taxes.
- Lawyers find it difficult to make _____ meet.

3 ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY Are the sentences in Exercise 2 true about you and your country?

Write your answers in your notebook, or talk to another student.

Unit 41

1 Complete the texts with words from the box.

away good season happens get advance around beaten air rough

Holidays

Start a conversation



CRAZY CAT Hi, I'm hoping to (1) _____ away for a month travelling in Europe this summer, but I haven't got much to spend. At the same time, I don't want to (2) _____ it too much. Any suggestions?



ERIN Hi, Crazy. First thing is to book your flight a long time in (3) _____; that will save you loads of money. And if you can travel out of (4) _____, do so – it's much cheaper in June than August. As it (5) _____ I'm free in June and hoping to travel in Europe. Would you like a travelling companion? Let me know!



LEROY How about a camping trip? Camp sites these days are really comfortable. That way, the accommodation is cheap, and you'll be in the open (6) _____, which will do you (7) _____. If you manage to get off the (8) _____ track, you'll find more bargains in the quiet places – AND you'll get (9) _____ from all those other tourists! Use public transport to get (10) _____ – you know it makes sense. Have a great time.

Unit 42

1 Finish each sentence.

- At the beginning of a game, you use a coin to find out which team wins the _____.
- If a player has to leave the field for breaking a rule, they have been _____.
- If you shout to encourage your team, you are _____ them _____.
- If you have all your best players playing, you are at full _____ in it.
- If you don't join in with something, you take _____ in it.
- If something catches on, it becomes _____.

2 Rewrite the sentences starting with the words given. The meaning must stay the same.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 It has had an effect. | It has made _____. |
| 2 Anyone can participate. | Anyone can take _____. |
| 3 His job is connected with sport. | His job is something to _____. |
| 4 We almost won. | We came _____. |
| 5 I'm tired of training. | I've had _____. |
| 6 It will make it more interesting. | It will liven _____. |
| 7 I've enrolled for an English course. | I've signed _____. |
| 8 We started very well. | We got _____. |

47 I can describe damage and repair



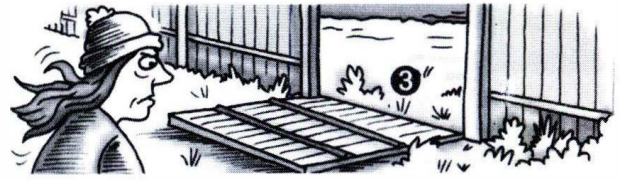
The bookcase **was falling to pieces** but I managed to **put it together** again.



They **knocked** the building **down**¹; now they're going to **put up** a block of flats **in** its **place**.



My shirt **was torn to bits** in the washing machine. I tried to **sew** it **up**², but in the end I had to **throw** it **away**.



Part of the fence **has blown down**³ in the wind. I hope I can **put it up** again.



There was a scene in the film where a car **blew up**⁴ and the house next to it **burnt down**.



The car **ran into** a tree. Fortunately no one was hurt, but the car was a **write-off**.



Two young guys stopped outside the bar, **broke** the door **down** and **smashed** the place **up**. It was terrible for the owners, who had just spent a lot of money **smartening** it **up**.

Glossary

put sth together
put sth up

make or mend sth by joining all the different parts.
construct sth such as a building, fence, some shelves, etc.

in sth/sb's place
throw sth away

instead of sth/sb (also **in place of sth/sb**).
get rid of sth that you no longer want. SYN **throw sth out**.

burn down
run into sth/sb
write-off

be destroyed by fire (also **burn sth down**).
hit sth/sb with a car, bus, etc. SYN **crash into sth/sb**.
a car, bus, etc. that has been so badly damaged that it cannot be repaired. **write sth off** v.

break sth down

make sth fall down or open by hitting it hard.
SYN **smash sth down**.

smash sth up
smartening sth/sb up

destroy sth deliberately (because you want to do it).
make a place or a person look more attractive.

spotlight to pieces/bits

The chair is falling to pieces. = starting to break. SYN **fall to bits** / **fall apart** (see picture 1).

The chair has fallen to pieces. = it has now broken.

He picked up the paper and tore it to pieces. = destroyed it by tearing it into small pieces. SYN **tear sth to bits**.

Sometimes **to pieces** and **to bits** are used for emphasis and not meant literally (as in the reference to the shirt in picture 3).

