

- 16 After the protest the leader of the council was made a \_\_\_\_\_ and forced to resign.
- 17 If you're at a \_\_\_\_\_ end this weekend, why not come round to see us?
- 18 The ambulance arrived just in the \_\_\_\_\_ of time to save the patient's life.
- 19 We looked in every \_\_\_\_\_ and cranny for the lost document, but couldn't find it anywhere.
- 20 Try to avoid driving along the High Street in the mornings as it's a bit of a \_\_\_\_\_ during the rush hour.

The missing proverb is:

---

*(You use this to say jokingly that you and someone else must be very intelligent because you both agree about something.)*

## Section 3: Idioms using verbs

This section concentrates on the use of verbs as idioms.

Certain verbs are nearly always followed by certain nouns. This section starts by looking at some common verb–noun collocations where the same verb is used for several nouns, e.g. *break* (your leg, the ice), *catch* (a cold, fire) and *lose* (your temper, face).

More idiomatic verb–noun combinations are presented next, e.g. *get the sack* (lose your job), *hit the sack* (go to bed) and *spill the beans* (reveal secret information).

The rest of the section concentrates on the most common verbs used in idioms, i.e. *give*, *take*, *break*, *have*, *make*, *bring*, *come*, *go*, *get*, *keep*, *pull*, *put* and *turn*.

Some examples are:

*give someone the cold shoulder* (ignore someone)

*take someone for a ride* (deceive someone in order to get money from them)

*have a lump in one's throat* (feel very emotional and close to tears)

*make a mountain out of a molehill* (exaggerate a situation)

*keep a straight face* (stop oneself from laughing)

*pull someone's leg* (tease someone)



*'Something's put the wind up him!'*

# 21 Verb + noun collocations

SECTION 3

Add two more words or phrases to the verbs below. Use each word or phrase once only. Choose from the following:

a cold a conclusion a living a speech attention  
 between the lines face fire ~~permission~~ someone a compliment  
 someone's palm thanks the curtains the fort the ice  
 the impression the line ~~the way~~ your leg your temper

- |    |       |            |                   |                |
|----|-------|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1  | ask   | a question | <u>permission</u> | <u>the way</u> |
| 2  | break | a promise  | _____             | _____          |
| 3  | catch | a bus      | _____             | _____          |
| 4  | draw  | a picture  | _____             | _____          |
| 5  | give  | advice     | _____             | _____          |
| 6  | hold  | a meeting  | _____             | _____          |
| 7  | lose  | weight     | _____             | _____          |
| 8  | make  | a profit   | _____             | _____          |
| 9  | pay   | a bill     | _____             | _____          |
| 10 | read  | a book     | _____             | _____          |



You *catch a disease* when it is infectious or contagious (e.g. the 'flu'). Companies can also *make a loss*, when they lose money instead of making it. It is also possible to say *earn a living*.

# 22 Verb + noun combinations 1

SECTION 3

Two out of the three nouns (in brackets) can go with each verb to form idioms. Underline the noun which does **not** form an idiom.

- 1 break (the news, the ice, the time)
- 2 call (the shots, someone's bluff, the handle)
- 3 do (a speech, wonders, the trick)
- 4 get (the message, the bacon, the sack)
- 5 go (public, places, one's goat)
- 6 have (words, pieces, kittens)
- 7 hit (the boat, the sack, the jackpot)
- 8 jump (the gun, the traffic, the queue)
- 9 make (a move, a bomb, steam)
- 10 play (the roof, second fiddle, the fool)
- 11 pull (strings, the beans, one's weight)
- 12 run (riot, the gauntlet, reason)
- 13 see (the ropes, the light, the sights)
- 14 take (the plunge, the biscuit, the bucket)
- 15 throw (a party, the fence, a fit)



Short verb + noun combinations are very common in idiomatic English. It is best to learn each one as a phrase, rather than trying to remember the verb and noun separately. *Jump the gun* is a reference to a runner starting a race before the gun goes off.

## Verb + noun combinations 2

Take a verb from box A and a noun from box B to complete the definitions below. Use each word once only.

A

bury    cook    drop    fly  
~~go~~    kick    lose    pop  
 sit    smell    spill    stretch  
       surf    talk

B

beans    books    bucket  
 clanger    fence    ~~halves~~  
 handle    hatchet    legs  
 nerve    net    question  
       rat    shop

- When you go halves, you divide the cost of something equally between you – that is, fifty-fifty.
- To \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ means to dishonestly change a company's bookkeeping records in order to steal money.
- If you \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_, you ask someone to marry you.
- To \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ is to use a computer to visit various sites on the Internet for information that is of interest to you.
- When you \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_, you stop quarrelling or arguing with someone and agree to be friends again.
- To \_\_\_\_\_ is to talk about your job with those you work with – usually when you are away from your place of work.
- If you decide to \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_, this means you want to go for a walk – especially after you have been sitting down for a while.

- When you \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_, you say something embarrassing in front of others.
- To \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ is a slightly humorous way of saying 'to die'.
- To \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ is to avoid making a decision between two sides in an argument or competition.
- If you \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_, you no longer have the courage you once had to do something (e.g. climb a mountain, make a speech in public).
- To \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ is to tell people secret information.
- To \_\_\_\_\_ off the \_\_\_\_\_ is to become very angry suddenly – to lose your temper.
- To \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_ is to become suspicious about a situation – to think that something wrong or dishonest is happening.



*Net* is short for 'Internet'.

*Spill the beans* refers to the Ancient Greek tradition of using beans to count votes. A jar would be passed around and voters would put a white bean for *No* and a brown bean for *Yes*. If the jar was knocked over, you could see which way the vote was going.

In Britain during the Black Death plague, people were encouraged to keep pets at home to smell out and kill rats (*smell a rat*).

# 24 Idioms using *give and take*

**A** For each sentence in **I** find a suitable idiom from **II**. Write your answers in the box.

- I**
- 1 She promised me she would do it.
  - 2 Daniel completely ignored me this morning when I said hello to him.
  - 3 It was supposed to be a surprise party, but Sarah told Thomas about it.
  - 4 The shopkeeper chased the two shoplifters, but they escaped.
  - 5 The audience clapped loudly when the band appeared on stage.
  - 6 Phöebe helped her neighbour with her son's wedding preparations.
  - 7 Javier telephoned his girlfriend after work.
  - 8 My brother lost his job last week. His boss told him to leave after he had refused to work overtime.

