

# Essential Idioms in English

Advanced

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## LESSON 28

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**to let up:** to slacken, to lessen in intensity; to relax or ease one's effort (also: related idiom: **to take it easy**),

- If the rain doesn't *let up* soon, we won't be able to have our picnic.
- When Jane is working, she never *lets up* for a moment.
- Jane should *take it easy* or she'll get exhausted.

**to lay off:** to abstain from, stop using as a habit; to release or discharge from a job (also: related idiom: **to let go**) (S)

- If you're trying to lose weight, you should *lay off* sweet things.
- If business continues to be slow, we will have to *lay off* some workers.
- It will be necessary to *let* the youngest employees *go* first.

**to bring out:** to show or introduce (to the public) (S); to make available (S)

- Most automobile companies *bring out* new models each year.
- My mother *brought* some snacks *out* for my friends and me to have.

**to bring back:** to return a bought or borrowed item (also: **to take back**) (S)

*To bring back* is used when you are speaking at the place that an item is bought or borrowed; *to take back* is used when speaking at another place.

- Ma'am, our store policy is that you can *bring back* the dress as long as you have your sales receipt.
- You can borrow my car if you promise to *bring it back* by six o'clock.
- I have to *take* this book *back* to the library today.

**to wait up for:** to wait until late at night without going to bed

- Don't *wait up for* me. I may be back after midnight.
- We *waited up for* our son until two o'clock in the morning before we called the police.

**to leave (someone or something) alone:** not to disturb, to stay away from (S) (also: **to let alone**)

- *Leave* the baby *alone* for a while and she may go to sleep.
- After the cat had scratched Peter twice, he *let it alone*.

**let alone:** and certainly not (also: **not to mention, to say nothing of**)

*Let alone* is used after negative forms. The example that follows *let alone* is much less possible than the example that precedes *let alone*.

- I'm too sick today to walk to the kitchen, *let alone* to go to the zoo with you.
- He doesn't even speak his own language well, *let alone* French.

**to break off:** to terminate, to discontinue (S)

- After war began, the two countries *broke off* diplomatic relations.
- Else and Bob were once engaged, but they have already *broken it off*.

**to wear off:** to disappear gradually

- My headache isn't serious. It will *wear off* after an hour or so.
- The effect of the painkilling drug didn't *wear off* for several hours.

**to wear down:** to become worn gradually through use (also: *to wear away, to wear through*) (S)

Compare with **to wear out** (to become useless from wear) in Lesson 8.

- If you drag your feet while you walk, you'll *wear down* your shoes quickly.
- The pounding of ocean waves against the coast gradually *wears* it *away*.
- Johnny has *worn through* the seat of his pants.
- Helga threw away that dress because she had *worn* it *out*.

**on the whole:** in general, in most ways (also: *by and large*)

- He is, *on the whole*, a good student.
- *By and large*, I agree with your suggestions.

**touch and go:** risky, uncertain until the end

- The complicated medical operation was *touch and go* for several hours.
- The outcome of the soccer final was *touch and go* for the entire match.

## EXERCISES

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- \* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons.

### Example:

1. Mary *discontinued* her relationship with Paul because she couldn't...  
*Mary broke off her relationship with Paul because she couldn't put up with him anymore.*
2. The effect of the wine *disappeared gradually* after I...  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. I think that we should *wait without going to bed* for our daughter until she...  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. *In general*, it is best for a student learning English to...  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. The company was forced *to release* hundreds of workers because business...  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Sir, you can *return* your jacket to the store if you...  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. The outcome of the 100-meter race was *uncertain* because the four runners...  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. I have no time to visit the park, *and certainty not* the...

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9. If the snowstorm doesn't *slacken*, we won't be able to...

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10. I want you *not to disturb me* so that I...

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\* Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

1. If you want to keep a favorite pair of shoes, what can you do when the sole (bottom) of the shoes *wears down*?
2. Have you ever been worried and had to *wait up for* someone? Why was the person late?
3. In your country, is it possible *to take back* an item to a store after you have bought it?
4. Why is it important *to let up* if you have been working for several hours without a break?
5. Give an example of when you should *leave a child alone*.
6. Why should smokers *lay off* smoking cigarettes?
7. How long does it take for the effects of a drug such as alcohol *to wear off*?
8. For what reasons would one country *break off* relations with another country?
9. *On the whole*, what is your favorite music?

## LESSON 29

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**to work out:** to exercise; to develop, to devise (a plan) (S)

- Jane *works out* at the fitness center every other morning before going to school.
- The advertising department *worked out* a plan to increase company sales.
- We couldn't come up with a good plan for solving the problem, but we agreed to *work it out* at a later date.

**to back up:** to drive or go backwards (S), to defend, to support (S); to return to a previous thought

- I couldn't *back my car up* because there was a bicycle in the driveway behind me.
- Ursula asked her friends to *back her up* when she went to court to fight a ticket for an illegal lane change on the highway.
- Wait a minute. Could you *back up* and say that again?

**to back out:** to drive a vehicle out of a parking space (S); to withdraw support, to fail to fulfill a promise or obligation

- The parking lot attendant had to *back another car out* before he could get to mine.
- We were all ready to sign the contracts when one of the parties to the agreement *backed out*.

**to have one's heart set on:** to desire greatly, to be determined to

- She *has her heart set on* taking a trip abroad. She's been thinking about it for months.
- Todd *has his heart set on* going to medical school and becoming a doctor.

**to buy up:** to buy the complete stock of (S) –

- Before the hurricane struck, residents *bought up* all the food and water in local stores.
- The government plans to *buy up* all surplus grain in order to stabilize the price.

**to buy out:** to purchase a business or company (S); to purchase all of a person's shares or stock (S)

This idiom is similar in meaning to *to take over* in Lesson 23.

- Larger companies often *buy out* smaller companies that are having financial difficulties.
- Mr. Lee has been trying for some time to *buy* his partner *out* so that he can control the company by himself.

**to sell out:** to sell all items (S); to arrange for the sale of a company or business (S)

- That store is closing its doors for good and is *selling out* everything this weekend.
- If my new business enterprise is successful, I'll *sell it out* for a few million dollars.

**to catch on:** to become popular or widespread; to understand, to appreciate a joke

This idiom is often used with the preposition *to* for the second definition.

- Fashions of the past often *catch on* again among young people.
- When the teacher speaks quickly like that, can you *catch on* easily?
- His joke was very funny at the time, but when I told it to others later, nobody seemed to *catch on*. I had to tell the joke again before anyone could *catch on to* it.

**to be cut out for:** to have the necessary skills or talent for

This idiom is most often used in the negative or in questions.

- John *is* certainly not *cut out for* the work of a trial lawyer.
- Are you certain that you *are cut out for* that kind of job?

**to throw out:** to discard (S); to remove by force (S); to refuse to consider, to reject (S)

- Instead of *throwing out* our paper waste in the office, we should recycle it.
- When a fight broke out between two people on the dance floor, the management *threw them out*.
- The judge *threw* the case *out* because there was insufficient evidence to try the defendant successfully.

**to throw up:** to erect or construct quickly (S); to vomit (S)

- The Red Cross *threw up* temporary shelters for the homeless victims of the earthquake.
- The ill patient is unable to digest her food properly, so she is *throwing* all of it *up*.

**to clear up:** to make understandable (also: *to straighten out*) (S); to become sunny

- The teacher tried to *clear up* our confusion about the meaning of the difficult paragraph in the reading.
- It's rather cloudy this morning. Do you think that it will *clear up* later?

**EXERCISES**

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\* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons.

