

IDIOMS

The IDIOM means language peculiar to a people or community or a class. It is the syntactical, grammatical or structural form peculiar to a language. It is an expression in the usage of a language that is peculiar to itself either grammatically or in having a meaning that can't be derived from the conjoined meanings of its elements. The command of idiomatic expression is a must for proper comprehension. You need to work on this element vigorously because you cannot guess or derive meaning from the given words.



Phrasal verbs or idioms may consist with prepositions, pairs of adverbs, pairs of verbs / nouns / adjectives and many more. It is nearly impossible to deal with them without constant practice and extensive reading. Given below are some most important idioms indispensable for any competitive examination. In fact, idioms are not a separate part of the language, which one can choose either to use or to omit but they form an essential part of the vocabulary of English.

EXAMPLE: Let me have a glass of 'Adam's ale'--- Adam's ale means water

List of Idioms:

1. The bare bones of something: the basic facts of something.

Ex: The bare bones of the air crash have not yet come into light.

2. Bare your soul to somebody: to tell somebody your deepest and most private feelings.

Ex: An ideal husband shouldn't bare his soul especially to his wife.

3. Ad nauseam: to talk about something that it becomes very boring.

Ex: She talks ad nauseam about how brilliant her children are.

4. Albatross around or round your neck: something that keeps causing your problems and stops you from being successful.

Ex: The air line that he founded is now an albatross around his neck making losses of several hundreds of thousands a year.

5. Have an axe to grind: to have a personal; often selfish, reason for being involved in something.

Ex: I have no axe to grind. I just want to help you.

6. Bark up the wrong tree: to attempt to do the wrong thing in the wrong way from the wrong direction.

Ex: He didn't know that he was barking up the wrong tree when he tried to influence the judge for bail.

7. Full of beans: full of energy and very cheerful.

Ex: She has been ill but she is full of beans.

8. At someone's beck and call: always ready to carry out someone's order or wishes.

Ex: He has always plenty of men at his beck and call ('Beck' is another form of 'beckon')

9. A bed of roses: an easy or a comfortable place, job, path etc.

Ex: The path to success is never a bed of roses.

10. Better off: happier, improved, more successful (goes with "with or without")

Ex: He would be better off starting with something simpler.

11. Have a bee in one's bonnet: to have an idea which has become too fixed in one's mind.

Ex: He has a bee in his bonnet about going to America.

12. A little bird told me something: to say that you know something but you will not say how you found out.

Ex: A little bird told me that you have got engaged.

13. Amiss: wrong, not as it should be.

Ex: She sensed that something was amiss and called the police.

14. What the doctor ordered: the very thing that is needed. To be exactly what is wanted or needed.

Ex: At this moment, a cup of tea is just what the doctor ordered.

15. be like a dog with a bone: to refuse to stop thinking about or talking about a subject.

Ex: On the subject of belt shops, the liquor king is like a dog with a bone.

16. The dog days: the hottest days of summer.

Ex: The sale of air coolers rises during the dog days.

17. A doubting Thomas: a person who refuses to believe something without having incontrovertible proof; a skeptic.

Ex: Being the president of a party, he shouldn't always be a doubting Thomas.

18. Dog's dinner or breakfast: something that has been done very badly. a poor piece of work.

Ex: To attend a function, I went to a saloon a day before to get my hair cut. The barber made a real dog's breakfast (of my hair).

19. Roll up your sleeves: prepare to fight or work.

Ex: The M.P.'s and M.L.A.'s are always ready to roll up their sleeves in the Houses shamelessly and senselessly though they are being shot and viewed by the public.

20. Put (or set) your hand to the plough: embark on a task.

Ex: Jesus said unto him, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

21. What's your poison: used to ask someone what alcoholic they would like to drink.

Ex: It's my round. What's your poison?

22. Pop the question: to ask a woman to marry you.

Ex: She said that her boyfriend had popped the question as they drove home from the party.

23. Go postal: to become very angry or to suddenly behave in a violent and angry way, especially where you work. (This is a very new idiom which started when a post office worker in America shot several of the people he worked with.)