- II**
- a They gave them a big hand.
  - b He gave him the sack.
  - c They gave him the slip.
  - d He gave her a bell.
  - e She gave me her word.
  - f She gave the game away.
  - g He gave me the cold shoulder.
  - h She gave her a hand.

Write your answers here:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
e							

**B** Replace the words in italics in the sentences below with an idiom from the box.

- (not) take no for an answer                      take it or leave it  
 take it out on someone                              take place  
 take pot luck    take someone for a ride  
 take something by storm                      take something with a pinch of salt  
 take the floor    ~~take to one's heels~~  
 take things easy

- 1 The two boys *ran away* when the farmer chased them.  
The two boys took to their heels when the farmer chased them.
- 2 Let's check the Internet to see if there are any last-minute, cheap holidays going somewhere tomorrow. It doesn't matter where – we'll just *take a chance*.
- 3 Nimah tends to exaggerate a lot. If I were you *I wouldn't believe everything he tells you*.
- 4 The new British boy band has *been really successful in America*.
- 5 I told him he couldn't borrow my new laptop, but he kept on asking anyway. *He just refused to accept my refusal*.
- 6 It was only when he got home after the car boot sale that he found out the TV didn't work. The woman he had bought it from had *cheated him*.

# 25

## Idioms using *break*, *have* and *make*

- 7 His doctor told him to *relax and avoid stress* for a while.
- 8 Just because someone has stolen your mobile phone, there's no need to *behave unpleasantly towards* me. It wasn't my fault!
- 9 \$10,000 – and that's my final offer! *It's up to you if you accept it or not*.
- 10 There was an expectant hush as the guest speaker *got up to speak*.
- 11 They told everyone that their wedding would *be held* at St Mary's church on 18th September.

**A** Arrange the following under the correct verb. There should be five under each.

a bee in one's bonnet	fun of someone
a bone to pick with someone	one's blood boil
a chip on one's shoulder	one's word
a good time	short work of something
a lump in one's throat	someone's heart
a mountain out of a molehill	the back of something
a scene	the news
<del>even</del>	

**BREAK**

**HAVE**

*even*

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**MAKE**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____



The *heel* is the bottom back part of a shoe and is what you see when someone runs away from you.

To *take pot luck* used to mean to take whatever food was served from a cooking pot.

# 26 Idioms using *bring*, *come* and *go*

- B** Complete the sentences below using one of the above idioms and making any changes that may be necessary. To help you, a definition is given after each sentence.
- I honestly don't know what all the fuss is about. If you ask me they're just making a mountain out of a molehill. (*making a lot of fuss about nothing*)
  - My father refuses to use a mobile phone. He's got \_\_\_\_\_ about mobile phones causing brain tumours. (*a fixed idea; is obsessed with the idea*)
  - With any luck the company should \_\_\_\_\_ by the end of the year. (*make neither a profit nor a loss*)
  - You'd better keep away from Julian. He's got \_\_\_\_\_ with you about not turning up for the match on Saturday. (*a complaint to make*)
  - It really \_\_\_\_\_ when young people don't give up their seat on a bus for older people. (*makes me angry*)
  - Michael's on holiday somewhere in Spain, so they still haven't been able to \_\_\_\_\_ to him of his nephew's birth. (*tell him what's happened*)
  - Most British people hate \_\_\_\_\_ in public. That's why they rarely complain at restaurants. (*quarrelling; making a fuss*)
  - It \_\_\_\_\_ André's \_\_\_\_\_ when Katerina left him. (*made him really sad; really upset him*)
  - You shouldn't \_\_\_\_\_ his clothes. He likes wearing yellow! (*laugh or make jokes about*)
  - Lucinda has always \_\_\_\_\_ about not going to university. (*felt resentful, inferior*)

Complete the newspaper headlines below with a suitable idiom. Write the correct letter (a–n) in the gaps. Choose from the following:

- |   |                        |   |                 |
|---|------------------------|---|-----------------|
| a | BRINGS THE HOUSE DOWN  | h | COME TO LIGHT   |
| b | BROUGHT TO LIGHT       | i | COME TO NOTHING |
| c | COMES A CROPPER        | j | GOES BALLISTIC  |
| d | COMES CLEAN            | k | GOES BUST       |
| e | CAME DOWN IN THE WORLD | l | GO DUTCH        |
| f | COMES INTO FORCE       | m | GOES FOR A SONG |
| g | COMES TO A HEAD        | n | GO STRAIGHT     |

1 PLANS TO INCREASE BUS FARES  b   
(are revealed)

2 MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALKS \_\_\_\_\_  
(fail to produce any results)

3 LEADING GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL \_\_\_\_\_  
OVER ACCUSATIONS OF CORRUPTION  
(becomes very angry)

4 ROCK STAR \_\_\_\_\_ ABOUT DRUGS PROBLEM  
(confesses; tells the truth)

5 LEAD SINGER IN NEW MUSICAL HIT \_\_\_\_\_  
(gets lots of applause)



If you get angry, your blood pressure normally rises, so if you were really angry it might feel as if your blood was boiling!

# 27 Idioms using *get* and *keep*

6 OLYMPIC HURDLES RECORD HOLDER \_\_\_\_  
(accidentally falls onto the ground, fails)

7 VAN GOGH PAINTING ACCIDENTALLY \_\_\_\_  
(sold very cheaply)

8 'HOW I \_\_\_\_' BY LEADING SOAP STAR  
(went from being very successful to being a failure)

9 EX-BANK ROBBER VOWS TO \_\_\_\_  
(not break the law any more; to lead an honest life)

10 NEW FACTS IN PLANE CRASH \_\_\_\_  
(are revealed)

11 MOST YOUNG COUPLES \_\_\_\_ THESE DAYS  
(share the costs, especially when eating out)

12 CONCERN OVER NURSING SHORTAGE IN LONDON \_\_\_\_  
(reaches a crisis)

13 FIGURES OUT TODAY REVEAL THAT ONE IN FOUR  
NEW COMPANIES \_\_\_\_ WITHIN THEIR FIRST YEAR  
(go bankrupt; stop trading)

14 NEW TAX LAW \_\_\_\_ TODAY  
(is the law)



*Go Dutch* is probably from an American English phrase *a Dutch lunch* where each of the guests brought along something to eat.