1. After Jane *exercised* for an hour at the gym, she...

---

2. Larry *defended* his friend who was accused of...

---

3. The company *withdrew support for* the joint venture when...

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4. This weekend I really *am determined to*...

---

5. That company will have to *sell all its items* if...

---

6. When a new product *becomes popular*, stores should...

---

7. I don't think that Felix *doesn't have the necessary talent for* parenthood because he...

---

8. Instead of *discarding* newspapers and plastics, people should...

---

9. The teacher tried to *make understandable* the problem in class, but the students...

---

10. If the weather *becomes sunny* this afternoon, we'll...

---

\* Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

1. When you are telling a complicated story to someone, when might you have to *back up*?

2. Is there anything at the moment that you *have your heart set on*? What is it?

3. If you can't *catch on to* a joke, but everyone else does, what do you do?

4. Do you think that you would be *cut out for* the job of politician? Why or why not?

5. Do you *throw out* items of clothing when they are worn out, or do you find ways to reuse them? Give examples of how some items might be reused.

6. For what reason might a person be *thrown out* of a private affair?

7. Suppose that you have a serious misunderstanding with a friend. When would you want to *clear up* the misunderstanding right away, and when would you let some time pass by before *straightening it out*?

## LESSON 30

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**to slow down:** to go, or cause to go, more slowly (also: **to slow up**) (S)

This idiom can be used both with and without an object.

- The car was going so fast that the motorist couldn't *slow it down* enough to make the sharp curve.
- You're eating too fast to digest your food well. *Slow down!*
- *Slow up* a bit! You're talking so quickly that I can't catch on well.

**to dry up:** to lose, or cause to lose, all moisture (S); to be depleted

- Every summer the extreme heat in this valley *dries* the stream *up*.
- All funds for the project *dried up* when the local government faced a budget crisis.

**to dry out:** to lose, or cause to lose, moisture gradually (S); to stop drinking alcohol in excess (also: **to sober up**)

- Martha hung the towel outside on the clothesline in order to *dry it out*.
- Some people go to alcohol recovery centers in order to *dry out*.

**to be up to (something):** to be doing something; to be planning or plotting something, scheming

The first definition usually takes the form of a question.

- Hi, Jake. I haven't seen you in a long time. What have you *been up to*?
- Those boys hiding behind the building must *be up to* something bad.

**to beat around the bush:** to avoid discussing directly, to evade the issue

Our boss *beats around the bush* so much that no one in the office knows exactly what he wants us to do. Instead of *beating around the bush*, Melinda explained her objection in very clear terms.

**to come to an end:** to end, to stop

This idiom is used with *finally* and *never* when some activity lasts too long.

- The meeting finally *came to an end* at ten o'clock in the evening.
- Even though my friend seemed to enjoy the movie, I thought that it would never *come to an end*.

**to put an end to:** to cause to end, to terminate in a definite manner (also: **to do away with**)

- The dictatorial government *put an end to* organized opposition in the country by making it illegal to form a political party.
- It may never be possible to *do away with* all forms of prejudice and discrimination in the world.

**to get even with:** to seek revenge, to retaliate

This idiom is similar in meaning to *to have it in for* in Lesson 27.

- Bill has had it in for his boss for a long time. He told me he's planning to *get even with* his boss by giving some company secrets to a competitor.
- I want to *get even with* Steve for beating me so badly in tennis last time. The scores were 6-1 and 6-2.

**to fool around:** to waste time; to joke, not to be serious

- The teacher got angry because her students *were fooling around* and couldn't finish their work before the end of class.
- Sometimes I wish that Pat would stop *fooling around* so much and talk about something more interesting to others.

**to look out on:** to face, to overlook

- We really enjoy our new apartment that *looks out on* a river.
- Their rear window *looks out on* a lovely garden.



**to stir up:** to cause anger (S); to create (trouble or difficulty) (S)

- The senseless murder of a small child *stirred up* the whole neighborhood.
- The boss is in a bad mood today so don't *stir her up* with any more customer complaints.

**to take in:** to visit in order to enjoy (S); to decrease the size of clothes (S); to deceive, to fool (S)

- We decided to *take in* Toronto on our trip to Canada, and that is where we *took in* the most memorable outdoor stage play we have ever seen.
- Lois lost so much weight that she had her skirts and slacks *taken in* by her tailor.
- The fraudulent investment advisor *took everyone in* with his sincere manner and generous promises. Most investors lost all their money.

## EXERCISES

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\* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons.

1. Many of the lakes in this part of the country have *lost all moisture* because...

---

2. When I asked Ted what he *was doing*, he responded that...

---

3. Karen hopes this meeting *stops* soon because...

---

4. If the government wants to *terminate* drug abuse in this country, it will have to...

---

5. Ruth *sought revenge on* the girl who stole her boyfriend away from her by...

---

6. Because our son Alien is always *joking*, nobody...

---

7. The house for sale was a valuable piece of property because it *faced*...

---

8. Old-time residents in the neighborhood became *angered* when their new neighbor...

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9. Marge has lost so much weight in the last month that she has had to *decrease the size of*...

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10. We visited the San Diego Zoo in order to *visit and enjoy*...

---

\* Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

1. If someone asked you what you *were up to* these days, how would you respond?
2. How can you tell when young children *are up to* something? Can you remember any personal experience when you were a child?
3. When might someone choose to *beat around the bush*? What could you do to avoid this?
4. What problems in the world would you like to *put an end to*? Do you think that there is hope for this?
5. Has someone ever *stirred you up* so much that you wanted to *get even with* him or her? What did you do?
6. What attractions in the area that you are living now have you already *taken in*?
7. Have you ever been *taken in* by someone such as a salesperson or a stranger on the street? What happened?

## LESSON 31

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**to go through:** to undergo, to experience; to consume, to use (also: *to use up*)

The first definition is used when someone is having some hardship or difficulty.

- I can't believe what she *went through* to get that job. She had four interviews with the hiring committee in one week!
- Frank said that they had *gone through* all the toilet paper in the house, but Steve couldn't believe that they had *used* it all up.

**to go without saying:** to be known without the need to mention

This idiom occurs with a *that*-clause, often with the pronoun *it* as the subject.

- It *goes without saying* that you shouldn't drive quickly in bad weather.
- That he will gain weight if he continues to eat and drink so much *goes without saying*.

**to put (someone) on:** to mislead by joking or tricking (S)

This idiom is usually used in a continuous tense form. A noun object must divide the idiom.

- Don't worry. I wouldn't expect you do all that work by yourself. I'm just *putting you on*.
- Jack can't be serious about what he said. He must be *putting us on*.

**to keep one's head:** to remain calm during an emergency

- When the heater caused a fire, Gloria *kept her head* and phoned for assistance right away; otherwise, the whole house might have burned down.
- When the boat started sinking in heavy seas, the crew members *kept their heads* and led the passengers to the lifeboats.

**to lose one's head:** not to think clearly, to lose one's self-control

- When Mel saw a dog in the street right in front of his car, he *lost his head* and drove onto the sidewalk and into a tree.
- If the politician hadn't gotten stirred up and *lost his head*, he never would have criticized his opponent unfairly.

**narrow-minded:** not willing to accept the ideas of others (the opposite of narrow minded is *broad-minded*)

- *Narrow-minded* people tend to discriminate against groups of people with which they have nothing in common.
- Ted is so *broad-minded* that he has almost no standards by which he judges others.

**to stand up:** to withstand use or wear; to fail to appear for a date or social engagement (S)

- My old car has *stood up* well over the years. I haven't had any major problems at all.
- Janet was very angry because her new boyfriend *stood her up* on their second date. She waited over an hour for him before returning home.

