

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ❑ Types of questions asked in this chapter
- ❑ Different types of error and how to identify those
- ❑ Modifiers Error/Parallelism Error

IDIOMS

An expression or phrase or collection of words, often informal, that has a meaning of its own which is not apparent from the meanings of its individual words is an **IDIOM**. In other words, meaning of **IDIOMS** is generated through the collection of individual words. For example “To kick the bucket” is an idiom which means “to die.” Knowledge of Idioms is important because in the absence of it, key meaning of passage or sentence may not be understood.

Following pages contain a list of the most commonly encountered idioms and their meanings.

A

Abide by—adhere to, agree to
 Above board—honest, fair, frank
 Account for—provide an explanation for
 All agog—in a state of excitement
 All and Sundry—everyone without exception
 All intents and purposes—practically, in actual practice
 An axe to grind—selfish motive
 Answer a purpose—to serve a purpose
 Answer for—take the responsibility for
 Apple of discord—cause of quarrel, a bone of contention
 Apple of one's eye—an object of love, the most valuable possession
 Apple pie order—in perfect order
 Ask after—inquire about one's condition or health
 Ask for—asked to be given, to run the risk of something negative
 Ask out—invite to a function (or an outing or a party)
 At a low ebb—in a state of decline
 At a pinch—in a difficulty
 At a stone's throw—very near

At a stretch—continuously, without a break
 At an arm's length—to keep aloof, to avoid, to keep at a distance
 At any rate—in any event, under any circumstances
 At home in—to be strong, to be comfortable with a subject
 At one's beck and call—at one's disposal or command
 At one's fingertips or ends—to be an expert at something
 At par—on level with, of a similar quality
 At random—aimlessly, without goals
 At sea—weak, perplexed
 At sixes and sevens—in disorder, pell-mell
 At stake—in danger
 At the bottom—real cause
 At the eleventh hour—at a late stage, at the last moment
 At the mercy of—in the power of
 At the outset—right in the beginning
 A.B.C.—elementary facts
 Achilles Heels—persons weak or vulnerable point
 to Add fuel to the fire—to increase anger
 to be At daggers drawn with—to be enemies, to be on bad terms
 to be At one's wit's end—to be in a fix or confusion, to be perplexed
 to be At large—to be free and not under any control

B

Back out—to withdraw, to break a promise
 Bad blood—enmity, bad feelings
 Bag and baggage—completely, leaving behind nothing
 Be off one's head—to be mad, insane
 Bear a grudge—to have bitter feelings towards someone
 Bear in mind—remember
 Bear up—keep one's spirits under hostile conditions
 Bed of roses—full of joys and pleasures

Bed of thorns—full of sufferings
 Behind one's back—in one's absence
 Beside the mark—irrelevant, not to the point
 Between the devil and the deep sea—to be in a fix or between two difficulties
 Big gun—an important figure
 Bird's eyeview—a general view or study
 Black sheep—a disgraceful person
 Blessing in disguise—a certain thing which appears to be a curse in the beginning but proves to be a blessing in the end
 Blow one's own trumpet—to speak proudly of one's achievements
 Blow over—to end, to extinguish/terminate
 Blue blood—a member of aristocracy
 Bolt from the blue—a sudden shock or calamity
 Bone of contention—a cause of quarrel
 Bread and butter—livelihood
 Breakdown—mental or nervous collapse of a person
 Break-in—enter with the aim of stealing
 Bring up—to rear the children; to start a topic for discussion
 Buckle under—to accept under pressure, to give in
 Burning question—an important question or topic of the day
 By far—beyond all comparison
 By hook or by crook—by all means, fair or foul
 By leaps and bounds—rapidly, at a rapid pace
 By no means—in no way
 By virtue of—on account of
 to Bank upon—to depend, to rely
 to Be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth—born in prosperous circumstances
 to Be in the good books—to be in favour with
 to Be in the bad books—to be in disfavour with
 to Bear the brunt of—to bear the consequences
 to Bear the palm—to win reward
 to Beat about the bush—to talk irrelevant
 to Beat a retreat—to retire, to move back
 to Beat hollow—to defeat completely
 to Bell the cat—to face a risk
 to Bid fair—likely to be
 to Break the ice—to break the silence, to get over initial shyness
 to Bring credit to—to bring fame and honour
 to Bring down the house—to win general praise
 to Bring to book—to punish the guilty
 to Burn one's fingers—to get into trouble
 to Burn the candle at both ends—to waste one's energy, time and money uselessly
 to Burn the midnight oil—to work very hard till late at night
 to Bury the hatchet—to forget a quarrel, to make peace