1 Match 1–8 with a–h.

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1 He ought to smarten | a pieces. |
| 2 The car had to be written | b apart. |
| 3 The wind blew the tree | c together. |
| 4 You should throw these eggs | d himself up. |
| 5 She tore the letter to | e up. |
| 6 The document was old; it just fell | f down. |
| 7 The chair broke, but I managed to put it | g off. |
| 8 They got into a fight and smashed the room | h away. |

2 Complete the dialogues.

- What happened to the old flats? ~ They _____ them down and rebuilt them.
- Why is she living in a hotel? ~ Oh, her house burnt _____ in the forest fires.
- Where's Mike? ~ He's out in the garden, smashing _____ some boxes.
- I hear his car is a _____. ~ Yes, he _____ into a wall. Fortunately he wasn't hurt.
- This table's _____ to bits. ~ Never mind, Bob will be able to put it _____ again.
- We need another shelf in the study. ~ Well, I could put one _____ if you like.
- Did the police have to break into the flat? ~ Yes, they had to break the door _____.
- This sheet is torn _____ bits. ~ Well, why don't you _____ it away?

3 Cross out one word which is not correct.

- Our neighbour was burnt down his garden shed.
- I'm going to get a new desk: this one is falling down to pieces.
- It was very old, so when I picked it up, it just fell to apart in my hands.
- Suddenly there was a very loud noise and the oil tank blew it up.
- The dog got hold of my bag and tore it up to pieces.
- We knocked the garage down and in its place of it we built a small studio.
- If you don't want those CDs, why don't you just throw them out off?
- The firemen smashed out the door down so that they could rescue the baby.

4 Rewrite the sentences using the word in capitals. The meaning must stay the same.

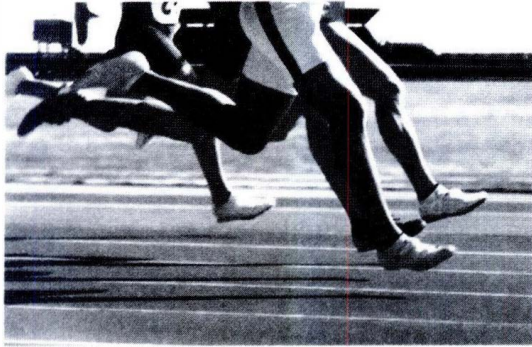
- I joined all the separate parts of the shelves again. PUT *I put the shelves together again.*
- The building was destroyed by fire. DOWN _____
 - The damage to the car couldn't be repaired. WRITE _____
 - Can't you get rid of those papers? AWAY _____
 - They had to destroy the building. KNOCK _____
 - The book broke into separate parts. BITS _____
 - The motorcyclist hit a brick wall. CRASH _____
 - I repaired the hole in my pocket. SEW _____
 - I sold the chair and put a sofa there instead. ITS _____

5 Complete the text with one word in each gap.

Our house was a terrible mess when we first moved in. In the kitchen, the cupboards were all falling (1) _____ and the room was really dirty. The first job was to clean everything up and (2) _____ out all the rubbish which the previous owners had left. Then Mark put some new cupboards (3) _____ and we were able to unpack our things. In the living room, we had to smarten everything (4) _____: that meant cleaning and redecorating. The curtains were dirty and torn in places, but they were very pretty, so I washed them and spent the afternoon (5) _____ them up. There was also an ugly wardrobe in the bedroom which took up a lot of space, so we got rid of it. And in its (6) _____, Mark (7) _____ up some shelves and a small cupboard. At last it was starting to feel like home.

48 I can say how things begin and end

A Different beginnings and endings



I **started off** the race quite well, but I couldn't **keep it up** and eventually I **came in** fifth.

She **set out to** write a short story, but **finished up** with a best-selling novel.

The fire **broke out** in the basement.

Have they **put it out** yet?

The business **closed down** last month.

They were mad to **set it up** anyway.

I recently **took up** golf, but I had to **give it up** because of a bad back.