**to get the better of:** to win or defeat by gaining an advantage over someone

- Jim doesn't seem very athletic at tennis, but if you're not careful, he'll *get the better of* you.
- Lynn gets frustrated when Bruce *gets the better of* her in arguments. No matter what she says, he always has a clever response.

**to break loose:** to become free or loose, to escape

- During the bad storm, the boat *broke loose* from the landing and drifted out to sea.
- One bicyclist *broke loose* from the pack of racers and pulled ahead towards the finish line.

**on edge:** nervous, anxious; upset, irritable

- Cynthia was *on edge* all day about the important presentation she had to give to the local citizens group.
- I don't like being around Jake when he's *on edge* like that. Someone should tell him to calm down and relax.

**to waste one's breath:** not be able to convince someone

This idiom is used when someone is wasting time trying to convince another person. The idiom **to save one's breath** is related and means *not to waste effort trying to convince someone*.

- Don't argue with Frank any longer. You *are wasting your breath* trying to get him to agree with you.
- I have already decided what I'm going to do. You can't change my mind, so *save your breath*.

**to cut short:** to make shorter, to interrupt (S)

- The moderator asked the speaker to *cut short* his talk because there wasn't much time remaining for questions from the audience.
- We were very unfortunate when we received bad news from home that forced us to *cut* our trip *short*.

## EXERCISES

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- \* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons.

1. Mr. Larsen is in the hospital *undergoing* emergency surgery because he...

---

2. When you feel sick, it *doesn't need to be mentioned* that...

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3. Steve was *misleading me* when he told me that...

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4. After the serious earthquake, most people *remained calm*, but unfortunately some people...

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5. You *are not able to convince someone* if he or she is *not willing to accept the ideas of others*, so it is better to...

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6. Betty *failed to appear* for her date because she...

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7. Your car will *withstand use* longer if you...

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8. Our team was able to *win by gaining an advantage over* the other team because...

---

9. The politician was *nervous* before she...

---

10. The meeting was suddenly *interrupted* because...

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\* Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

1. Do you *go through* money quickly? What is your biggest expense?
2. Have you ever *gone through* a medical operation? What was it?
3. Do you enjoy *putting* others *on*, or are you a rather serious person?
4. During an emergency, how can you *keep your head*?
5. In what kind of emergency might you be likely to *lose your head*?
6. Have you ever *stood* anyone *up*? What were the circumstances of the situation that caused you to do so?
7. In what sport would an athlete try to *break loose* from an opponent?
8. Does talking in front of a large audience put you *on edge*? Why or why not?

## LESSON 32

---

**to step in:** to become involved or concerned with something; to enter a place for a brief time (also: **to step into**)

- When the children started fighting on the playground, a teacher had to *step in* and stop the fight.
- The supervisor asked one of the employees to *step in* her office for a moment.
- Would you *step into* the hallway so that I can show you the information posted on the bulletin board?

**to step down:** to retire or leave a top position, to resign

- Next May the principal will *step down* after thirty-five years of service to the school.
- The angry shareholders wanted the company president to *step down* because of the stock scandal.

**to step on:** to treat severely, to discipline; to go faster, to work more quickly

For the second definition, the idiom is followed by the pronoun *if*.

- Sometimes it's necessary to *step on* children when they do something dangerous.
- We're going to be late for the movies. You'd better *step on it*!

**a steal:** very inexpensive, a bargain

This idiom is often used in an exclamation using *what*.

- I can't believe that I paid only \$2,000 for this three-year-old car. *What a steal!*
- Scott considered it *a steal* when he bought a complete bedroom set for only \$99.

**to play up to:** to behave so as to gain favor with someone

- The other students in the class resent Jim because he *plays up to* the teacher in order to get better grades.
- When my children asked me to go shopping for a new video game, I knew why they had been *playing up to* me all morning.

**more or less:** approximately, almost; somewhat, to a certain degree

- Although your bedroom feels smaller, it's *more or less* the same size as mine.
- Ted *more or less* agreed with our decision to put off the meeting until more members could show up. At least he didn't object strongly.

**to goof up:** to perform badly, to make a mistake (also: *to mess up, to slip up*)

- I really *goofed up* on the exam today; did you *mess up*, too?
- Karen *slipped up* when she forgot to deposit money into her checking account.

**to go off the deep end:** to get very angry and do something hastily

- Just because you had a serious argument with your supervisor, you didn't have to *go off the deep end* and resign, did you?
- When Dan's wife demanded a divorce, he *went off the deep end* again. This time he was shouting so that the whole neighborhood could hear.

**to lose one's touch:** to fail at what one used to do well

- Milton used to be the best salesman at the car dealership, but recently he seems to have *lost his touch*.
- I used to play tennis very well, but today you beat me easily. I must be *losing my touch*.

**in hand:** under firm control, well managed

- The copilot asked the pilot if he had the plane *in hand* or whether he needed any help navigating through the severe thunderstorm.
- The police officer radioed to the station that she had the emergency situation *in hand* and didn't require any assistance.

**on hand:** available, nearby

This idiom is often followed by *in case*.

- I always keep some extra money *on hand* in case I forget to get cash from the bank.
- The concert organizers arranged to have some security guards *on hand* in case there were any problems during the performance.

## **EXERCISES**

\* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons.

1. During the lengthy workers' strike, the police had to *become involved* when...

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2. After leaving his office down the hall, my supervisor *briefly entered* my office to...

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3. The old man who founded the company decided to *retire* when...

---

4. Because the mean boss *severely* treated his employees on many occasions, none of them...

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5. Mike thought that the camera advertised in the newspaper was a *bargain*, so he...

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6. The children *behaved so as to gain favor with* their parents in order to...

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7. The young child *caused problems in* his bicycle by...

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8. Lenny *performed badly* on the physics test because he...
- 
9. I hope that the football coach doesn't *get angry and do something hastily* because he seems to be *failing at what he usually does well*; recently his football team...
- 
10. The stores in town didn't have enough drinking water *available* after the typhoon, so hundreds of people...
- 

\* Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

1. If someone was being attacked by a thief, would you *step in* and help the person? Why or why not?
2. Why might you have to *step on it* in the morning? Does this happen often to you?
3. Have you ever *goofed up* on an important test? Why did it happen?
4. Have you ever *gone off the deep end*? What happened?
5. For what reasons might an athlete *lose his or her touch* at a sport?
6. Is there any special skill that you have well *in hand*? What is it?
7. How much money do you have *on hand* right now?

## LESSON 33

---

**to kick (something) around:** to discuss informally (over a period of time) (S) (also: **to toss around**)

- At first my friends were reluctant to consider my suggestion, but they finally were willing to *kick it around* for a while.
- Herb thought that we should *kick around* the idea of establishing a special fund for supporting needy members of the club.

**be on the ball:** be attentive, competent, alert

- Jim was the only one who caught that serious error in the bookkeeping statements. He's really *on the ball*.
- Ella was certainly *on the ball* when she remembered to reconfirm our flight arrangements. All the rest of us would have forgotten.

**to make up:** to meet or fulfill a missed obligation at a later time (S); to create, to invent (an idea) (S), to apply cosmetics to (S), to comprise, to be composed of

Note that all of the definitions are separable except the last one.

- The teacher allowed several students who missed the exam to *make it up* during the next class.
- The little boy *made up* a bad excuse for wearing his dirty shoes in the house, so his mother punished him.
- Dee was able to *make her face up* in half the normal time because she didn't use much *makeup*.
- Two separate bodies — the House of Representatives and the Senate — *make up* the Congress of the United States

**to make up with:** to resolve differences with

This idiom is used for differences of opinion between friends and lovers.