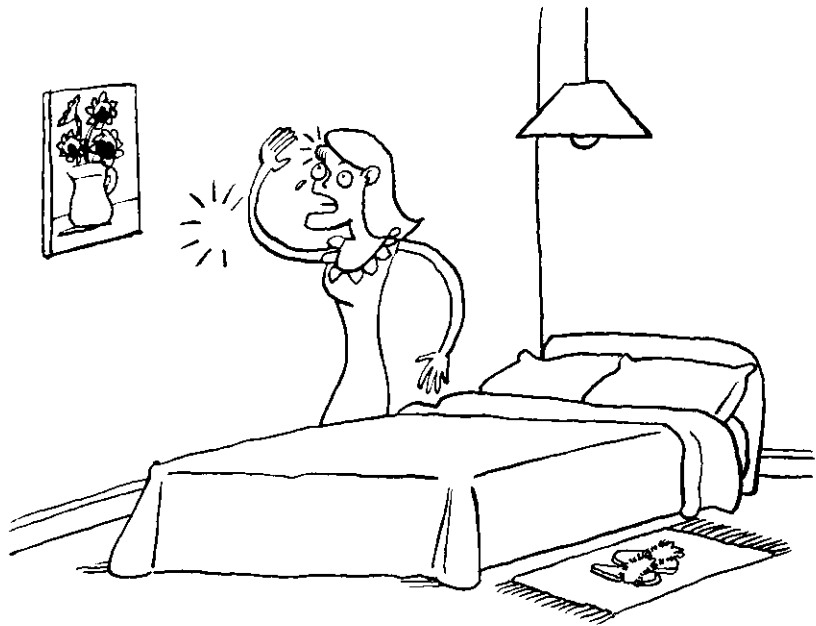
The opposite of *come down in the world* is *go up in the world*.

Another idiom for *go bust* is *go to the wall*.

Say whether the idioms in the following sentences are used correctly (true) or incorrectly (false).

	True	False
1 If someone tells you to <b>get a move on</b> they want you to hurry.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 You would probably feel quite flattered if someone told you that you <b>got on their nerves</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 I always try to <b>keep in touch with</b> my friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 You'll soon learn. You'll soon <b>get the hang of it</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 If you say that someone <b>got out of bed on the wrong side</b> , you mean that they are not very intelligent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 If something <b>gets your goat</b> , it annoys you.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Emotional people would find it hard to <b>keep a stiff upper lip</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 He was a poor swimmer and found it hard to <b>keep his head above water</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 He had an exam on Friday and asked me to <b>keep my fingers crossed</b> for him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 You would probably feel relieved if you managed to <b>get something off your chest</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 To <b>get wind of something</b> is to be told a secret.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 To <b>keep something under your hat</b> is to deceive or cheat someone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 To <b>keep a straight face</b> is not to laugh, even though you feel like laughing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 14 She told her husband everything – she used to **keep him in the dark**. \_\_\_\_\_
- 15 Most people would feel quite proud to **get the sack**. \_\_\_\_\_
- 16 It was really cheap. I **got it for a song**. \_\_\_\_\_



*She got out of bed on the wrong side this morning.*



*Get one's goat* comes from the time when it was common to keep a goat in the same stable as a racehorse to calm its nerves before a big race. If, however, someone stole the goat, the horse would become agitated and perform badly. So the owner would probably be very angry! In the past people believed that left was unlucky and right was lucky. So they believed that if you put your left leg out of bed first, then things would go wrong for you (*get out of bed on the wrong side*).

# 28 Idioms using *pull* *put* and *turn*

A For each sentence in I find a suitable idiom from II.

- I
- 1 Dimitri wasn't being serious! He was just teasing you!
  - 2 Jeanette really frightened Robbie when she suddenly dropped a tray behind him.
  - 3 He spoke very bluntly to me and told me exactly what he thought about the way I was behaving.
  - 4 Kate really annoyed Christophe when she told him he was a terrible driver.
  - 5 My cat was so ill, the vet decided to end her suffering.
  - 6 Mario will have to work much harder to pass his exams next summer.
  - 7 Loren told the man standing next to him that he thought the painting was rubbish. But the man was the person who had painted it!
  - 8 The prisoner promised never to break the law again. He was a changed man now.
- II
- a He put her to sleep.
  - b He's turned over a new leaf.
  - c She put his back up.
  - d He put his foot in it.
  - e He was pulling your leg!
  - f He didn't pull any punches.
  - g He needs to pull his socks up.
  - h She put the wind up him.



Write your answers here:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
e							

**B** Replace the words in *italics* in the sentences below with an idiom from the box.

pull strings

pull the wool over someone's eyes

put a spoke in someone's wheel

put something on the map

put the cat among the pigeons

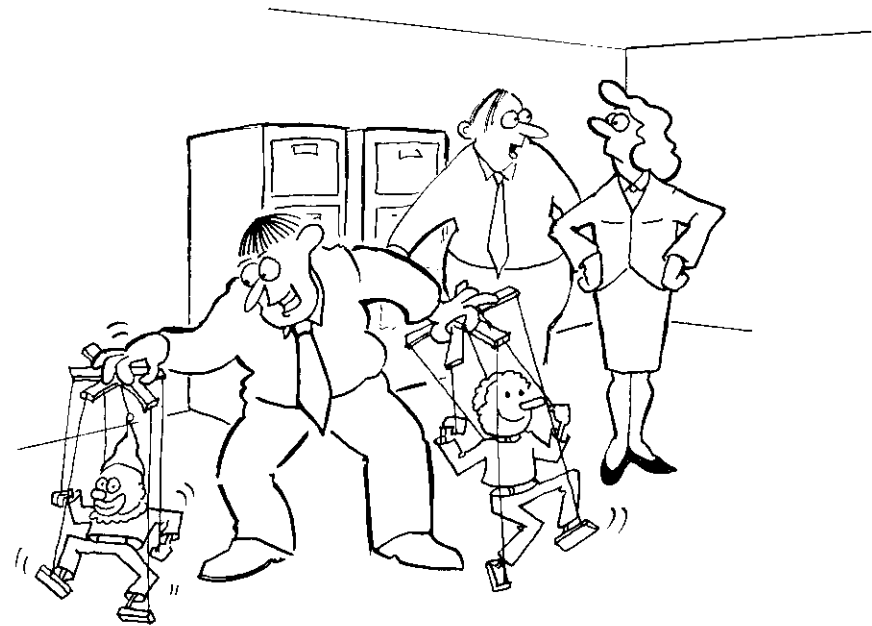
put two and two together

~~put one's foot down~~

turn a blind eye to something

- His daughter asked to go to an all-night party, but he *firmly refused* and told her she would have to be home by midnight.  
His daughter asked to go to an all-night party, but he put his foot down and told her she would have to be home by midnight.
- They were going to build the highest skyscraper in the world in a bid to *make their city really famous*.
- It was his views on whale hunting that really *caused a lot of trouble and made a lot of people very angry*.
- He saw the young boy take the bar of chocolate without paying for it, but he decided to *ignore it*.
- Ask your uncle to try and *use his influence and contacts* to get you the job.
- I'm too smart for you! You can't *deceive me!*

- When he noticed that both his wife and best friend always went out alone the same evenings every week, he *guessed the truth* and came to the conclusion that they were having an affair.
- Tell your daughter you need the car this weekend – that'll *upset her plans*.