Glossary

start sth off

begin doing sth (also **start off** begin to happen).

keep sth up

continue sth at the same high level.

come in (first, second, etc.)

finish a race in a particular position.

finish (up) with sth

have sth at the end.

break out

(of a fire, a fight, or a war) start.

put sth out

stop sth burning.

close down

(of a business activity) close permanently because it is making no money (also **close sth down**).

take sth up

start or learn to do sth, especially for pleasure.

give sth up / give up doing sth

stop doing sth you have done for a period of time.

spotlight Phrasal verbs with set

If you **set out to do sth**, you begin a job or task to achieve a particular aim (as above).

If you **set sth up**, you start a business, organization, etc. e.g. *I **set up** the new company two years ago.*

1 Do these sentences describe something that is beginning or ending? Write B or E.

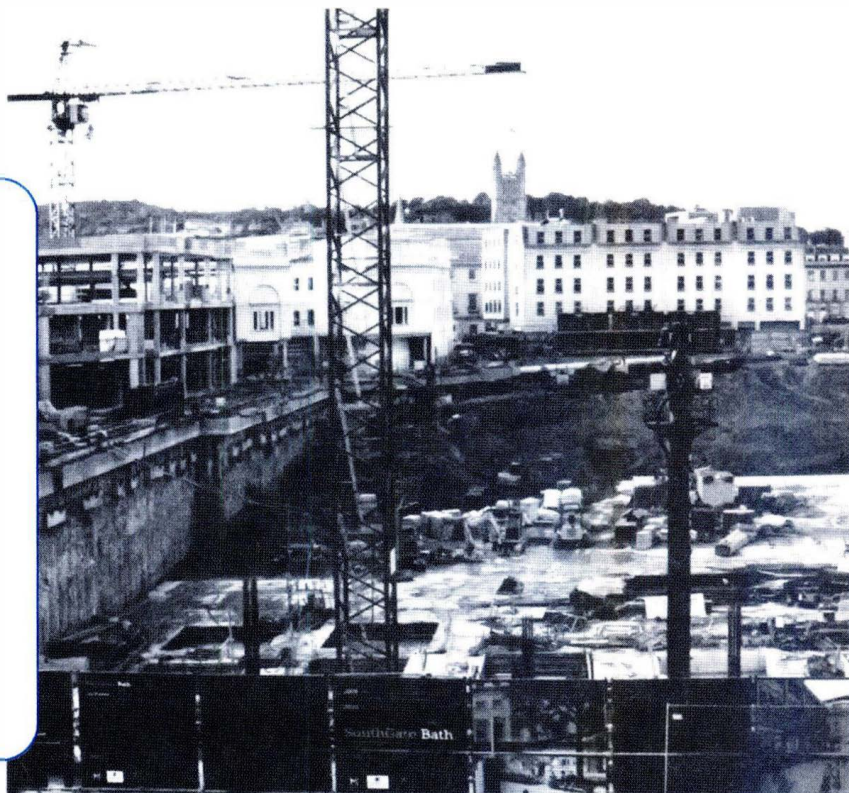
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Eddie has taken up golf. | 4 War has broken out. |
| 2 Pedro came in first. | 5 Anna gave up running last year. |
| 3 Lennie set up the café in 2008. | 6 Alec put his cigarette out. |

2 Write the correct particle.

- When he first became manager, he set _____ to make a lot of changes.
- Mike set _____ the company in 2006, but had to close it _____ because of the recession.
- I took _____ tennis because I needed more exercise, but I gave it _____ soon afterwards.
- A fire broke _____ in the warehouse, but they managed to put it _____ quite quickly.
- People didn't eat much at the party, so we finished _____ with lots of leftover food.
- It was a good race and Pam started _____ quite well. Unfortunately she couldn't quite keep it _____, and in the end I think she came _____ third.

B A new beginning

'The 1960s shopping centre was a disaster. It's hard to imagine how it **came about** in the first place, but the council decided to **knock** the whole thing **down** and **start from scratch** with a new development. There were problems **early on**, and it took ages to **get** the project **off the ground**, but the architects finally **came up with** a design that everyone liked. Now, two years later, the centre is really **taking shape**. **Judging by** the look of it, I feel that the designers **started out with** some good ideas, but have **ended up** with something of a compromise. It's quite attractive, but architecturally it doesn't **break** any **new ground**.'