- Helen *made up with* her roommate after their serious misunderstanding about arrangements for the party.
- After the bad quarrel the two lovers kissed and *made up with* each other.

**to pull together:** to gather, to collect (information) (S); to gain control of one's emotions (S)

A reflexive pronoun must be used for the second definition.

- The reporter *pulled together* information from several sources in preparing the newspaper article.
- Mr. Simpson was so frightened when he heard footsteps behind him on the lonely, dark street that it took several minutes to *pull himself together*.

**to be looking up:** to appear promising or optimistic, to be improving

This idiom is used in a continuous tense, very often with the subject *things*.

- The board chairman is glad to report that things *are looking up* for the company after several years of declining sales.
- Prospects for building that new library in the downtown area *are looking up*.

**to kick the habit:** to stop a bad habit

- Once a child becomes accustomed to chewing his nails, it's difficult to *kick the habit*.
- The doctor advised the heavy cigarette smoker that her heart had become damaged and that she should *kick the habit* right away.

**to cover up:** to conceal, to hide (S)

This idiom is used for events which are potentially embarrassing to one's reputation, as well as against the law. The noun *coverup* can be formed.

- The office worker tried to *cover up* his crimes, but everyone knew that he had been stealing office supplies all along.
- The political *coverup* of the bribery scandal failed and was reported by all the major media.

**to drop off:** to fall asleep; to take to a certain location (S); to decrease (for the third definition, also: **to fall off**)

- My mother *dropped off* during the boring television show; her head was nodding up and down.
- I don't mind *dropping you off* at the store on my way to work.
- Business has been *dropping off* rapidly recently, but fortunately it hasn't been *falling off* as quickly as for our competitors.

**to turn over:** to place upside down (S); to flip, to turn upside down; to pass or give control to someone (S)

- The teacher asked the students to *turn* the answer sheet *over* and to write a short essay on the back.
- The car was going too fast around the corner and *turned* over twice.
- Mr. Collins has decided to *turn over* his jewelry store to his son at the end of the year.

**to go through channels:** to send a request through the normal way

This idiom can be used with the adjective *proper*.

- If you *go through proper channels* in this company, it's sometimes impossible to get anything done quickly.
- The police told the important civic leader that even she had to *go through channels* in reporting the burglary of her house.

**the last straw:** the final event in a series of unacceptable actions ( *It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back.* )

This idiom is always used with the definite article *the*.

- When John asked to borrow money from me for the fourth time, it was *the last straw*. I finally told him that I couldn't lend him any more.
- I can't believe that my roommate left the door to our apartment unlocked again. It's *the last straw*; I'm moving out.

**EXERCISES**

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\* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons.

1. When the committee members..., they decided to discuss the matter *informally* for a while.

---

2. In playing sports, you have to be *alert* if...

---

3. The child tried to *invent* an excuse when...

---

4. Lynn doesn't ever have to *apply cosmetics* to her face; she...

---

5. The two lovers *resolved differences with* each other after...

---

6. Even though I've..., things *appear promising* now.

---

7. Business *had decreased* so much that the company was forced to...

---

8. You should *place* the bread in the toaster *upside down* because...

---

9. Old Mr. Jenkins *gave control* of his company to his associate when...

---

10. The office worker didn't think that... if he *sent a request through the normal way* because...

---

\* Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

1. What is the benefit of *kicking* an idea *around* instead of making an immediate decision?
2. What kind of excuses do people *make up* for being late to an important event, a class? Have you ever done this?
3. Do you know how many states *made up* the original United States in 1776? How many states *make up* the United States now?
4. Have you ever *made up with* someone? How did you feel about *making up with* the person?
5. Where could you go to *pull together* information for a research report? Would you enjoy doing so, or not?
6. Have you ever had to cover up an embarrassing situation? Can you now explain what it was?
7. When someone manages to *kick the habit* of smoking or drinking, there is an interesting expression, *to turn over a new leaf*, that applies. Can you imagine what this expression means?
8. Have you ever faced a situation which you would describe as *the last straw*? What happened?



## LESSON 34

---

**to get cold feet:** to become unable or afraid to do something

This idiom is usually used in the case of an important or dangerous action

- Karl was supposed to marry Elaine this weekend, but at the last moment he *got cold feet*.
- Only one of the rock climbers *got cold feet* when the group reached the base of the hundred-meter cliff.

**to trade in:** to receive credit for the value of an old item towards the purchase of a new item (S)

This idiom is used to form the noun *trade-in*.

- The car dealership offered me \$1,000 for my old car if I *traded it in* for a new model.
- The appliance company was offering a \$50 *trade-in* during the special promotion for its new line of refrigerators.

**face-to-face:** direct, personal; directly, personally (written without hyphens)

This idiom can be used both as an adjective (the first definition) and as an adverb (the second definition).

- The workers' representatives had a *face-to-face* meeting with management to resolve the salary issue.
- The stepmother and her teenage son talked *face to face* about his troubles in school.

**to be with (someone):** to support, to back (also: *to go along with*); to understand or follow what someone is saying

- Although others thought that we shouldn't *go along with* Jerry, I told Jerry that I *was with* him on his proposal for reorganizing the staff.
- After turning left at the traffic light, go two blocks and turn right on Madison. After three more blocks, turn right again. *Are you still with me?*

**to be with it:** to be able to focus or concentrate on (also: *to get with it*)

*To be with it* in the negative has the same meaning as *to feel out of it*. The related form *to get with it* is used in commands.

- Jack's really *with it* today. I've never seen him play such good soccer.
- You've done only a small amount of work in two hours. You're not *with it* today, are you?
- It's no excuse to say that you *feel out of it*. We need everyone's help on this, so *get with it!*

**to fall for:** to fall in love quickly; to be fooled or tricked by

- Samantha and John never expected to *fall for* each other like they did, but they got married within two weeks of having met.
- The Masons wanted to believe their son, but unfortunately they had *fallen for* his lies too many times to be deceived once again.

**it figures:** it seems likely, reasonable, or typical

This idiom is either followed by a *that*-clause or by no other part of grammar.

- *It figures* that the children were willing to help with the yardwork only if they received a reward for doing so.
- When I told Evan that his secretary was unhappy about not getting a raise, he said that *it figured*.

**to fill (someone) in:** to inform, to give background information to (also: *to clue in*) (S)

This idiom is often followed by the preposition *on* and a noun phrase containing the pertinent information.

- Could you *fill me in* on what is going to be discussed at tomorrow's meeting?
- Not having been to the convention, my associate asked me to *clue him in* on the proceedings.

**to make (someone) tick:** to motivate to behave or act in a certain way (S)

This idiom is used within a *what*-clause.

- If a salesperson knows what *makes* a customer *tick*, he will be able to sell a lot of merchandise.
- It's been impossible for us to figure out what *makes* our new boss *tick*. One moment she seems pleasant and then the next moment she's upset.

**to cover for:** to take someone's place temporarily, to substitute for; to protect someone by lying or deceiving

- Go ahead and take your coffee break. I'll *cover for* you until you return.
- The criminal made his wife *cover for* him when the police asked if the man had been home all day. She swore that he had been there.

**to give (someone) a break:** to provide a person with another opportunity or chance (S); not to expect too much work from (S); not to expect someone to believe (S)

Command forms are most common with this idiom. For the third definition, the pronoun *me* must be used.

- The driver pleaded with the police officer to *give him a break* and not issue him a ticket for speeding.
- When the students heard how much homework the teacher wanted them to do over the holiday, they begged, «*Give us a break, Professor Doyle!*»
- Oh, Jim, *give me a break!* That's a terrible excuse for being late.