*He got the job by pulling strings!*



Spokes are the thin metal bars inside a wheel.

When a boxer *pulls his punches* he doesn't hit as hard as he could.

Another way of saying *I had my cat put to sleep* is to say *I had my cat put down*.

*Leaf* is an old-fashioned word for a page in a book. So when you *turn over a new leaf* (page) you have a new fresh and clean one to start writing on.

# 29 Idioms using various verbs

SECTION 3

In each of the sentences below, two of the alternatives are correct. Underline the one that does **not** fit in.

- 1 The old man at number 10 has died. He \_\_\_\_\_ on Friday morning.
- a) buried the hatchet  
b) kicked the bucket  
c) passed away
- 2 Alberto lost his temper. He \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) blew his top  
b) barked up the wrong tree  
c) flew off the handle
- 3 She makes me so angry sometimes. She really \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) makes my blood boil  
b) leads me up the garden path  
c) gets my goat
- 4 The butcher was very irritable this morning. He \_\_\_\_\_!
- a) went like a bomb  
b) bit my head off  
c) was like a bear with a sore head
- 5 It's very wet today. It's \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) bucketing down  
b) beating about the bush  
c) raining cats and dogs
- 6 I couldn't do the bungee jump in the end. I \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) got cold feet  
b) chickened out  
c) missed the boat
- 7 The market trader deceived us. He \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) took us for a ride  
b) led us up the garden path  
c) pipped us at the post
- 8 You said something very embarrassing. You really \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) dropped a clanger  
b) blew your own trumpet  
c) put your foot in it
- 9 Juliette had a very good relationship with her mother-in-law. They \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) were like two peas in a pod  
b) really hit it off  
c) got on like a house on fire
- 10 It's so expensive here. \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) You have to pay through the nose for a flat.  
b) Flats cost the earth.  
c) You can get a flat for a

SECTION 3

- 11 I'm tired. I think I'll \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) throw in the towel  
b) hit the sack  
c) turn in
- 12 It's a lot of fuss about nothing. \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) They're making a mountain out of a molehill!  
b) It's a flash in the pan!  
c) It's just a storm in a teacup!
- 13 Rachael doesn't have a job at the moment. She's \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) skating on thin ice  
b) on the dole  
c) been given the sack
- 14 It was supposed to be a secret, but she \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) let the cat out of the bag  
b) gave the game away  
c) gave them a piece of her mind
- 15 Although they both worked, they didn't have much money and \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) lived from hand to mouth  
b) found it hard to make ends meet  
c) were often in the doghouse
- 16 The film was so frightening, it \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) made my hair stand on end  
b) drove me up the wall  
c) brought me out in a cold sweat



If someone calls you *chicken* they are calling you are a coward.

A trick in the old days was to put a cat in a bag or a sack and sell it as a pig. But if people insisted on opening the sack before buying it then the trick would be revealed (*let the cat out of the bag*).

In England during the seventeenth century there weren't any drains to take away heavy rain, so many pets and stray animals drowned during heavy downpours. So it was not unusual to see their bodies floating down the streets (*raining cats and dogs*).

# Section 4: Idioms using prepositions

This section looks at idioms that begin with or contain a preposition.

Certain prepositions occur more frequently in idioms than others, namely *at*, *by*, *for*, *in*, *on*, *off* and *out of*.

Most of the examples given here are preposition–noun/noun phrase combinations. It is perhaps worth pointing out the difference between the literal meaning of a preposition–noun phrase and the idiomatic meaning. A typical example is the following:

*When the lights went out we were **in the dark**.*

*I knew nothing about the plan. I was completely **in the dark**.*

The first example is literal and means 'being without light'. The second example is idiomatic and means 'I was kept ignorant. I was not told anything'.

Here are other examples of idioms found in this section:

*by a hair's breadth* (very narrowly, e.g. She missed having an accident by a hair's breadth.)

*in deep water* (be in trouble)

*off the record* (not official, e.g. You can't print what I say – it's off the record.)

*on the dot* (be precise, on time)

*out of sorts* (slightly ill)



*Feeling out of sorts*

# 31 Idioms using *at*

Fill in the missing words in the sentences below. The words in brackets after each sentence should help you. Choose from the following:

at a loss    at a pinch    ~~at a rough guess~~    at a standstill  
at a stretch    at death's door    at large    at loggerheads  
at short notice    at sixes and sevens    at the crack of dawn  
at the drop of a hat    at the eleventh hour    at your wits' end    at will

- 1 'How many were there at the meeting last night?'  
'I'm not sure exactly, but at a rough guess about 300.'  
(approximately 300)
- 2 Barbara and Gordon are always \_\_\_\_\_. I can't imagine them ever getting married. (*quarrelling*)
- 3 This morning's newspaper headline read: Cold Blooded Murderer Still \_\_\_\_\_. ! (*free, not caught*)
- 4 You can't expect me to work overtime \_\_\_\_\_ such \_\_\_\_\_ ! I need to be told at least a day in advance. (*with such little advanced warning*)
- 5 The workers went on strike \_\_\_\_\_. (*suddenly and easily*)
- 6 Like you, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ to explain the sudden fall in share prices. I've absolutely no idea what can have caused it. (*unable to explain it*)
- 7 New evidence proving he was innocent was uncovered \_\_\_\_\_ . (*at the last possible moment before it is too late*)

# 32 Idioms using *by* and *for*

- 8 I've got room in the car for three people, maybe four \_\_\_\_\_ . (*possibly four, but with some difficulty*)
- 9 A chameleon is a remarkable creature in that it is able to change the colour of its skin \_\_\_\_\_ . (*when it wants to*)
- 10 I may be getting on a bit, but I'm certainly not \_\_\_\_\_ yet! I hope to live for at least another ten to fifteen years! (*seriously ill; about to die*)
- 11 We got up \_\_\_\_\_ , as we wanted to leave London before the traffic built up. (*very early*)
- 12 I'm afraid everything's \_\_\_\_\_ this week. Both the secretaries are ill and no one knows where anything is. (*muddled, confused*)
- 13 Traffic was \_\_\_\_\_ this morning because of an accident on the M25. (*not moving*)
- 14 When her daughter didn't come home on the last bus, Mrs Lee was \_\_\_\_\_ . (*really worried, not knowing what to do next*)
- 15 The thing I don't like about my present job is that we often have to work up to ten hours \_\_\_\_\_ . (*ten hours without stopping*)