Ex: My dad will go postal, if I get home late.

24. Pass the buck: to pass on responsibility to someone else or to blame someone for a problem that you should deal yourself (often with 'to').

Ex: Parents often try to pass the buck to teachers when children misbehave in the school.

25. Cross the bridge when you come to it: to worry about a problem when it actually happens and not before.

Ex: The power cut problem is really horrible. The government crosses the bridge only when it comes to it.

Practice Questions

1) My son's chemistry teacher is often lost in clouds.

(a) Confused (b) Angry (c) Unable to solve problems.

2) The differences between India and Pakistan have grown bitterer and now they are at daggers drawn.

(a) Hating each other (b) To have bitter enmity (c) Planning for a war.

3) It is very difficult for most of the people to make both ends meet in the Congress party's ruling.

(a) To travel (b) To live within one's means (c) To get a job.

4) I have to phone Sunanda before I leave, "Well, make it snappy my wife said. We haven't much time."

(a) Tell someone to hurry

(b) Tell someone not to worry.

(c) Ask someone to react smoothly.

5) There has been bad blood between the two brothers ever since their guardian's death.

(a) Love and affection (b) Misunderstanding (c) Enmity and unfriendliness.

6) Take care, my children! That young man is bad news.

(a) Unbelievable person (b) A thief (c) Someone that tends to cause trouble.

8) The manager was carpeted for leaking information to the press.

(a) Welcomed (b) Suspended (c) Reprimanded.

9) Most of the politicians now-a-days are eating their own words.

(a) Taking back their statements admitting that what they say is wrong

(b) Unable to speak fluently (c) Making empty promises.

10) Most parents now-a-days are suffering from empty nest syndrome.

(a) Having no house of their own (b) Living in nested houses

(c) The situation that they are in when their children have left home.

11) We must just agree to differ on this.

- (a) Decide not to discuss any longer. (b) Agree to discuss as they differ
(c) Agree not to differ.

12) The eloped couple went or walked down the aisle.

- (a) Walked through an aisle to occupy their seats
(b) Slipped down from an aisle (c) Got married.

13) When I won the lottery, I received a lot of letters that told their hard-luck stories.

- (a) False stories (b) Sympathetic stories
(c) Stories craving for help and sympathy.

14) As I was very busy in my script work, I shouted at the children to hop it.

- (a) To stop it (b) To go away (c) To be silent.

15) No amount of encouragement would make him jump into the pool.

- (a) Discouragement (b) Will have no effect (c) Temptation.

16) Do you think she'll be back any time soon?

- (a) Immediately (b) May not be back (c) Gets too late to imagine

17) Kashmir is the apple of Indians' eye.

- (a) More lovable than any other (b) Famous for apples loved by Indians
(c) Known for apples.

18) Botsa and Kiran Kumar Reddy are too apt to cling to Delhi's apron strings.

- (a) Tied to slavery to Delhi (b) Be influenced and controlled too much
(c) Delhi's political scenario.

19) Is Dharmana prepared to argue the toss when he might have to go to court to prove it?

- (a) Disagree with the decision (b) Challenge the statement
(c) Submit oneself to a decision.

20) The party headed by a young leader is in the ascendant.

- (a) Diminishing (b) Becoming more powerful and popular (C) Decreasing.

21) When all the ways were closed, the company owned the tender through the back door.

- (a) Through the door that is backside of the house
(b) Entered from behind (c) In an indirect or unfair way.

22) People who voted for the Congress party in the past backed the wrong horse.

- (a) Voted in a wrong way (b) Supported the unsuccessful party
(c) Expected corruption less ruling.

23) You can give your daughter to Ramdev for he can bring home to bacon.

- (a) Be able to earn more to live on (b) Be able to get pig meal instead of chicken
(c) Be able to look after well.

24) He went ballistic when he heard that he wasn't offered any ministry.

- (a) Decided to ruin something (b) Became very angry
(c) Planned an evil plan.

25) The party founded by him went with a bang.

- (a) Went very successfully (b) went very dully
(c) Made a big, loud noise.