C

a Cat's paw—to make somebody a tool
 a Chicken-hearted person—a cowardly person
 a Child's play—something very easy
 a Cock and bull story—an imaginary or false story
 a Cool head—a calm judgment
 a Cry in the wilderness—a useless cry
 Call on—to pay a visit
 Capital punishment—punishment of death
 Care about—to feel for someone/something
 Care for—have respect or regard for someone
 Cast down—depressed, dejected
 Casting vote—a vote which decides the issue when the voting is otherwise equal
 Close shave—a narrow escape
 Come of—come from, descended from
 Come off—to be successful
 Come round—become conscious; to visit; adopt an opinion
 Come to hand—receive
 Count on—to believe in, rely on
 Count out—to disregard
 Crocodile tears—false tears
 Cut and dried—in a readymade form
 to Call a spade a spade—to speak in plain terms, to speak out openly
 to Call into question—to object to
 to Carry fire and sword—to cause destruction
 to Call for—to demand
 to Carry off one's feet—to be wild with excitement
 to Carry the day—to win, to succeed
 to Cast a slur upon—to bring a blot, to bring discredit
 to Cast a spell over—fascinate or attract
 to Cast into the shade—to throw into obscure position
 to Catch napping—to take unawares
 to Catch tartar—to meet with a person who is more than a match for one
 to Change colour—to turn pale with fear
 to Chew the cud—to think deeply
 to Clinch the issue—to decide the matter
 to Come of age—to be major, to be twenty-one
 to Come off with flying colours—to succeed well
 to Come to a head—to reach a crisis
 to Come to a standstill—to come to a stop
 to Come to grief—to suffer, to be ruined, to fail
 to Compare notes—to discuss impressions or opinions
 to Cool one's heels—to wait for somebody patiently
 to Cross one's mind—to come into one's mind
 to Cross swords—to fight
 to Cry for the moon—to wish for something impossible
 to Cry over spilt milk—to waste time in vain, repent over lost opportunities

to Cut a sorry figure—to feel humbled, to make oneself ridiculous, to produce a poor result
 to Cut no ice—to have no effect
 to Cut the Gordian knot—to get over a difficulty by a bold strike

D

a Dead letter—no longer in use
 a Deadlock—a position in which no progress can be made
 a Dog in the manger—a selfish policy
 a Drawn game or battle—in which no party wins
 Dark horse—a competition of unknown capabilities
 Dead of night—in the middle of
 Dead shot—a marksman whose aim never goes wrong
 Deal in—to trade in something, to be busy with something
 Democle's sword—an impending danger
 Die down—reduce to zero slowly, to diminish and finish
 Die hard—customs that require a long period to die out
 Dirt cheap—very cheap
 Do away with—reject, get rid of
 Do one proud—to give cause for feeling proud
 Do up—put in better condition
 Down and out—completely beaten
 Draw in—to pull into something
 Dress down—to scold, censure, rebuke
 Dutch courage—fictitious courage induced somehow
 to be Dashed to the ground—to fail
 to Dance attendance upon—to wait on somebody always
 to Dance to one's tune—to carry out orders
 to Decline with thanks—to refuse or neglect
 to Die in harness—to die while working till death
 to Do full justice—to have one's fill, to do a thing thoroughly
 to Drive home—to lay emphasis on, to make something very clear

E

at the Eleventh hour—at the last moment
 Eat into—to destroy
 Eat one out of house and home—to eat in a gluttonous manner
 Eat one's heart out—to worry excessively
 Eat out of one's hand—give no trouble
 Enough and to spare—in plenty
 Every inch—completely
 Eye for eye—tit for tat
 Eyewash—means of deceit
 to Eat humble pie—to offer an humble apology
 to Eat one's words—to go back on one's promise, to back out
 to Egg on—to keep urging regarding something

to End in smoke—to come to nothing
 to Extend the hand of friendship—to express a desire for friendship

F

a Fair hand—a beautiful and clear hand
 a Fair weather friend—a selfish friend
 a Fatal disease—a disease that ends in death
 a Far cry—a long way or distance
 a Feather in one's cap—another achievement to be proud of
 a Fish out of water—to be in an uncomfortable position
 a Flying visit—a hasty and brief visit
 a Fool's paradise—state of joy based on false hopes
 by Fits and starts—irregularly
 Face-to-face—personally
 Fair play—impartial treatment
 Fall flat—collapse, flop, fail to generate interest
 Fall foul of—to incur the disfavour of
 Fall over one another—to try and do something before others
 Fed up—to be tired of to be sick of
 Few and far between—few and rare
 First and foremost—important
 Flesh and blood—human nature
 Fly at—attack
 Fly in the face of discretion—foolishly take a course that is not logical
 Fly off at a tangent—to start discussing something totally irrelevant
 For good—for ever
 Foul play—bad intentions
 From hand to mouth—a miserable existence
 to Face the music—to face trouble, to face consequences of one's actions
 to Fall to the ground—to come to nothing
 to Fan the flames—to increase excitement
 to Feather one's nest—to care for one's selfish interest
 to Feel at home—to feel happy or at ease
 to Fight shy of—to attempt to avoid a thing or person
 to Fish in troubled waters—to take advantage of the troubles of others
 to Fizzle out—failed out gradually
 to Flog a dead horse—to waste one's energy and time
 to Fly in the face of—to insult
 to Follow in the footsteps of—to follow somebody's example
 to Follow suit—to follow example of
 to Foot the bill—to pay the bill