Glossary

come about	happen (often used of sth that is surprising or hard to explain).
knock sth down	destroy a building by breaking the walls.
(start) from scratch	(start) from a new beginning. (👁 See page 144.)
early on	soon after the beginning.
get sth off the ground	If you get a project off the ground , you make it start happening successfully. A project can also get off the ground .
come up with sth	produce ideas or a solution to sth.
take shape	develop and become more organized and complete.
judging by/from sth	used to say what you think, based on what you have seen, heard, or learnt.
start out with sth	start doing sth with a particular intention.
end up	finish in a situation or place that you didn't expect to be in.
break new ground	do sth that hasn't been done before.

3 Circle the correct answer.

- Most of the problems happened early *in* | *on*.
- It took us a couple of years to get the company off the *ground* | *land*.
- We started *out* | *up* with the aim of creating a youth club.
- The main part of the sports centre is now taking *form* | *shape*.
- They're going to knock *down* | *over* all the old houses.
- I don't know who *went* | *came up* with this idea, but it won't work.
- Where did you end *up* | *out* last night?
- He joined the army but I don't know how that came *about* | *off*.

4 Rewrite the sentences using the words in capital letters. Keep the meaning the same.

- I'm starting my essay from the beginning. SCRATCH
- The problems occurred soon after the beginning. EARLY
- Based on his story, the boys are innocent. JUDGING
- They've done something completely new. BREAK
- The house is developing and looking more finished. SHAPE
- How did these changes happen? COME
- They've destroyed the offices. KNOCK
- I'm sure they'll find a solution. COME

49 I can talk about time

A Personal time

About me

I often get up **at the crack of dawn**.
I can get ready to go out **in no time**.
I go to the doctor **once in a blue moon**.
I go horse-riding **from time to time**.
Most of my clothes are a bit **out of date**.
One day I'm going to travel round the world.
I'm happy living where I am **for the time being**.
I do most things **on impulse**.
I live **from day to day**; I don't think about the future.

Glossary

at the crack of dawn	INF very early in the morning.
once in a blue moon	INF hardly ever; very rarely. (👁 See page 144.)
out of date	1 old-fashioned (as above). 2 without the most recent information, e.g. <i>These figures are out of date.</i>
one day	at some time in the future.
on impulse	without thinking about sth before you do it. SYN on the spur of the moment .
live from day to day	live without thinking about what will happen in the future.

spotlight Idioms with time

You will find many idioms with *time* in your dictionary:
in no time very quickly or very soon (also **in next to no time**).
from time to time sometimes, but not regularly or often.
for the time being for now and the immediate future.

1 Match the idioms with their opposites.

at the crack of dawn in next to no time for the time being
out of date on impulse once in a blue moon

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 fashionable OPP | 4 very often OPP |
| 2 late at night OPP | 5 very slowly OPP |
| 3 planned in advance OPP | 6 forever OPP |

2 Complete the sentences.

- I buy CDs on the of the moment.
- Hang on, I'll be ready in time.
- This technology is of date.
- I got up at the crack of
- One, I'll learn to play the piano
- She sees him once in a moon.
- I visit them from to
- She just lives from to

3 ABOUT YOU Are the sentences at the top of the page true for you? Write your answers, or talk to another student.

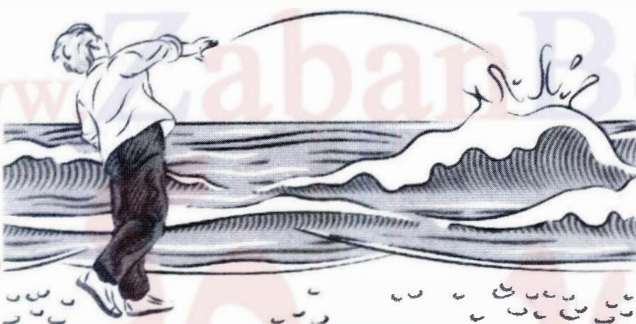
4 ABOUT YOUR DICTIONARY Look up the word *time* in your dictionary and read through the idioms at the end of the entry. Make a note of any new idioms you find interesting, and think how you would translate them into your own language.

Idioms – some interesting histories

How did English idioms come into use? Here we show the meanings behind some idioms, and how some of them developed.  Look at our website www.oup.com/elt/wordskills for more.

a stone's throw (Unit 2)

A **stone's throw** is the distance that you can throw a stone – in other words, only a short distance from where you are standing.