**to bow out:** to stop doing as a regular activity, to remove oneself from a situation

The related idiom **to want out** indicates that someone desires to bow out.

- She *bowed out* as the school's registrar after sixteen years of service.
- One of the two partners *wanted out* of the deal because they couldn't agree on the terms of the contract

## EXERCISES

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\* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons

1. At the amusement center, Scan was about to... when he *became afraid to do it*.

---

2. Tanya talked to her supervisor *directly* about...

---

3. The politician asked his friends if they *supported* him on...

---

4. Ted *fell in love with* the actress as soon as...

---

5. When Mrs. Garcia told her husband that their son..., Mr. Garcia responded, «*That seems likely.*»

---

6. Joseph's roommate had been sick, so Joseph *gave him information* on...

---

7. I don't understand what *motivates* Diana to *behave that way*, she...

---

8. The boss *gave* his employee *another opportunity* when...

---

9. When the teacher told the students that..., the students said, «*Don't expect too much work from us!*»

---

10. One of the members of the committee *removed herself from the situation* because...
- 

\* Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

1. Have you ever been about to do something important or dangerous, and then *gotten cold feet*? What was it?
2. Why might a student need to have a *face-to-face* talk with a teacher?
3. For what reasons might you not *be with it*? *Are you with it* today? Why or why not?
4. In general, who would you feel compelled to *cover for*? Have you ever had to do this?
5. What unbelievable statement might someone make that would cause you to respond, «*Give me a break!*»?
6. Why might you choose to *bow out* of a situation?

## LESSON 35

---

**to pin on:** to find guilty of a crime or offense (S) (also: **to hang on**)

This idiom is divided by a noun phrase containing the crime or offense. The accused person is mentioned after the preposition *on*.

- The prosecuting attorney tried to *pin* the murder *on* the victim's husband, but the jury returned a verdict of «not guilty.»
- I wasn't anywhere near the window when it got broken. You can't *pin* that *on* me.

**to get a rise out of:** to provoke a response from

This idiom is usually used when someone is teased into responding in anger or annoyance.

- You can kid me all day about my mistake, but you won't *get a rise out of me*.
- I *got a rise out of* Marvin when I teased him about his weight. Marvin weighs over two-hundred pounds.

**to stick around:** to stay or remain where one is, to wait

This idiom is used when someone is waiting for something to happen or for someone to arrive.

- Todd had to *stick around* the house all day until the new furniture was finally delivered in the late afternoon.
- Why don't you *stick around* for a while and see if Sarah eventually shows up?

**to pick up the tab:** to pay the cost or bill

This idiom applies when someone pays for the cost of another person's meal, tickets, etc.

- The advertising manager is flying to Puerto Rico for a conference, and her firm is *picking up the tab*.
- The government *picked up the tab* for the visiting dignitary. It paid for all of the lodging and meals, as well as transportation, during his stay.

**by the way:** incidentally

This idiom is used when someone thinks of something further in the course of a conversation.

- Movies are my favorite form of entertainment. Oh, *by the way*, have you seen the new picture that's playing at the Bijou?
- Vera's been divorced for three years now. She told me, *by the way*, that she never plans to remarry.

**to go to town:** to do something with enthusiasm and thoroughness

- Our interior decorator really *went to town* in remodeling our living room. I'm afraid to ask how much it's going to cost.
- Charlie really *went to town* on his research project. He consulted over forty reference works and wrote a ninety-page report.

**to let slide:** to neglect a duty (**S**); to ignore a situation (**S**)

- Terry knew that she should have paid the electric bill on time instead of *letting* it *slide*. Now the utility company has turned off her service.
- When he tried to get a rise out of me by mentioning my failure to receive a promotion at work, I just *let* it *slide*.

**search me:** I don't know (also: **beats me**) This idiom is used informally, usually as a command form.

- When Elmer asked his wife if she knew why the new neighbors left their garage door open all night, she responded, «*Search me.*»
- When I asked Derek why his girlfriend wasn't at the party yet, he said, «*Beats me.* I expected her an hour ago.»

**to get off ones chest** to express ones true feelings (**S**)

This idiom is used when someone has long waited to express themselves.

- Ellen felt a lot better when she finally talked to a counselor and *got* the problem *off her chest*.
- Faye hasn't shared her concern about her marriage with her husband yet. I think that she should *get it off her chest soon*.

**to live it up:** to spend money freely, to live luxuriously

- Kyle and Eric saved up money for two years so that they could travel to Europe and *live it up*.
- After receiving a large inheritance from a rich aunt, I was able to *live it up* for years.

**to liven up:** to energize, to make more active (also: **to pick up**) (**S**)

- The teacher occasionally took the class on field trips just to *liven* things *up* a bit.
- The animals in the zoo began to *liven up* when evening came and the temperatures dropped.
- Many people have to drink coffee every morning just to *pick* themselves *up*.

**to have a voice in:** to share involvement in

- The new vice-president was promised that she would *have a voice in* developing the company's international expansion.
- The students are trying to *have a voice in* college affairs by gaining representation on administrative committees.

## **EXERCISES**

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\* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons.

1. The police were successful in *finding* the criminal *guilty* of the robbery because...

---

2. My older brother is always able to *provoke a response from* me when he...

---

3. Why don't you *stay here* for a while longer? We're still...

---

4. The director *paid the bill* for the meal when he invited...

---

5. The neighbors really *did something with enthusiasm* when they worked together to...

---

6. I understand that Bill ... because he *neglected his responsibilities* again and again.
- 
7. In order to *express their true feelings about a problem*, some people...
- 
8. On their honeymoon, the young couple *lived luxuriously* by...
- 
9. In order to *energize* the party, the host and hostess...
- 
10. The preferred candidate for the new position would not ... until management agreed that she would *share involvement* in budget matters.
- 

Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

- When you were a child, do you remember your brother, sister, or friend ever trying to *pin* something on you? What was it?
- If someone is late in meeting you, about how long would you *stick around* before leaving?
- Can you think of a reason why the expression *search me* is used to mean *I don't know*? (In other words, why is the verb *search* used in this way?)
- Have you ever had a chance to *live it up*? Describe what you did.
- What are some different ways of *livening up* an event such as a wedding?

## LESSON 36

---

**to check in:** to register at a hotel or motel; to leave or deposit for transporting or safekeeping (S)  
The adjective form *check-in* derives from this idiom.

- Courtney arrived in town at mid-day and promptly *checked in* at the Plaza Hotel. The hotel permitted an early *check-in* time.
- There were dozens of people at the airline counters waiting to *check* their bags *in* for their flights.

**to check out:** to pay the bill at a hotel or motel and then leave; to investigate, to examine (S)  
The adjective form *check-out* derives from this idiom.

- The latest you should *check out* of the hotel is 12 noon. However, in your case, we can set a special *check-out* time of 2:00 P.M.
- The police received a call from someone claiming to have witnessed a murder. The police sent two detectives to *check* the call *out* right away.

**to take somebody at one's word:** to accept what one says as true, to believe

- When he offered to be responsible for the fund raiser, I *took him at his word*. Now he's saying that he's not available to do it.
- You should be careful about *taking her at her word*. She's been known to say one thing but to do another.

**to serve (the/one's) purpose:** to be useful, to suit one's needs or requirements

- I don't have a screwdriver to open this, but I think that a knife *will serve the purpose*.
- Jane prefers working to studying, so it *served her purpose* to drop out of school and take that job.

**in the worst way:** very much, greatly

- Jim and Claudia want to have children *in the worst way*.
- Because Umer has relatives in Turkey, he wants to visit there *in the worst way*.