G

Gala day—a day of rejoicings
 Gift of the gab—fluency of speech

Give and take—the making of mutual concessions, *quid pro quo*

Give currency to—to give wide publicity

Go in for—to take up as an occupation

Go off the deep end—to lose temper

Go the rounds—to be circulated

Grain of salt—to believe only a part of statement

to be Greek—unintelligible, not clear

to be a Good hand at—to be expert

to Gain ground—to progress

to Get at the bottom of—to find out the truth

to Get away with—to do something without the fear of any repercussion

to Get back at—to retaliate

to Get down to brass tacks—decide about the practical details

to Get into a mess—to get into muddle

to Get into a scrap—to be involved in a difficult situation

to Get into hot water—to get into scrap, to get into trouble

to Get on one's nerves—to be a source of worry

to Get the better of—to overpower, to defeat

to Get the sack—to be dismissed

to Get the upper hand—to become stronger, to get the better position

to Get wind of—to come to know of

to Gird up one's loins—to prepare oneself for a work

to Give a bit or a piece of one's mind—to rebuke; to scold

to Give a person the cold shoulder—to show a person apathy

to Give a slip—to escape

to Give a wide berth to—to avoid, to keep aloof from

to Give away—to reveal, betray, disclose

to Give chapter and verse—to give full proof

to Give in—to yield to pressure, to succumb

to Give oneself airs—to assume a superior attitude, to feel proud

to Give quarter to—to have sympathy with

to Give the cold shoulder—to receive in a cold and careless manner

to Give way—collapse, replace by

to Go against the grain—against one's likings

to Go all out for—to make the maximum possible effort

to Go by—to judge something by

to Go easy—not to use excessively

to Go hand-in-hand—to go together

to Go scot-free—to escape unpunished

to Go the whole hog—to go to the fullest extent; to agree

to Go through fire and water—to make every sacrifice

to Go to dogs—to be utterly ruined

to Go to the wall—to be ruined to, be hard pressed

to Go with the current—to follow the general trend

to Go without saying—to be clear

to Go home to—to appeal

to Grease the palm—to bribe

H

a Hair breadth escape—a narrow escape

a Hard nut to crack—a difficult problem, a stubborn person

Hair standing on end—a sign of fear and surprise

Hale and hearty—very healthy and sound

Hammer and tongs—with all might

Hand in gloves with—on very intimate terms, also in close association

Hang by a thread—to be in a miserable condition

Hang heavy—difficult to pass

Happy go lucky—careless, depending on good luck

Hard and fast—strict

Hard of hearing—somewhat deaf

Hard up—in financial difficulty

Haunted house—in which ghosts or spirits are supposed to live

Heads and shoulders above others—very superior

Heart and soul—with full energy

Henpecked—a husband under the control or thumb of his wife

Herculean task—a work requiring great efforts

High spirits—to be very happy

High time—proper time

Hobson's choice—no choice at all

Hold good—to be valid

Hold on—to continue efforts

Hold out—not yield

Hole and corner—secret and underhand

Horns of dilemma—to be in a fix

Hue and cry—to raise a great cry and or stir, to raise alarm

Hush money—a bribe, price of silence

to be Hoisted with one's petard—to be killed with one's own sword

to Hammer out—to plan, to devise

to Hang in the balance—undecided

to Hang fire—delayed

to Harp on the same string or scheme—to talk continuously of the same matter

to Have a bee in one's bonnet—to take the remarks seriously

to Have a finger in every pie—to interfere unnecessarily

to Have a windfall—unexpected good fortune

to Have an old head on young shoulders—ripe in wisdom but young in years

to Have one's hands full—to be very busy

to Have one's way—to do one's own will

to Hit below the belt—to be mean, to fight unfairly

to Hit the ceiling—to give an outlet to anger

to Hit the nail on the head—to do what is proper at a proper time

to Hold a brief—to support be action or influence

to Hold a candle to—to be equal to, to be comparable to the other

to Hope against hope—to entertain hope when there is no hope

to Hold the baby—be burdened with a task that should be shared by others too
to Hold one's own—to maintain one's position boldly
to Hold water—to be valid
to Hold no water—not valid

I

an Iron hand—severe hand
an Iron will—strong determination
an Irony of fate—happening of events contrary to natural expectations
In a nutshell—briefly, as a summary
In black and white—in writing
In cold blood—cruelly
In full swing—in great progress
In the air—widespread, prevalent
In the course of—during
In the face of—in spite of
In the guise of—in the dress of
In the light of—keeping in view
In the long run—at the end
In the nick of time—just in time
In the teeth of—in the face of
In the twinkling of an eye—in no time
In the wake of—behind
In tune with—in keeping with
In vogue—to be in fashion
Ins and outs—full details
Iron out—smoothen
to be In one's elements—in one's proper sphere