Rewrite the sentences below, replacing the words in **bold** type with a suitable idiom. Choose from the following:

by a hair's breadth    by chance    by ear    by heart    by mistake  
by no means    for good    ~~for kicks~~    for love or money    for short  
for the high jump    for the time being

- 1 The football hooligans admitted to smashing shop windows just **for the excitement it gave them**.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *for kicks* \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 If taxes continue to rise I shall leave this country **for ever**.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Do you like my ring? I saw it quite **unexpectedly** in the window of an antique shop while I was shopping in the Old Town.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4 This piano was a present from my grandmother and I wouldn't part with it **under any circumstances whatsoever**.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5 The government has decided to drop its plans to raise the school leaving age to eighteen – at least **for the moment**.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6 His name was Benjamin, but he was called Ben – **the short form of his name**.  
\_\_\_\_\_



For *at a pinch* you can also say *at a push*.

To remember *at a standstill* imagine the traffic standing still – in other words, not moving.

- 7 The car swerved to avoid a cyclist and **just missed** hitting a pedestrian.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Mr Wilson's **going to be punished**. He's been caught fiddling the accounts.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Probably the only really effective way of learning prepositions is **to memorise** them.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10 He can't read a note of music – he plays everything **from memory**.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 11 It is **not in the least** uncommon for squirrels to bury nuts in the autumn.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 12 I was rushing this morning and **accidentally** put my jumper on back to front.  
\_\_\_\_\_

# 33 Idioms using *in*

Go from a square in the TOP ROW to a square in the BOTTOM ROW in twenty moves. You can move vertically, horizontally or diagonally. To help you trace the correct route, work out the missing words in the idioms in the sentences that follow.

jiffy	long run	tight spot	dribs and drabs	mint condition
public	dark	season	nick of time	good shape
succession	stock	red	flash	cash
cold blood	nutshell	rut	stitches	flesh
short	change	element	limelight	turns
due course	broad daylight	deep water	common	prime
bag	cold sweat	shoes	doghouse	bargain
theory	favour of	vain	time	hot water
pink	all	know	coldrums	full swing



## MOVES (in this order)

- 1 The law may be unpopular now, but I'm sure people will soon see how good it is for the country and themselves *in the* long run.
- 2 No one's been told what's going to happen at the conference yet. We're all being kept *in the* \_\_\_\_\_ for some reason.
- 3 Last year was the third year *in* \_\_\_\_\_ that he had won the championships.
- 4 At the trial it was found that the victim had been killed *in* \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 And that *in a* \_\_\_\_\_, ladies and gentlemen, is the government's position at the moment.
- 6 Although I've been trying hard to pay back my bank loan I'm still nearly £2,000 *in the* \_\_\_\_\_. In fact, I've got to go and see my bank manager about it tomorrow.
- 7 Strawberries cost a lot at the moment because they're not *in* \_\_\_\_\_.
- 8 The audience arrived *in* \_\_\_\_\_, but by 7.30 the hall was completely full.
- 9 A coin from 1896 *in* \_\_\_\_\_ would probably fetch as much as £1,000 at an auction.
- 10 Although she is in her early fifties, she exercises regularly and is still *in* very \_\_\_\_\_.
- 11 The answer to the examination question came to her *in a* \_\_\_\_\_.

- 12 When she told us the joke about the shark and the octopus we were *in* \_\_\_\_\_. We just couldn't stop laughing.
- 13 'I saw the queen yesterday *in the* \_\_\_\_\_. She was standing as close to me as you are now.'
- 14 The journey to Paris was a long one, so they *took it in* \_\_\_\_\_ to drive.
- 15 I think I have found the perfect girlfriend at last! We have so much *in* \_\_\_\_\_.
- 16 The main headline in today's *Financial Times* was: Executive *in* \_\_\_\_\_ Over Alleged Bribes!
- 17 The robbery happened *in* \_\_\_\_\_ in one of the busiest parts of the town.
- 18 The thought of getting up to make a speech in public always *brought him out in a* \_\_\_\_\_.
- 19 The inexperienced teacher *tried in* \_\_\_\_\_ to control the unruly class. In the end he had to call for the headteacher.
- 20 Sorry if I'm not very good company today. I'm feeling a bit *in the* \_\_\_\_\_.



The opposite of *in good shape* is *in poor shape*.

If you are feeling sad and depressed (*in the doldrums*) you can also be feeling *down in the dumps*.

In bookkeeping, sums that were owed were usually written in red ink (*in the red*).

To *kill in cold blood* is to kill without any emotions – coldly and cruelly.

# 34 Idioms using *on* and *off*

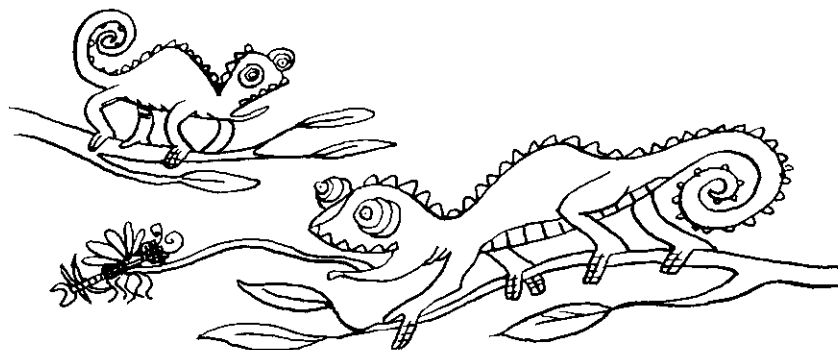
Complete sentences 1–12 by choosing an ending from a–l.

- 1 It wasn't planned. We did it ...
- 2 Charles had short legs, so he found it hard ...
- 3 The students were *on tenterhooks* as they ...
- 4 I've been learning Japanese *on and off* ...
- 5 They arranged to meet outside the cinema ...
- 6 We just called round ...
- 7 The two men who escaped from jail at the weekend ...
- 8 Oh, what's that actor's name? I know it! It's ...
- 9 Let's meet later at the church. I'll ...
- 10 They're sending someone from head office to inspect us today ...
- 11 I can't take any more work on. I've got enough ...
- 12 Remember, you mustn't print any of it! What I've just told you ...