**to cop out:** to avoid one's responsibility, to quit

This idiom is an informal version of the second definition *to back out* (Lesson 29). The noun form **copout** means *an excuse for avoiding responsibility*.

- Evelyn had agreed to help us with arrangements for the party, but she *copped out* at the last minute.
- I can't believe that Cindy offered such an explanation for falling to show up. What a poor *copout*!

**to line up:** to form a line; to arrange to have, to manage to obtain (S)

- The moviegoers *lined up* in front of the theater showing the most popular film of the summer.
- Rob is going to schedule the famous author to speak at the convention if he can *line her up* in time.

**to lose one's cool:** to get excited, angry, or flustered

- Despite the boos from some in the audience, the actors on stage never *lost their cool*.
- Although the group of skiers were in danger from an apparent avalanche, their ski guide never *lost his cool*.

**to leave open:** to delay making a decision on (S)

- In making up the job announcement, the firm decided to *leave* the salary *open* until a qualified candidate was found.
- We know that the annual summer camp will be held in August, but let's *leave* the exact dates *open* for now.

**to turn on:** to interest greatly, to excite (S)

The idiom with the opposite meaning is **to turn off**. These idioms are used to form the nouns **turnon** and **turnoff**.

- Does great art *turn you on*? I find going to a museum and viewing classic works of art a real *turnon*.
- Going to a bar and having silly conversation with strangers really *turns me off*. In fact, most bar scenes are really *turnoffs* to me.

**to miss the boat:** to lose an opportunity, to fail in some undertaking

- The precious metals market was looking up several months ago, but unfortunately most investors *missed the boat*.
- Mr. Vlastic's new business went bankrupt within a short time. He really *missed the boat* by opening a tanning salon near the beach.

**to think up:** to invent, to create (also: **to dream up**)

This idiom is often used for an unusual or foolish thought.

- Who *thought up* the idea of painting the living room walls bright red?
- When asked by the teacher why she was late, the student *dreamed up* a plausible excuse.

## EXERCISES

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\* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons.

1. The Smiths *registered* at the hotel as soon as...
-

2. The Smiths also *deposited* some jewelry at the front desk because...  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The jealous husband hired a private detective to *investigate* the possibility that...  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. *I accepted what my financial advisor had to say* about...  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. While shopping in the expensive store, Mrs. Thurston ... *very much*.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. To ensure..., the politician *managed to obtain* the support of his colleagues in the Senate.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. The athlete *got angry and flustered* on national television when...  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. *We delayed making a decision on* the arrangements for the wedding because...  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Even though I had urged my parents to..., my parents *lost an opportunity* when the stock market...  
\_\_\_\_\_

\* Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

1. If you and a friend are walking on a beach, what do you think your friend could mean if he or she says, «*Check that out!*»
2. Have you ever *taken someone at his or her word*, only to be disappointed at a later time? What happened?
3. What is it that you want at the present time *in the worst way*?
4. Have you ever *copped out* of a responsibility by *thinking up* a reasonable excuse? How do you feel when you do this? Why?
5. Think of different kinds of events or situations where people have to *line up*.
6. What kind of situation might cause you to *lose your cool*? Does this happen easily to you, or not?
7. What kinds of sports or hobbies *turn you on*?

## LESSON 37

---

**to throw (someone) a curve:** to introduce an unexpected topic, causing embarrassment (S)

- The first week of class was going very well until a student *threw* the teacher *a curve* by suggesting that the textbook was too difficult.
- The director asked us in advance to stick to the meeting agenda and not to *throw him any curves*.

**to make waves:** to create a disturbance, usually by complaining

This idiom is similar in meaning to the previous idiom, but the emphasis is on the aspect of complaining rather than causing embarrassment.

- In most companies, an employee who *makes waves* is not appreciated.
- The meeting was going smoothly until one of the participants *made waves* about the newly revised compensation package.

**to carry on:** to continue as before; to conduct, to engage in; to behave in an immature manner – ; , ; ;

Even in the face of disaster, the inhabitants *carried on* as though nothing had happened.

- The business associates decided to *carry on* their discussion in the hotel bar instead of the conference room.
- I can't believe that John *carried on* so much just because his dog died. He looked depressed and cried for weeks after it happened.

**not on your life:** absolutely not (also: **no way**) This idiom is used as a kind of exclamation by itself.

- You're asking me to invest in that poorly rated company just because you know the son of the president? *Not on your life!*
- When a friend tried to get Mark to jump out of a plane with a parachute, he immediately responded, «*No way!*»

**to cover ground:** to be extensive, to discuss much material

Forms such as *a lot of*, *too much*, *too little* are used before the noun *ground*.

- That national commission's report on urban ghettos *covers a lot of ground*. Many of the recommendations are too costly to implement.
- In his first lecture on Greek philosophers, I thought that our professor *covered too little ground*.

**to mind the store:** to be responsible for an office while others are gone

- It seems that all of our employees are taking a lunch break at the same time. I wonder who's *mind the store*.
- Lynne agreed to *mind the store* while the others went outside to watch the parade passing by.

**to throw the book at:** to punish with full penalty, to be harsh on

- Because the criminal was a repeat offender, the judge *threw the book at* him with heavy fines and a long prison term.
- My boss *threw the book at* me when he discovered that I had been using company time for personal business. I was severely reprimanded and forced to make up the lost time.

**to put one's foot in:** to say or do the wrong thing

This idiom is used with the noun phrase *one's mouth* or the pronoun *it*.

- Fred really *put his foot in his mouth* when he called his supervisor by the wrong name.
- I really *put my foot in it* when I forgot my girlfriend's birthday and didn't buy her anything. She almost lost her cool.

**to be up for grabs:** to become available to others

This idiom is used when something is highly desirable to many other people.

- When one of the full-time contract instructors stepped down, her nice office overlooking the river *was up for grabs*.
- Did you know that Senator Stone is retiring and that her Senate seat *is up for grabs*?

**to show off:** to display one's ability in order to attract attention (S), to let others see, to expose to public view (S)

This idiom can form the noun **showoff** for the first definition.

- Elizabeth is an excellent swimmer, but I don't like the way she *shows off* in front of everyone. It's very obvious that she enjoys being a *showoff*.
- Mary *showed* her large wedding ring *off* to all her friends.

**to learn the ropes:** to become familiar with routine procedures at work or school

- The job applicant didn't have much previous experience or knowledge, but she seemed intelligent enough to *learn the ropes* quickly.
- It took the new schoolteacher a year to *learn the ropes* regarding administrative and curricular matters.



**to keep one's fingers crossed:** to hope to have good results, to hope that nothing bad will happen  
This idiom reflects the way people cross their fingers to hope for good luck.

- Let's *keep our fingers crossed* that we got passing grades on that college entrance exam.
- Jerry *kept his fingers crossed* that the good weather would hold up for the picnic he was planning for the coming weekend.

### EXERCISES

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\* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons.

1. After discovering some improper contracts arranged by his company, a worker *created a disturbance* by...

---

2. The professor decided to *conduct* her class in the park because...

---

3. The teenager *behaved in an immature manner* for quite a while when his parents...

---

4. Martha answered, «*Absolutely not!*», when her friend...

---

5. Because the instructor would *discuss too many matters* in the course, the student...

---

6. When the boss went out for lunch with some visitors, she asked ... *to be responsible for the office*.

---

7. The judge *was harsh on* the defendant who...

---

8. The long-time manager's office suddenly *became available to others*, and many associates...

---

9. The excellent athlete *displayed his ability and attracted attention* at the regional track meet by...

---

10. It was difficult for ... *to become familiar with the routine procedures* at the university.

---

\* Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

1. Has anyone *thrown you a curve* recently? What happened?
2. Do you remember ever *carrying on* when you were a child? What did your parents do to stop you?
3. Do you like to take classes that *cover a lot of ground* or *cover little ground*? Why?
4. Would it ever be appropriate to throw the book at someone for *putting their foot in their mouth*? Why or why not?
5. Do you know anyone who likes to *show off*? What do they do?
6. Give an example of when you might *keep your fingers crossed*.