J

Jack of all trades—a person supposed to know everything partially
to Hold no water—not valid
Jail bird—a person who has been to jail many times
Jump at—to accept immediately
Jump down one's throat—to reply in an angry manner
Jump on—to scold severely
Jump to the conclusion—to arrive at a conclusion soon

K

Keep to—stick to, adhere to
Keep up with—to keep pace with
Kick up the dust—to create disturbance
Kith and kin—relatives
to Keep a good table—to entertain
to Keep a straight face—to avoid smiling or laughing
to Keep abreast of—to be familiar with
to Keep body and soul together—to remain alive
to Keep one's head—to remain mentally calm in an emergency

to Keep one's head above water—to tide over difficulty, to escape debt
to Keep the ball rolling—to maintain interest of a conversation
to Keep the powder dry—to be ready for any work
to Keep the wolf from the door—to keep away, hunger and starvation
to Keep up appearances—to maintain outward show
to Kick up a row—to make a great noise
to Knock down—to defeat
to Knock off—to reduce; stop working

L

a Left-handed compliment—a false praise
at a Low ebb—on the decline
Labour of love—work undertaken not for profit but for service
Laughing stock—an object of ridicule
Lay off—to remove from work
Leap in the dark—a careless action
Lend oneself to—allow to be carried away
Let down—to fail to keep promise
Let off—released
Let up—to be sluggish
to the Letter—completely
Life and soul—main figure
Lion's share—a major share
Live up to—to maintain certain standards
Loaves and fishes—material comforts
Lock, stock and barrel—with all belongings
Look blue—to feel nervous or depressed
Look down one's nose—to regard others contemptuously
Look forward to—to expect with pleasure
Look on—watch carefully
Look out—take care
Look to—to request for help
Look up—to verify
Look up to—to admire something/someone
to Land an ear—to listen to
to Land on one's feet—to be lucky
to Laugh in one's sleeves—to laugh in secret but not openly
to Lead a cat and dog life—to lead a life of constant quarrelling
to Lead a dog's life—to lead a miserable life
to Lead astray—to misguide
to Leave in the lurch—to leave in time of difficulty and trouble
to Leave no stone unturned—to make all possible efforts
to Let bygones be bygones—to ignore the past
to Let off steam—to react aggressively to release the tensions
to Lie in wait for—to wait for in concealment

to Live in glass-houses—to be open to criticism
to Lose head—to lose balance of mind, to be proud

M

a Man of straw—a man with no voice or will of his own
a Moot point—a point or question still open to discussion
Maiden speech—a speech made for the first time
Man in the street—an ordinary person
Man of letters—a scholar with literary tastes
Man of moment—an important person
Man of word—a reliable person
Much ado about nothing—to make fuss
to Make a clean sweep of—to remove completely
to Make a dash—to go quickly
to Make a mark—to distinguish oneself
to Make a mess of—to bungle
to Make a mountain of mole hill—to exaggerate difficulties or trifles
to Make a pint of—to do something (certainly)
to Make amends for—to compensate for damage or injury
to Make an example of—to punish someone to make it a warning to others
to Make away with—to carry off
to Make both ends meet—to live within one's income
to Make do without—to manage without something
to Make free with—to take liberty with
to Make hay while the sun shines—to make the best use of the opportunity
to Make headway—to progress slowly and steadily
to Make light of—to treat lightly, to attach no importance
to Make much of—to make an issue of something trivial
to Make neither head nor tail of—not to understand
to Make one's way—to succeed, to prosper
to Make the flesh creep—cause someone to feel fear
to Make the heart bleed—to be filled with sorrow or pity
to Make up—to compensate
to Make up one's mind—to resolve
to Make up with—to compose one's differences
to Make way—to make room for others
Wide of the mark—irrelevant

N

a Narrow escape—to be saved with a great difficulty
a Necessary evil—something which cannot be avoided
Neck and neck—side by side; even in a race or contest
Nook and corner—everywhere
Not worth the salt—good for nothing
Now and again—occasionally
Null and void—invalid, of no effect
to Nip in the bud—to destroy a thing at the very beginning
to Nurse a grudge—to have jealousy or revenge

O

Odds and ends—different things, big and small
Off hand—without previous preparation
Of no avail—of no use
Of one's own accord—of one's own free will
On one's last legs—about to fall
On the sly—privately
On the spur of the moment—without any deliberation, at once
Order of the day—something common or general
Out of pocket—without money, short of
Out of the wood—out of danger or difficulty
Once for all—finally
Out of joint—in disorder and confusion
On the face of it—apparently
On the ground of—for
to be On the lookout for—to be in the search of
to be On the right scent—to be going in right direction
to be On the right side of—to be less than or below
to be On the wane—to decline
to be On the wrong side of—to be more than