- a is strictly *off the record*.
- b *on my plate* as it is.
- c on the *off-chance* that you were at home.
- d so we'd better be *on our toes*.
- e *on the spur of the moment*.
- f at 8.30 *on the dot*.
- g be *off duty* by then.
- h to buy clothes *off the peg*.
- i are still *on the run*.
- j for about two years now.
- k waited for their exam results.
- l *on the tip of my tongue!*

Write your answers here:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
e											



'What sort of insect is that?'  
'Er ... it's *on the tip of my tongue!*'



In the past, freshly woven cloth was stretched on a framework called a *tenter* and held tight by small hooks known as *tenterhooks*. If you are feeling anxious, your body is often tight or tense (*on tenterhooks*).

The opposite of *off duty* is *on duty*.

# 35 Idioms using *out of*

Say whether the idioms in the following sentences are used correctly (true) or incorrectly (false).

- |  | True  | False |
|--|-------|-------|
| 1 Enrico ran so fast that he was completely <b>out of breath</b> .                             | ✓     | _____ |
| 2 I can't see us beating them at tennis this year – we're so <b>out of practice</b> .          | _____ | _____ |
| 3 You'll have to stay at a hotel, I'm afraid. We're <b>out of place</b> at the moment.         | _____ | _____ |
| 4 The demonstration got <b>out of hand</b> , so the police were called in.                     | _____ | _____ |
| 5 It's difficult to get hold of copies of the book as it's <b>out of print</b> .               | _____ | _____ |
| 6 This TV set is <b>out of condition</b> . I'll have to get it repaired.                       | _____ | _____ |
| 7 The advanced computer course was really difficult and I felt really <b>out of my depth</b> . | _____ | _____ |
| 8 She's got a lovely voice – she can really sing <b>out of tune!</b>                           | _____ | _____ |
| 9 Most people would be pleased if they found themselves <b>out of pocket</b> .                 | _____ | _____ |
| 10 No, you can't borrow my car! It's quite <b>out of the question!</b>                         | _____ | _____ |
| 11 I wasn't expecting a letter from her. It arrived quite <b>out of the blue</b> .             | _____ | _____ |
| 12 You probably wouldn't want to go to a party if you were feeling <b>out of sorts</b> .       | _____ | _____ |
| 13 I feel quite fit. I've been <b>out of the running</b> for the past week.                    | _____ | _____ |

- |   |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|
| 14 This area is normally <b>out of bounds</b> for non-members.                    | _____ | _____ |
| 15 He's not <b>out of the woods</b> yet. He's still very young and inexperienced. | _____ | _____ |
| 16 You'd better put those tablets <b>out of reach</b> of the children.            | _____ | _____ |



*It arrived quite out of the blue.*



The opposite of *out of* is often *in*, so you can *sing in tune*, *be in pocket* and *be in place*.

To remember *out of pocket* imagine all your money falling out of your pocket, so you lose a lot of money.

*Out of the blue* refers to lightning appearing suddenly and unexpectedly in a blue sky.



# Idioms using prepositions and particles

Fill in the missing prepositions or particles in the following sentences.

- 1 Everything seems to be above *board*, but there's something that doesn't feel quite right. I just wish I knew what it was.
- 2 I always thought he was strange. After seeing him at the party I'm convinced that he's \_\_\_\_\_ *the bend!*
- 3 If you have any complaints, then *tell me* \_\_\_\_\_ *my face*. I can't stand people who *do things* \_\_\_\_\_ *my back*.
- 4 My mother is a vegetarian and won't eat meat \_\_\_\_\_ *principle*.
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ *you, me and the gatepost*, I don't think the new boss will last more than a few months.
- 6 This work is taking much longer than I thought. \_\_\_\_\_ *this rate* it'll be Christmas before it's finished.
- 7 He didn't have time to prepare a speech so he had to give one \_\_\_\_\_ *the cuff*.
- 8 Throughout the flight he was very much \_\_\_\_\_ *edge*, and didn't start to relax until the plane had landed.
- 9 I wouldn't like to *be* \_\_\_\_\_ *her shoes* when Miss Hoffman finds out that she's lost the exam papers.
- 10 I'd love to come to the concert with you but I can't, I'm afraid. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ *my ears in work* this week.
- 11 Playing tennis once a week is one way of *letting* \_\_\_\_\_ *steam*.
- 12 He learnt Portuguese \_\_\_\_\_ *scratch* in less than six months.
- 13 The competitors waited \_\_\_\_\_ *baited breath* for the results to be read out.

- 14 Mrs Samuel's daughter is terrible, isn't she? Out \_\_\_\_\_ *all hours* and never a kind word to anyone.
- 15 I bought a computer last year, but I've had nothing but trouble with it. As far as I'm concerned it was money \_\_\_\_\_ *the drain!*
- 16 The football match had to be postponed \_\_\_\_\_ *account* \_\_\_\_\_ the bad weather.



*'I wouldn't like to be in her shoes!'*



A *drain* is a pipe for carrying away water. So if you dropped anything down it, you would lose it!

The *scratch* used to be a starting line which was scratched on the ground to show where a race should start from, so *from scratch* means from the start, beginning.

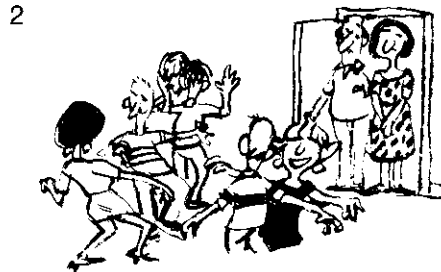
## Idioms using various prepositions 1

Complete the captions by writing the letters (a-l) in the gaps. Use the pictures to help you. Choose from the following:

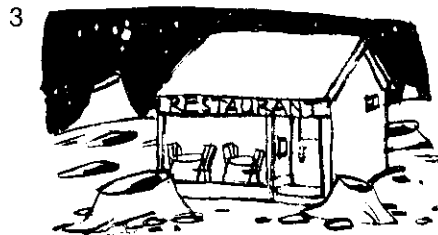
- |                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| a at random        | g in the limelight     |
| b behind bars      | h keep in touch        |
| c behind the times | i off the beaten track |
| d by ear           | j on fire              |
| e in a rut         | k out of order         |
| f in full swing    | l out of this world    |



He's very talented. He plays the trumpet  d .



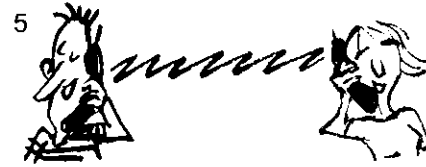
The party was  h  when they arrived.