## LESSON 38

---

**to land on one's feet:** to recover safely from an unpleasant or dangerous situation

- After a series of personal and professional difficulties, it's amazing that George *has landed on his feet* so quickly.
- Some young adults get into so much trouble at school that they are never able *to land on their feet* again. They drop out before graduating.

**to dish out:** to distribute in large quantity (S), to speak of others in a critical manner (S)

- Mary's mom *dished out* two or three scoops of ice cream for each child at the birthday party.
- Larry can't seem to take any criticism of his actions but he certainly likes to *dish it out*.

**to get through to:** to communicate with, to make someone understand (also: **to break through to**)

This idiom has the meaning of *to make someone «catch on»* (Lesson 29, eighth idiom, the first definition)

- Some of the students in my reading class understand English so poorly that it is difficult to *get through to* them.
- The doctors have never succeeded in *breaking through to* Mr. Ames, who is a silent and secretive patient.

**to keep one's word:** to fulfill a promise, to be responsible

An idiom with the opposite meaning is **to break one's word**.

- Suzanne *kept her word* to me not to let on to others that I intend to step down next month.
- Thomas always intends to *keep his word*, but invariably the end result is that he *breaks his word*. He just isn't capable of being a responsible person.

**to be over one's head:** to be very busy, to have too much to do (also: **to be up to one's ears**); to be beyond one's ability to understand

- I'd love to take a week off for a hiking trip, but at the moment I *am over my head* in work. Maybe next week when I'm only *up to my ears*!
- It was impossible for the tutor to get through to Bill about the physics problem because the subject matter was *over Bill's head*.

**to ask for:** to deserve, to receive a just punishment (also: **to bring upon**)

- If you drink alcohol and then drive a car, you're only *asking for* trouble.
- Don't complain about your cut in salary. You *asked for* it by refusing to heed our repeated warnings not to be late and inefficient.

**to be a far cry from:** to be very different from

- I enjoyed visiting Seattle, but it *was a far cry from* the ideal vacation spot I expected.
- Ned is enjoying his new job, but his responsibilities *are a far cry from* what he was told they would be.

**by all means:** certainly, definitely, naturally (also: **of course**); using any possible way or method

- If the Johnsons invite us for dinner, then *by all means* we have to return the invitation. *Of course*, we don't have to invite their children, too.
- In order to ensure its survival, the ailing company has to obtain an infusion of cash *by all means*.

**to get out from under:** to restore one's financial security, to resolve a difficult financial obligation

- After years of struggling to get ahead, the young couple finally *got out from under* their debts.
- The ailing company, succeeding in obtaining the necessary cash, was able *to get out from under* its financial burdens.

**to take the bull by the horns:** to handle a difficult situation with determination

This idiom is usually used when someone has been postponing an action for some time and finally wants or needs to resolve it.

- After three years of faithful service, Jake decided to *take the bull by the horns* and ask his boss for a raise.
- Vic has been engaged to Laura for a long time now, and I know that he loves her. He should *take the bull by the horns* and ask her to marry him.

**to give (someone) a hand:** to assist, to aid, to help (also: *to lend someone a hand*) (S)

- Would you *give me a hand* lifting this heavy box?
- When Terry's car broke down at night on the highway, no one would stop to *lend her a hand*.

**to give (someone) a big hand:** to clap one's hands in applause, to applaud (S)

- After the talented new vocalist had sung her number, the audience *gave her a big hand*.
- Should we *give a big hand* to each beauty contestant as she is introduced, or should we wait until all the introductions are finished?

### EXERCISES

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\* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons.

1. It took some time for the artist to *recover from the difficult situation*...

---

2. Billy's mother *distributed in large quantity* ... to all the kids at the birthday party.

---

3. When parents are having trouble *communicating with* their children, they can...

---

4. When I decided to change apartments, my friend *fulfilled her promise* about...

---

5. Larry *has too much to do* at work because...

---

6. The child running on the wet pavement beside the swimming pool *deserved it* when...

---

7. The new immigrant thought that ... in the United States *was very different from*...

---

8. After days of postponing necessary yardwork, Mr. Johnson *handled the difficult situation and*...

---

9. When Kim's car broke down on the highway, a passing motorist *assisted her by*...

---

10. The President *was applauded* when he announced...

---

\* Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

1. The idiom *to land on one's feet* is related to a special ability of cats. Do you know what this is?
2. Why is it often difficult *to get through to* young children? Is this sometimes true for adults?
3. Is it always important for you to *keep your word*? Can you think of a situation where you would *break your word*?
4. Have you ever had a class where the subject matter *was over your head*? What did you do?
5. If you run across a street without looking first, you *are asking for trouble*. Try to think of other situations where you're *asking for trouble*.
6. What parts of an adult's life *are a far cry from* the life of a child?
7. Are there any things in life that you want to have or want to do *by all means*?
8. Have you ever been forced to *take the bull by the horns*? What was the situation?
9. In what case might you refuse to *give someone a hand*?

## LESSON 39

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**to goof off:** to waste time, to be idle

- Some of the workers in our office always *goof off* when the boss is out.
- On Saturday afternoons, I like to go to a movie or just *goof off* at home.

**to talk back to:** to answer in a rude manner, to speak disrespectfully

- Billy, if you *talk back to* me like that once more, you're going to spend the rest of the day in your room.
- The school principal had to reprimand the child for *talking back to* her teacher.

**to be in:** to be popular or fashionable, to be available at one's work or home

- Most young people tend to want anything that *is in* at the time, but a few don't care about current trends.
- Could you please tell me when Mrs. Zachary *will be in*? I'd like to talk to her soon.

**to be out:** to be unpopular or no longer in fashion; to be away from one's work or home

- These days, designer jeans are in and long skirts *are out*.
- I'm sorry, Mr. Jensen *is out* at the moment. Could I take a message?

**to draw the line at:** to determine to be unacceptable, to refuse to consider

- I don't mind helping him with his homework, but I *draw the line at* writing a term paper for him.
- The conference organizers tried to accommodate the needs of the various interest groups, but they *drew the line at* extending the conference by two days.

**to get out of line:** to disobey or ignore normal procedures or rules (also: *to step out of line*)

- When a child *gets out of line* in that teacher's class, she uses the old-fashioned method of making the child sit in the corner of the room.
- Any employee who *steps out of line* by coming to work in an unacceptable condition will be fired.

**dry run:** rehearsal, practice session

- The college president requested a dry run of the graduation ceremony in order to ensure that all aspects went smoothly.
- Before the manager presented the reorganizational plans to the board of directors, he did several *dry runs* of his presentation.

**to play by ear:** to play music that one has heard but never read (S); to proceed without plan, to do spontaneously (S)  
The pronoun *it* is often used with the second definition.

- That pianist can *play* most popular music *by ear*. She never needs to read sheet music.
- My husband wanted to plan our trip carefully, but I argued that it was more fun if we *played it by ear*.

**to be in (someone's) shoes:** to be in another person's position, to face the same situation as another person

- If I *were in your shoes*, I wouldn't take too many classes this semester.
- When his boss finds out about that accounting error, I wouldn't want to *be in his shoes*.

**to keep after:** to remind constantly, to nag

- Lynn always has to *keep after* her children about cleaning up their rooms and doing chores around the house.
- Lon is so forgetful that it's necessary to *keep after* him about every little thing.