P

Pillar to post—form one place of shelter to another
Point blank—frankly
Pros and cons—arguments for and against
to Pay in the same coin—to give tit for tat
to Pay lip service—sympathy, to pretend to be faithful
to Pay off old scores—to have revenge
to Play ducks and drakes—to spend lavishly
to Play fast and loose—to say one thing and to do another (be inconsistent)
to Play into the hands of—to be under the control of
to Play second fiddle—to be in a subordinate position
to Play to the gallery—to appeal to lower taste
to Play truant—to stay away from class
to Plead quality—to confess one's crime
to Pocket an insult—to bear insult quietly
to Poison one's ears—to prejudice
to Poke one's nose—to interfere with
to Pull a long face—to look sad and worried
to Pull one's legs—to make a fool of
to Put a spoke in one's wheel—to hinder one's progress
to Put heads together—to consult
to Put one's foot down—to show determination
to Put the best foot forward—to do one's best
to Put the cart before the horse—to do things in a wrong manner

R

a Rainy day—a time of difficulty or poverty
a Red letter day—auspicious day of rejoicing, lucky and important day

a Red rag to a bull—highly irritating, a cause for anger
 a Rolling stone—one who is never constant to one work or the other
 a Rough diamond—an illiterate but noble person
 a Royal road—an easy way to achieve an end
 Rain or shine—under all circumstances
 Red tapism—official formalities causing excessive delays
 Right hand man—a very useful person on whom one can depend
 Rise from the ranks—to rise from a humble position
 Root and branch—completely, entirely
 Run over—go over
 the Rank and file—the masses
 to Rack one's brains—to think hard
 to Read between the lines—to read carefully
 to Rest on one's laurels—to rest satisfied with the honours already won
 to Rest on one's oars—to rest after hard work
 to Ride roughshod over—to be inconsiderable or cruel
 to Rise to the occasion—to be found equal to the task
 to Rub shoulders with—to come in close touch with
 to Run amuck—to go mad
 to Run down—weak in health
 to Run riot—to wander without restraint
 to Run the gauntlet—to undergo severe criticism

S

a Sharp tongue—a bitter tongue
 a Sheet anchor—the main support
 a Square deal—a fair bargain, justice
 a Square meal—full meal
 a Square peg in a round hole—a misfit
 a Stepping stone—source of success or help
 a Storm in a tea cup—a quarrel for trifling reason
 a Stumbling block—a great obstacle
 by the Skin of one's teeth—very narrowly
 Scapegoat—a person who is made to bear the blame of others
 Scot free—to go without punishment
 See through—understand
 Shake in the shoes—to be in a state of fear
 Shake off—to get rid of
 Side issue—something not connected with the matter in hand
 Sing low—to express one's views in an inconspicuous manner
 Sink differences—to forget/overlook differences
 Smooth sailing—no difficulty
 Snake in the grass—a hidden enemy, a deceitful person
 Sniff at—to show derision for
 Spill one's sides—to laugh merrily
 Stand by—to support
 Steer clear of—to avoid, to keep aloof

Sum and substance—gist, purport
 Sweet tooth—liking for sweetmeat
 Swelled head—pride
 Sword of damocles—an impending danger
 to do a Snow job—to fool someone
 to Sail in the same boat—to be equally exposed to risk
 to Sail under false colours—to pretend to be what one is not, to try to deceive
 to Save one's skin—to accept without loss
 to See a thing through coloured glasses—to see a thing with a prejudiced mind
 to Set at naught—to disregard
 to See eye-to-eye with—to agree
 to Set thames on fire—to try to achieve an impossible distinction
 to Show a clean pair of heels—to run away
 to Show the white feather—to show signs of cowardice
 to Sing the blues—to exhibit a discouraged attitude
 to Sit on the fence—to remain neutral
 to Sit pretty—to be in a safe and comfortable position
 to Sit up—to take notice of
 to Smell a rat—to suspect something
 to Sow the wild oats—to indulge in youthful follies
 to Speak one's mind—to speak frankly
 to Speak volumes—to bear sufficient evidence for or against
 to Spill the beans—to give secret information
 to Split hairs—to go into minute details
 to Spread like a wild fire—to spread rapidly.
 to Stand in good stead—to be useful and serviceable
 to Stand on one's own legs—to be independent
 to Stand on ceremony—to insist on formalities
 to Stand up for—to support
 to Stare in the face—to threaten
 to Steal a march—to get the advantage secretly
 to Stem the tide of—to check, to stop
 to Step into another's shoes—to take another's place
 to Stick to one's guns—to stand firm, to stick to one's principles
 to Strain every nerve—to try one's best
 to Stretch a point—to bend the rules
 to Swallow the bait—to fall an easy victim to temptations

T

a Thorn in the flesh—to be a source of anger or displeasure
 a Turncoat—a person who changes opinions
 a Turning point—anything that brings change
 on Tenterhooks—in a state of suspense and anxiety
 Take ill—fall ill; consider unfavourably
 Take the cake—to be the topmost
 Tall talk—boastful and exaggerated talk
 Thankless task—a selfless work for which we cannot expect anything