The restaurant was  e !



The numbers are chosen  a .



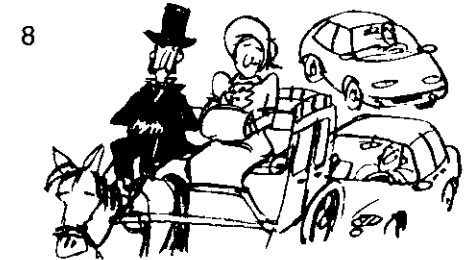
Promise me you'll always  h !



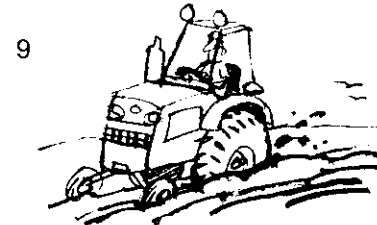
He's still  b .



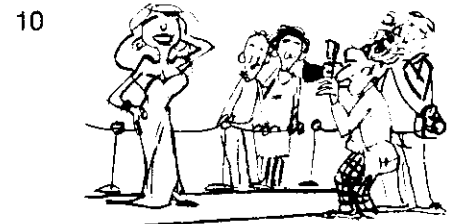
Help! Help! My house is  j !



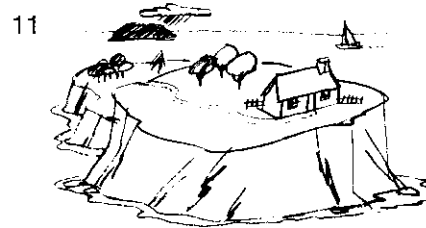
They're a bit  c .



After twenty-five years of farming, I feel I'm  e .



She loves being  g .



Our house is  i .



Your coffee machine seems to be  k !




A *rut* is a deep narrow track left in the ground by a wheel. If the ground is muddy, it is very easy for your car, etc. to get stuck in it (*in a rut*). Prison windows traditionally have iron *bars* to stop a prisoner escaping. So if you are behind them you are in a prison cell (*behind bars*).

## Idioms using various prepositions 2

Look at what the people are saying and complete the captions, making any changes that may be necessary. Choose from the box below.


- by the skin of one's teeth    by word of mouth    down in the dumps  
 fall off the back of a lorry    in one's birthday suit    off one's head  
~~over the moon~~    up to scratch    under your hat  
 under the weather    up in arms    up with the lark

1 'Guess what? I've passed my exams! Isn't it great – I'm so happy!'




She's over the moon.

2 'You can't beat this time of day! It's so peaceful ... just the sound of the birds! I'm so glad I decided to be a milkman!'




He's \_\_\_\_\_.

3 'What's the point of living? My job's boring, my girlfriend's just left me, I'm going bald.'




He's feeling \_\_\_\_\_.

4 'And this is a photograph of Zzrump. He's an alien, you know... Comes from one of the moons of Jupiter. He often pops in for tea on a Sunday.'




She must be \_\_\_\_\_.

5 'The restaurant is so cosy! And the food – I tell you, Monique, it's out of this world! The strange thing is, they don't advertise. They just rely on people telling their friends about them.'




The restaurant gets its customers \_\_\_\_\_.

6 'The car suddenly came hurtling towards me and how it didn't hit me I'll never know! I tell you – I'm lucky to be alive!'




She escaped \_\_\_\_\_.

7 'How dare they just cancel their concert like that! I've been travelling since 5 a.m. today. I tell you they can't do this! Not with just an hour to go!'




He's \_\_\_\_\_.

8 'There's a rumour going around the embassy that the ambassador's assistant is a spy. But don't say anything!'




Keep it \_\_\_\_\_.

9 'Do you like my new DVD player? I got it half price. I can get one for you if you like – so long as you keep quiet about it.'




The items have probably \_\_\_\_\_.

10 'I'm sorry, but I don't think I can come to the meeting tonight. I've got this shocking cold and a bit of a temperature... I think I'd better just go to bed.'




She's feeling a bit \_\_\_\_\_.

11 'Suddenly this guy appears and runs onto the baseball pitch! He was stark naked! Honestly! Not a stitch of clothing on! Well, the crowd went mad!'



The man was \_\_\_\_\_.

12 'Although she had to sit through three interviews and pass five tests before she was offered the job, within months they had sacked her and found someone better.'



She wasn't \_\_\_\_\_.



A lark is a type of brown singing bird. Birds usually start singing very early in the morning.

You are naked when you are born and the day you are born is your birthday (*in your birthday suit*). You could also have said he was *starkers!*

To remember *up in arms* imagine a group of people with their arms held in the air, shaking their fists at someone because they are very angry.

# 39 Idioms using various prepositions 3

SECTION 4

Choose the best idiom (a, b or c) to complete the sentences below. To help you, the meaning of the idiom is given in brackets after each sentence.

- 1 We must at all costs catch the 7.30 train. Otherwise we won't get to the meeting in time.  
(a) at all costs      b) at best      c) at once  
(Meaning: *We must catch it without fail.*)
- 2 He wasn't prepared for the question, so he was forced to answer \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) on all fours      b) on the go      c) off the top of his head  
(Meaning: *without preparing beforehand; spontaneously*)
- 3 Christmas decorations are nice, but my neighbours have really gone \_\_\_\_\_ this year – their whole house is covered in flashing lights.  
a) over the moon      b) over the top      c) at half mast  
(Meaning: *They have done more than is necessary or suitable.*)
- 4 They say that when John Lennon first saw Yoko Ono it was a classic case of love \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) at first sight      b) for keeps      c) in a jiffy  
(Meaning: *It was love from the very moment they saw each other.*)
- 5 Swimming is something I like and am good at. It's right \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) in my element      b) up my street      c) in my prime  
(Meaning: *It's exactly what I like doing.*)
- 6 The film, which was made \_\_\_\_\_, surprised everyone by winning three Oscars, including the one for Best Picture.  
a) under the counter      b) on the air      c) on a shoestring  
(Meaning: *on a very small budget*)