**to fix up:** to repair or put back in good condition (S); to arrange a date or an engagement for another person (S)

- Instead of buying an expensive new home, we decided to buy an older home and *fix it up* ourselves.
- Since my visiting friend didn't have a date for dinner, I *fixed her up* with a male friend of mine. They got along very well together.

**to be had:** to be victimized or cheated

- When the jeweler confirmed that the diamonds that the woman had purchased abroad were really fake, she exclaimed, «*I've been had!*»
- The angry customer complained about being overcharged at the store, asserting that this was the third time that he had been had.

## EXERCISES

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\* Substitute an idiomatic expression for the word or words in italics, making any necessary grammatical changes as well. Then complete each sentence appropriately with your own idea. Also try to use idioms from previous lessons.

1. Because most of her elementary school students *were wasting time*, the teacher...

---

2. When Joey *spoke disrespectfully to* his mother, she...

---

3. When he learned that the owner *wasn't available*, the visiting salesperson...

---

4. Greg is willing to help his brother with some household chores, but he *refuses to consider*...

---

5. If you *disobey the rules* one more time, I will...

---

6. The theater group did a *rehearsal* of the play before...

---

7. Mrs. Dixson has the special ability *to play music she has heard but never read*. She doesn't have to...

---

8. I wouldn't want *to be in Ted's position*. The police have discovered that he...

---

9. Every day after school, Harriet's parents have *to nag* her to...

---

10. I decided to *arrange an engagement* for him because he...

---

\* Answer these questions orally by making use of the idiomatic expressions studied in this lesson.

1. Are you usually a serious person, or do you like to *goof off* a lot? Why might *goofing off* sometimes be healthy for you?
2. When (If) you were (are) young, did (do) you *talk back to* your parents? Why or why not?
3. Do you pay attention to whether clothing fashions *are in or out*? What is an advantage of not paying attention?
4. If you had to give a speech in class, would you do *a dry run*? Why or why not?
5. When (If) you were (are) young, what did (do) your parents have to *keep after* you about? Did you ever learn to remember it, or do you still forget?
6. Have you ever *fixed someone up* with a date, or have you ever been *fixed up* with a date yourself? Can you imagine why the term *blind date* is sometimes used in such cases?
7. Have you ever *been had* by someone you just met, such as a store clerk or a stranger on the street? What happened?

**REVIEW-LESSON 28 TO 39**

**A.** Match the idiom in the left column with the definition in the right column.

_____ 1.	let alone	a)	I don't know
_____ 2.	on the ball	b)	certainly, definitely
_____ 3.	search me	c)	nervous, irritable
_____ 4.	by the way	d)	rehearsal, practice session
_____ 5.	on hand	e)	and certainly not
_____ 6.	by all means	f)	incidentally
_____ 7.	more or less	g)	available, nearby
_____ 8.	a steal	h)	in general
_____ 9.	dry run	i)	attentive, alert
_____ 10.	on the whole	j)	directly, personally
_____ 11.	on edge	k)	approximately, almost
_____ 12.	face-to-face	l)	very inexpensive

**B.** In the space provided, mark whether each sentence is true (T) or false (F).

- If you have succeeded in *landing on your feet* after financial difficulties, things probably *are looking up* in your life. \_\_\_\_\_
- If you *go through channels* in submitting a complaint, you are probably *making waves* in your company. \_\_\_\_\_
- If someone asks why you did something and you can't *think up* a good reason, you might respond, «*Search me.*» \_\_\_\_\_
- If you know someone who likes to *put others on*, you can usually *take* that person *at their word*. \_\_\_\_\_
- If the subject matter of an academic field often *is over your head*, you may not *be cut out for* that field. \_\_\_\_\_
- Parents might *go off the deep end* if they have *to wait up for* their child very late without knowing what he or she *is up to*. \_\_\_\_\_
- If you get a problem *off your chest*, you are *beating around the bush*. \_\_\_\_\_
- If you are able to *get through to* someone, you have *wasted your breath*. \_\_\_\_\_
- If you *are not with* someone while they are explaining something, you *are catching on*. \_\_\_\_\_
- You might *back out* of an activity that could cause you *to get cold feet* at the last minute. \_\_\_\_\_
- If you dislike *playing something by ear* you will probably *leave it open*. \_\_\_\_\_
- If you are *learning the ropes*, it is possible that you might *goof up* once in a while. \_\_\_\_\_

**C.** Fill in each blank with the appropriate form of the idioms using *give* listed below. Some expressions come from Lessons 1 to 27.

give and take	to give up	to give in
to give off	to give out	to give one a break
to give birth to	to give one a hand	to give one a big hand

- Mrs. Johnson was very surprised when she \_\_\_\_\_ twin boys.
- Because it was the first time that I had fooled around in class I asked the teacher \_\_\_\_\_.
- A successful marriage is mostly a matter of \_\_\_\_\_ between husband and wife.
- This box is too heavy for me to lift alone. Could you \_\_\_\_\_.
- The lecturer was so interesting that the audience \_\_\_\_\_ at the end of the talk.
- The man stood on the street corner and \_\_\_\_\_ advertising flyers to the people passing by.

7. Could you please take this garbage outside? It \_\_\_\_\_ a very bad smell.
8. The army forces \_\_\_\_\_ when they discovered that they were surrounded by the enemy.
9. I usually don't \_\_\_\_\_ so easily, but this work is too hard for me to do.

**D.** Fill in each blank with the appropriate form of the idioms using *keep* listed below. Some expressions come from Lessons 1-27.

to keep one's head	to keep up with	to keep in touch with
to keep one's word	to keep after	to keep in mind
to keep track of	to keep away	to keep one's fingers crossed

1. In the emergency situation, Alex was able \_\_\_\_\_ and save the child from drowning in the ocean.
2. At the racetrack, none of the horses were able \_\_\_\_\_ the horse that was expected to win the race.
3. When we visited Disneyland, we had to be careful \_\_\_\_\_ our children in the large crowds of people.
4. You have \_\_\_\_\_ Tanya to return the typewriter or she will forget time and again.
5. You should \_\_\_\_\_ about doing that important task and not neglect to attend to it any longer.
6. Even though you're moving to another city, we should \_\_\_\_\_ each other as much as possible.
7. While I was cooking with hot grease on the stove, I warned others \_\_\_\_\_ in order not to get burned.
8. When teaching beginning-level English students, it is important \_\_\_\_\_ that their range of vocabulary is quite limited.
9. The weather forecast is calling for cloudy skies tomorrow. We should \_\_\_\_\_ that it doesn't rain during the picnic.

**E.** Fill in each blank with the appropriate form of the idioms using *go* listed below. Some expressions come from Lessons 1 to 27.

to go through	to go to town	to go without saying
touch and go	to go in for	to go around
to go over	to go off	to go with

1. I was too tired to get up in the morning when my alarm clock \_\_\_\_\_, so I turned it off and went back to sleep.
2. My presentation to the class \_\_\_\_\_ so well that the students gave me a big hand.
3. The delicate operation was \_\_\_\_\_ for several hours, but finally the surgeons were able to finish successfully.
4. We just went to the store an hour ago to buy more beer, and already there isn't enough \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I can't understand how we \_\_\_\_\_ so much beer in such a short time.
6. When we remodeled our house, we added a master bedroom, a large bathroom with jacuzzi, and a walk-in closet. We really \_\_\_\_\_.
7. I really enjoy playing chess. Do you \_\_\_\_\_ playing chess as well?
8. That you should stay home if you are very sick \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Do you think that this grey shirt \_\_\_\_\_ these beige pants?