The thin edge of the wedge—small beginning with bright future

The three R's—reading, writing and arithmetic

Through thick and thin—under all circumstances

Tied to the apron string of—to be dependent upon somebody

to be Taken aback—to be extremely surprised

to Take a fancy to—to like something

to Take a leaf out of another's book—to follow somebody's example

to Take a thing lying down—to pocket an insult without a murmur

to Take after—to resemble in features

to Take an issue—to quarrel

to Take away one's breath—to surprise

to Take by storm—to conquer rapidly

to Take exception to—to object

to Take French leave—leave without permission

to Take heart—to pluck up courage

to Take off the hat—to show respect

to Take one's cue—to take a hint

to Take root—to become firmly established

to Take stock of—to observe and estimate

to Take the bull by the horns—to face a difficulty boldly

to Take the lead—to surge ahead in a competition

to Take the plunge—to take a bold decision

to Take time by the forelock—to act at once, to avoid delay

to Take to heart—to feel

to Take to heels—to run away

to Take to task—to call to account, to scold, to require explanation

to Take up the cudgels—to defend, to fight for somebody's claims

to Talk shop—to discuss exclusively of one's business on profession

to Talk (someone) into—persuade by talking

to Talk (someone) out of—to discourage

to Talk through a hat—to exaggerate or bluff or make wild statement

to the Tune of—to the amount of

to Throw cold water on—to discourage

to Throw down the gauntlet—to give an open challenge

to Throw mud at—to abuse, to vilify

to Tip off—to give a secret hint

to Turn a deaf ear to—to refuse to listen to

to Turn one's head—to be proud

to Turn over a new leaf—a change for the better

to Turn tail—to withdraw cowardly

to Turn the corner—to pass the critical stage

to Turn the tables on—to reverse the situation

to Turn turtle—to upset, to capsize

Tooth and nail—furiously, violently

True to one's salt—to be loyal to someone

Twinkling of an eye—very quickly

U

an Uphill task—a difficult work

Under a cloud—in disfavour or disgrace

Under lock and key—carefully

Under the thumb of—under the control of

Up and doing—active

Up one's sleeves—something hidden but ready for use in reserve

Up to the mark—up to certain standard

Ups and downs—good and bad times

Utopian scheme—a visionary scheme, not practicable

V

a Vexed question—a question regarding which there has been much controversy but no solution has been arrived at

to Vie with—to compete with

W

a Wet blanket—kill joy, a dull fellow who spoils our joy

a White elephant—an expensive burdensome but use less thing

a White lie—a harmless lie

a Wild goose chase—a foolish and useless search

a Wolf in a sheep's clothing—a hypocrite, a deceiver

to be Within an ace of—almost nearly

to Wash one's hands of—to have no connection

to Weather the storm—to come out safely through a difficulty

to While away—to pass in amusement

to Win laurels—to achieve success or win fame

to Wind up—to bring to an end

Wait upon—to serve

Walk over—very easy victory

Wash out—quite dull

Wear and tear—decrease in value due to constant use

Wide of the mark—beside the purpose

Willy-nilly—somehow or the other

Windfall—unexpected good fortune

With a grain of salt—with some reservation, not at the face value of

With a vengeance—excessively

With open arms—warmly and cordially

Word of mouth—a solemn promise

PHRASES

Phrasal Verbs

Many verbs (called 'phrasal verbs'), when followed by various prepositions or adverbs, acquire an idiomatic sense. Some examples are given below:

Example

- She backed up (supported) his boyfriend's claim.
- The current disturbances will soon blow over (pass off).
- The investigating officer produced evidence to bear out (substantiate) the charge of corruption.
- You must not build your hopes upon (rely upon) his promises.
- The matter has been cleared up (explained).
- I readily closed with (accepted) his offer.
- He is ready to dispose of (sell) his car for ₹1,500.
- Rust has eaten away (corroded) the plate.
- They fixed upon (chose) him to do the work.
- The habit of chewing tobacco has been growing upon (is having stronger and stronger hold over) him.
- About a day ago I saw a beggar hanging about (loitering about) our bungalow.
- These events led up to (culminated in) the establishment of a republic.
- During excavations one of the workmen lighted upon (chanced to find, discovered) a gold idol.
- During her long illness she often longed for (desired) death.
- I could not prevail on (persuade, induce) him to attend the meeting.
- For years I could not shake off (get rid of) malaria.
- I threatened to show him up (expose him).
- All eyes turned to him because he was the only person who could stave off (prevent, avert) the impending war.
- He is sticking out for (persists in demanding) better terms.
- I must think the matter over (i.e., consider it).
- Train up (educate) a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.
- That fellow trumped up (concocted, fabricated) a story.
- He seems to be well off (in comfortable circumstances).

BEAR

- Rajeev bore away (won) many prizes at the school sports.
- The new Sultan has been able to bear down (overthrow, crush) all opposition.
- His evidence bears out (confirms, corroborates), the evidence of the first witness.
- In his misfortune God gave him strength to bear up (to keep up spirits, not to despair).