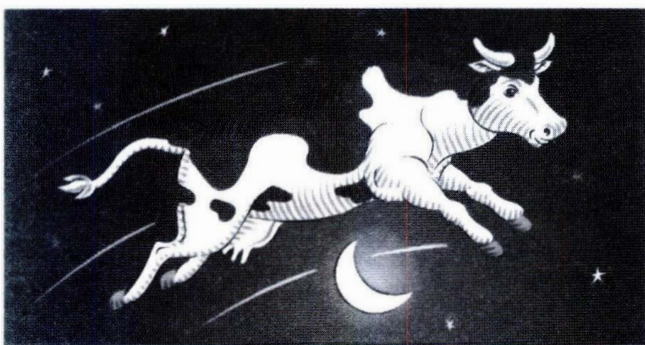


be over the moon (Unit 27)

In early use, the idiom was to 'jump' over the moon. It spread because of its use in the children's nursery rhyme (= poem):

*Hey, diddle, diddle,
 The cat and the fiddle,
 The cow jumped over the moon.*

It means, be extremely happy about something.



brush sth up / brush up on sth (Unit 9)

You could improve the appearance of something like a silk hat or a woollen coat by brushing it. Nowadays, the idiom expresses the idea of improving a skill that you have not used for a long time, e.g. speaking a foreign language.

catch sb red-handed (Unit 35)

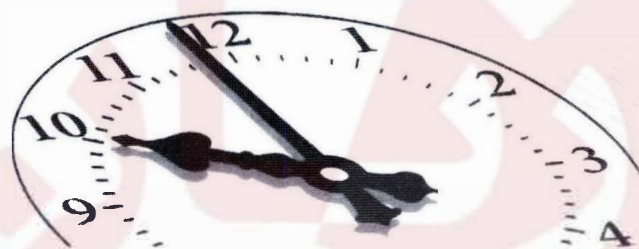
If someone was **caught red-handed**, they had blood on their hands after murdering someone or poaching (= killing birds and animals illegally on another person's land). Nowadays if someone is **caught red-handed**, they have been caught while doing something wrong or illegal.

in the red OPP in the black (Unit 33)

In bank accounts, if you owed money (i.e. you were in debit), the amount was written in red ink; amounts of money actually in your account were written in black.

on the dot (Unit 49)

On the dot refers to a traditional clock face. The minutes are marked as dots, which the minute hand covers as it moves round the clock.

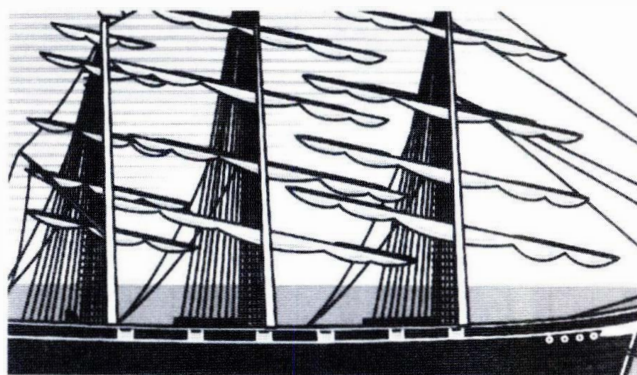


once in a blue moon (Units 3, 49)

The moon is obviously not blue, and it rarely looks blue; this phrase suggests that if something happens **once in a blue moon**, it rarely or never happens.

show sb the ropes (Unit 24)

In the past, sailing ships had many ropes of different kinds, and sailors had to learn how to handle them. If someone **shows you the ropes**, they teach you a skill or show you how something is done.



start from scratch (Unit 48)

The origin of this phrase is to do with sport. People used to scratch a line on the ground as the starting point of a race, or to show where boxers had to stand at the beginning of a match. It now means to start something again from the beginning, probably because the previous work you did on it was no use.

5

- 1 **read** through my notes
- 2 tried to **breathe** in and out
- 3 feel my **mind** going blank
- 4 none of them **made** sense
- 5 keep my **eye** on the clock
- 6 I ran **out** of time
- 7 **miss/leave** out the last question
- 8 steered **clear** of my friends

6

Answers from a British person.