SECTION 4

- 7 She passed her exam \_\_\_\_\_!  
a) with open arms      b) with flying colours      c) with a bang  
(Meaning: *She passed very easily with good grades.*)
- 8 The old man was very weak and was close to death. He was \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) out of his mind      b) over the hill      c) on his last legs  
(Meaning: *He was dying.*)
- 9 The critics were unanimous that his latest book was not \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) in the bag      b) on the ball      c) up to scratch  
(Meaning: *not up to the usual standard*)
- 10 You'll be \_\_\_\_\_ if the boss ever finds out that you forgot to deliver those parcels on time last week.  
a) on the carpet      b) at fault      c) out for the count  
(Meaning: *You'll be in trouble.*)
- 11 I wonder if you can help me, Henri? I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and don't know what to do.  
a) in an ivory tower      b) in a jam      c) on the wrong track  
(Meaning: *to be in trouble, difficulties*)
- 12 It looks as though another government resignation is \_\_\_\_\_ at the moment.  
a) on the move      b) in due course      c) on the cards  
(Meaning: *It is going to happen soon.*)
- 13 'Two tins of baked beans, please.'  
'I'm afraid we haven't got any \_\_\_\_\_ at the moment. But we should be getting some more on Thursday.'  
a) in stock      b) on call      c) under cover  
(Meaning: *available for sale*)

14 Bjorn won't do anything without asking his wife first. She's really got him \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) under the table    b) under her thumb    c) under lock and key

(Meaning: *She makes all the decisions; she is the dominant partner in the marriage.*)

15 I'm \_\_\_\_\_ whether to go to Greece for the summer or not.

- a) on second thoughts    b) on the spot    c) in two minds

(Meaning: *undecided*)



'Our new striker is really on the ball!'

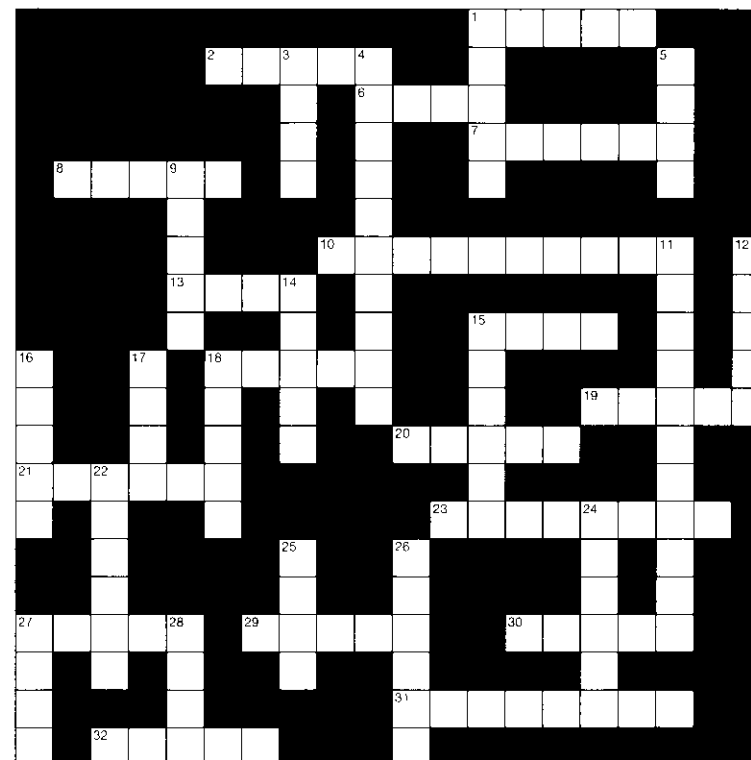


*On the cards* is probably a reference to trying to see into the future using a pack of cards. So if something is *on the cards*, it's likely to happen in the near future.

*Over the top* is sometimes abbreviated to 'OTT'

# 40 Just for fun 4

Complete the crossword. All the idioms are found in Tests 31–39.



## Across

- 1 I wouldn't like to be in your \_\_\_\_\_ when Mr Rosenthal finds out what you did to his car.
- 2 They smashed all the windows of the empty house just for \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6 He slipped as he was crossing the road and a motorbike just missed him by a \_\_\_\_\_'s breadth.
- 7 She tried hard to remember the name of the hotel – it was on the tip of her \_\_\_\_\_.
- 8 I've got too much on my \_\_\_\_\_ at the moment. I've really got to learn to say no when people offer me work.

- 10 The traffic was at a \_\_\_\_\_ this morning as half the people living in the city left for their summer holidays.
- 13 The car's in \_\_\_\_\_ condition. It's only had one owner and hasn't gone more than 2,000 miles.
- 15 Do you think it's a good idea to get married on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the moment? Shouldn't we wait until we know each other better?
- 18 The musical was dreadful. As far as I'm concerned it was money down the \_\_\_\_\_ !
- 19 They were lucky enough to see the film star in the \_\_\_\_\_ as she left through the back entrance of the studios.
- 20 I find one of the best ways of letting off \_\_\_\_\_ is to go jogging.
- 21 He was on the \_\_\_\_\_ for being late for work again.
- 23 She was so funny! She had us in \_\_\_\_\_ all night.
- 27 He was arrested and charged with carrying out a killing in cold \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 29 The computers were being sold so cheaply that they must have fallen off the back of a \_\_\_\_\_ !
- 30 She was in two \_\_\_\_\_ about taking the job in Geneva.
- 31 Can you just tell us in a \_\_\_\_\_ the differences between an eclipse of the moon and an eclipse of the sun.
- 32 There's room for three more in the van – four at a \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Down**

- 1 I think I'll have an early night. I'm feeling a bit out of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 3 She had no time to prepare a speech, so she did it off the \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 4 The local radio company was being run on a \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 5 The new teacher certainly keeps the children on their \_\_\_\_\_ ! I don't think I've seen them work so hard before.

- 9 Oscar does everything his wife tells him to do. He's really under her \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 11 My father and I are always at \_\_\_\_\_ . We just don't seem to agree on anything.
- 12 The news quickly spread by word of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 14 He gave them a very detailed map, as his house was a bit off the beaten \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 15 I've got to apply for this job. It's right up my \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 16 Don't forget to keep in \_\_\_\_\_ when you move to Venice.
- 17 You're going to be for the high \_\_\_\_\_ when the boss finds out you've been stealing from the stores.
- 18 The course was too advanced. She felt completely out of her \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 22 When you play bingo, the numbers are chosen at \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 24 We drove to the town centre on Sunday on the off \_\_\_\_\_ that one or two shops were open.
- 25 He was over the \_\_\_\_\_ when he got a new car for his eighteenth birthday.
- 26 She passed her final exams with \_\_\_\_\_ colours.
- 27 The governor's resignation came completely out of the \_\_\_\_\_ . Everyone was really surprised.
- 28 The taxi arrived to take them to the airport at the crack of \_\_\_\_\_ .