- A religious hope bears up (supports) a man in his trials.
- His evidence did not bear upon (was not relevant to) the inquiry.
- I trust you will bear with (have patience with, show forbearance to) me a few minutes more.

BRING

- Idleness and luxury bring forth (produce, cause) poverty and want.
- Our teacher often tells us a story to bring out (show) the meaning of a lesson.
- The publishers have recently brought out (published) a cheap edition of their new dictionary.
- He found great difficulty in bringing her round (converting her) to his views.
- She brought up (reared) the orphan as her own child.

CALL

- His master called for (demanded) an explanation of his conduct.
- New responsibilities often call out (draw forth) virtues and abilities unsuspected before.
- Call in (summon, send for) a doctor immediately.
- He called on me (paid me a brief visit) yesterday.
- The old man could not call up (recollect) past events.

CARRY

- He agreed to carry out (execute) my orders.
- His passion carried him away (i.e., deprived him of self-control).
- His son carried on (managed) his business in his absence.
- Many persons were carried off (killed) by plague.

CAST

- The ship was cast away (wrecked) on the coast of Africa.
- He was much cast down (depressed) by his loss.
- Some snakes cast off (throw away) their outer skins seasonally.

COME

- At last the truth has come out (transpired).
- The taxes come to (amount to) a large sum.
- The question came up (was mooted or raised for discussion) before the Municipal Corporation last week.
- I expect he will come round (recover) within a week.
- I hope he will come round (agree) to our views.

CRY

- Men of dissolute lives cry down (depreciate) religion, because they would not be under the restraints of it.
- He cried out against (protested against) such injustice.
- That young author is cried up (extolled) by his friends.

CUT

- He was cut off (died) in the prime of life.
- You must cut down (reduce) your expenditure.
- He is cut out for (specially fitted to be) a sailor.
- His wife's death cut him up (affected him, distressed him) terribly.

DO

- I am done for (ruined).
- Having walked twenty miles, he is quite done up (fatigued, exhausted).
- She has done up (decorated, furnished) her apartment beautifully.

FALL

- At last the rioters fell back (retreated, yielded).
- At my friend's wedding reception, I fell in with (met accidentally) my old time friend.
- The measure falls in with (happens to meet) the popular demand.
- The scheme has fallen through (failed) for want of support.
- I am told the two brothers have fallen out (quarrelled).
- It is said that the standard of efficiency in public service has recently fallen off (deteriorated).
- In the second school term the attendance fell off (diminished).

GET

- His friends expected that he would get off (escape) with a fine.
- The thief got away (escaped) with my cash box.
- I cannot get out (remove) this stain.
- The revolt of the tribal chiefs has been got under (subdued).
- The dog tried to get at (attack) me.
- He has got through (passed) his examination.
- They soon got the fire under (under control) by pouring buckets of water over it.
- You were lucky to get out of (escape from) his clutches.

GIVE

- We are credibly informed that the murderer has given himself up (surrendered himself) to the police.
- The doctors have given him up (i.e., have no hope of his recovery).
- Soon after it was given forth (published) and believed by many, that the king was dead.
- The fire gave off (emitted) a dense smoke.
- The strikers seem determined and are not likely to give in (submit, yield).
- It was given out (published, proclaimed) that he was a bankrupt.
- The horses gave out (were exhausted) at the next milestone.

- Give over (abandon) this foolish attempt.
- In his cross-examination he ultimately gave himself away (betrayed himself).

GO

- You cannot always go by (judge from) appearances.
- It is a good rule to go by (to be guided by) the exact procedure.
- He promised to go into (examine, investigate) the matter.
- Have you anything to go upon (i.e., any foundation for your statement)?
- We have no data to go upon (on which to base our conclusions).
- The story would not go down (be believed).
- The concept went off well (was a success).
- The auditor went over (examined) the balance sheet.
- The poor woman has gone through (suffered) much.
- I must first go through (examine) the accounts.

HOLD

- The rebels held out (offered resistance) for about a month.
- He holds out (gives) no promise of future prospects.
- They were held up (stopped) on the highway and robbed by bandits.
- The subject is held over (deferred, postponed) till the next meeting.

KEEP

- A few boys were kept in (confined) after school hours.
- I was kept in (confined to the house) by a bad cold.
- They kept up (carried on) a long conversation.
- Little disputes and quarrels are mainly kept up (maintained) by those who have nothing else to do.
- He is trying his best to keep up (maintain) the reputation of his family.
- The rubber syndicate keeps up (maintain) the price.
- She kept on (continued) talking.
- I shall keep back (conceal) nothing from you.

KNOCK

- He has knocked about (wandered about) the world a great deal.
- The dressing table was knocked down (sold at an auction) for fifty rupees.
- We were greatly knocked up (exhausted) after our steep climb.

LAY

- The rebels laid down (surrendered) their arms.
- He had laid out (invested) a large sum in railway shares.
- Foolish people, who do not lay out (spend) their money carefully, soon come to grief.
- He is laid up (confined to his bed) with fever.