- 1 Yes, I always stay up late revising on the night before an exam.
- 2 I like to be alone and quiet just before an exam, but that's not often possible.
- 3 I try to keep my eye on the clock, but I find that difficult to do if I'm really concentrating on what I'm writing.
- 4 Yes, I do try to stick to the question, but I'm not good at doing so.
- 5 If I get stuck on a question I usually try to write something, even if I know it's not answering the question. I should probably just move on instead.
- 6 It's a good idea to breathe in and out slowly if your mind goes blank.
- 7 I never have enough time to read through my answers at the end.

Unit 11

1

- | | | |
|-----------|---------|-----------|
| 1 foot | 3 worst | 5 earlier |
| 2 compare | 4 best | 6 on |

2

- 1 She will **go** far in her career.
- 2 I was **in** my element at university.
- 3 She came **up** with some good ideas.
- 4 He sat **back** and did nothing.
- 5 Why did she drop **out** of college?
- 6 It went from **bad** to worse.

3

- 1 comparison (By comparison)
- 2 early (it's early days)
- 3 up (it's not up to much)
- 4 dropped (dropped out)
- 5 thinking (thinking on his feet)
- 6 better (be better off)

4

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1 start off / get off | 5 bring out |
| 2 know | 6 think |
| 3 do | 7 pull |
| 4 think | |

5

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|--------|
| 1 getting | 4 pulling | 7 foot |
| 2 out | 5 stuff | 8 do |
| 3 much | 6 thanks | |

Unit 12

1

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 think straight | 4 think back |
| 2 think ahead | 5 think twice |
| 3 think for himself | 6 think it over |

2

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| 1 over/through | 5 mind |
| 2 back | 6 yourself |
| 3 over | 7 spur |
| 4 straight | 8 twice |

3

Answers from a Czech person.

No. I like to think ahead.

It's sometimes good to accept other people's opinions, but I mostly prefer thinking for myself. I like to solve my problems on my own, but I sometimes consult my close friends.

I try to avoid doing things on the spur of the moment.

That's right. I always tend to start panicking. Yes, I always think twice before doing anything important.

I hardly ever think back to my time at primary school.

Unit 13

1

- 1 I'm a bit out of the practice these days.
- 2 She knows what ~~that~~ she's doing.
- 3 Would you like to give ~~to~~ it a try?
- 4 Are you ~~no~~ any good at making things?
- 5 I'm no ~~much~~ good at maths.
- 6 I meant to do it but it slipped ~~out~~ my mind.
- 7 She knew it like the back ~~side~~ of her hand.
- 8 Are you any good with ~~for~~ electrical things?

2

- | | | |
|--------|--------------|--------|
| 1 with | 4 back | 7 hang |
| 2 head | 5 good, give | 8 out |
| 3 in | 6 mind | |

3

Answers from a New Zealander.

- 1 I'm good with my hands, especially making and fixing things, e.g. sewing, basic furniture repairs, etc.

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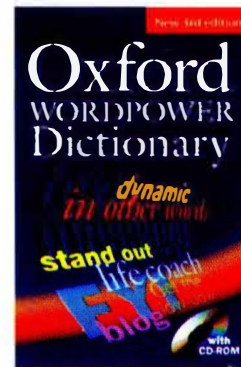
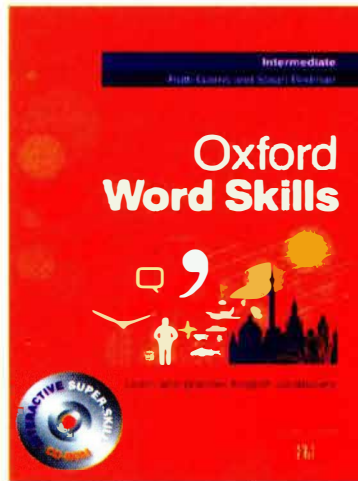
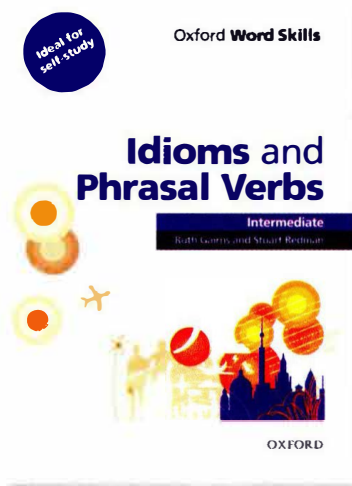
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