- He resolved to lay by (save for future needs) a part of his income.

LET

- I was let into (made acquainted with) her secret.
- This being his first offence he was let off (punished leniently) with a fine.

LOOK

- His uncle looks after (takes care of) him.
- He looks down upon (despises) his poor cousins.
- Look up (search for) the word in the dictionary.
- The old man is looking forward to (expecting with pleasure) the visit of his grandchildren.
- I will look into (investigate) the matter.
- I look on (regard) him as my son.
- Some look to (rely on) legislation to hasten the progress of social reforms.
- Look to (be careful about) your manners.
- Prices of piece goods are looking up (rising).
- Things are looking up (improving).
- His friends look up to (respect) him.
- He will not look at (i.e., will reject) your offer.

MAKE

- Contentment makes for (conduces to) happiness.
- He made over (presented, gave in charity) his bungalow to the Islam orphanage.
- I cannot make out (discover) the meaning of this verse.
- I cannot make out (read, decipher) his handwriting.
- You have failed to make out (prove) your case.
- Some time ago the two brothers quarrelled but they have now made it up (become reconciled).

PULL

- Unless we pull together (cooperate, work together in harmony) we cannot succeed.
- My cousin pulled through (passed with difficulty) the examination.
- The doctor says the patient will pull through (recover from his illness).
- It is far easier to pull down (demolish) than to build up.
- He was pulled up (scolded, rebuked) by the president.

PUT

- Please put out (extinguish) the light.
- He was put out (vexed, annoyed) when I refused his request for a loan.
- The plaintiff was put out (disconcerted) when the suit was dismissed.
- He tried to put me off (evade me, satisfy me) with promises.
- He has put in (made, sent in) a claim for compensation.
- He put off (postponed) his departure for a week.
- The measure was put through (passed) without opposition.

RUN

- On account of overwork he is run down (enfeebled).
- He always runs down (disparages) his rivals.
- The lease of our premises has run out (expired, come to an end).
- He has run through (squandered away) his fortune.
- The tailor's bill has run up to (amounted to) a large amount.
- He has run into (incurred) debt.
- While turning the corner I ran against (chanced to meet) an old friend.
- Recently my expenses have run up (increased) considerably.
- The cistern is running over (overflowing).

SEE

- I saw through (detected) the trick.
- It is hard to see into (discern) his motive.
- His friends were present at the station to see him off (witness his departure).

SET

- The high court set aside (annulled) the decree of the lower court.
- He immediately set about (took steps towards) organising the department.
- He set off (started) for Peshawar early this morning.
- The frame sets off the picture (i.e., enhances its beauty by contrast).
- He has set up (started business) as a banker.
- I have enough capital to set me up (establish myself) in trade.
- He hired a palatial bungalow and set up for (pretended to be) a millionaire.
- I was obliged to set him down (snub him).
- You may set down (charge) this loss to me.
- Who set you on (instigated you) to do it.
- These seats are set apart (reserved) for ladies.
- In his speech on prohibition, he set forth (explained, made known his views) at length.
- The robbers set upon (attacked) the defenceless travellers.
- Winter in England sets in (begins) about December.

SPEAK

- In Bombay there is no free library to speak of (worth mentioning).
- I was determined to speak out (express my opinion freely).

STAND

- They are determined to stand up for (vindicate, maintain) their rights.
- Let this matter stand over (be deferred or postponed) for the present.
- It is hard but I think I can stand it out (endure it to the end without yielding).

- He is always standing up for (championing the cause of) the weak and oppressed.
- We shall be formidable if we stand by (support) one another.

STRIKE

- He is struck down with (attacked by) paralysis.
- The medical council struck off (removed) his name from the register of medical practitioners.

TAKE

- The piano takes up (occupies) too much room.
- He takes after (resembles) his father.
- At present I am reading the essays of Bacon, but it is taking a lot of time.
- Difficult to take in (comprehend, understand) his meaning.
- Recently he has taken to (become addicted to) opium eating.
- Finally, he was talked into saying (convinced) yes to the proposal.

TALK

- We talked over (discussed) the matter for an hour.
- I hope to talk him over (convince him by talking) to our view.

THROW

- My advice was thrown away (wasted) upon him, because he ignored it.
- The bill was thrown out (rejected) by the Assembly.
- In disgust he threw up (resigned) his appointment.
- When he became rich he threw over (abandoned or deserted) all his old friends.

TURN

- The factory turns out (produces, manufactures) 20,000 lbs of cloth a day.
- If he is lazy, why do not you turn him off (dismiss him)?
- He turned out (proved) to be a scholar.
- His very friends turned against (became hostile to) him.
- Who can say what will turn up (happen) next?
- He promised to come but he never turned up (appeared).

WORK

- We tempted him with many promises but nothing would work on (influence) him.
- He worked out (solved) the problem in a few minutes.
- He is sure to work up (excite) the mob.
- He worked upon (influenced) the ignorant villagers.