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ENGLISH LANGUAGE



IDIOMS AND PHRASES

I. IDIOMS

An idiom is an expression, word or phrase peculiar to a language. Questions on idioms are frequently asked in MBA entrance examinations. Since the meanings of idioms are figurative and not literal, they are among the more difficult questions to solve for new learners of English. One of the ways of getting to know the meanings of many idioms is to develop a strong reading habit not necessarily of books which are academic in content but also of pulp fiction, thrillers and biographies in which most of the idioms appear. Different types of questions are often presented to students in examinations. Following are the types of questions that are most frequently asked.

II. TYPES OF QUESTIONS — IDIOMS

A. In this question type, an idiom is given followed by several options. You need to choose an option that gives the correct meaning of the idiom.

Example 1:

Choose the option that is closest in meaning to the following idiom:

The politician is in hot water after that speech.

- (a) The politician is being praised for his speech.
- (b) The politician is in some sort of trouble for his speech.
- (c) The politician took a hot bath after the speech.
- (d) The politician was too verbose in his speech.
- (e) The politician is being criticised for his speech.

Explanation:

To be “in hot water” means to be ‘in trouble’. Here, the politician is in trouble for his speech. Hence, the correct answer is **option (b)**.

B. Alternatively, the meaning of an idiom may be given along with several idioms as options. You are expected to identify the idiom which matches with the meaning.

Example 2:

Choose the idiom from the options which means, “to be wise beyond his years”

- (a) Caught a tartar
- (b) On the wrong side of sixty
- (c) Wolf in sheep’s clothing
- (d) Two strings to his bow
- (e) To have an old head on young shoulders

Explanation:

“To be wise beyond his years” means ‘to have an old head on young shoulders’. Hence, the correct answer is **option (e)**.

C. In this question type, a statement is given with a blank which needs to be filled up with the correct idiom.

Example 3:

Fill in the blank with the appropriate idiom.

She is _____ of her son.

- (a) In the teeth of
- (b) At daggers drawn
- (c) Of yeoman service
- (d) Under the thumb
- (e) Show her up

Explanation:

Options 1, 2, 3 and S would make the statement grammatically incorrect. To be 'under the thumb' means 'to be completely under the influence of'. Hence, the correct answer is **option (d)**.

D. Sometimes several sentences may be given, each containing an idiom. You are expected to choose the sentence(s) where the idiom has been used in a correct manner.

Example 4:

Choose the sentence(s) in which the idiom has been used correctly.

- (a) The loud screeching noise set his teeth on edge.
 - (b) He was voted to power in the teeth of the year.
 - (c) Many doctors render yeoman service in the villages.
 - (d) One should not thrust one's nose in one's affairs.
1. (a) and (c) 2. (b), (c) and (d) 3. (b) and (d) 4. (b) and (d)
 5. All five statements

Explanation:

"Teeth on edge" means to irritate or cause annoyance'. A loud screeching noise would cause irritation. Therefore statement A is correct. "In the teeth of" means 'in defiance of'. 'In the teeth R the year' makes no sense and has an incorrect idiom. Therefore, statement B is incorrect. "Yeoman service" means 'to render good and useful service'. Therefore, statement C is correct and has the right idiom, since doctors rendering yeoman service in the villages makes for a logically correct statement. "Thrust one's nose" means 'to meddle'. Statement D is incorrect because while one should not thrust one's nose in other people's affairs is correct- "One... in one's (own) affairs" makes the statement incorrect. Therefore, the correct statements are A and C. Hence, the correct answer is option 1.

E. A sentence may be given which contains an incorrect idiom. You are expected to identify the correct idiom from the options provided which would logically fit in with the sentence.

Example 5:

A sentence is given with the wrong idiom. From the options given below, choose the right idiom.

He kept up appearances in the interview.

- (a) Took up the cudgels
- (b) Is not in my line
- (c) Stands well with
- (d) Cut a poor figure

Explanation:

"Took up the cudgels" means 'to defend', which does not make for a very logical statement. "Is not in my line" means 'not in my area of interest or expertise' which does not make for a logical statement. "Stands well with" means 'to be well thought of by' which is logically and grammatically inconsistent making statements incorrect. "Cut a poor figure" means 'to make a poor impression' and fits in logically with the rest of the statement. Hence, the correct answer is **option (d)**.

F. A table is given. The left side has four idioms while the right side has their corresponding meanings. You are expected to match each idiom with its correct meaning.

Example 6:

Match the idioms on the left (A, B, C, D) with their corresponding meanings on the right (E, F, G, H). Choose the option that lists down the correct combinations.

A	A man of straw	E	To be proficient in
B	To a nicety	F	Exactly
C	Move heaven and earth	G	Someone of little or no substance
D	Great hand at	H	Make huge efforts

- (a) A-G, B-E, C-H, D-F
- (b) A-E, B-F, C-G, D-H
- (c) A-C, B-H, C-B, D-F
- (d) A-F, B-H, C-F, D-G
- (e) A-C, B-F, C-H, D-F

Explanation:

“A man of straw” is someone of little or no substance’. Therefore A-C is a pair. We can eliminate options 2 and 4.
 “To a nicety” means exactly or perfectly’. Therefore B-F is a pair. We can eliminate options 1 and 3.
 “Move heaven and earth,” means ‘to make a huge or every possible effort’. Therefore, C-H is a pair.
 “Great hand at,” means ‘to be an expert or proficient in something’. Therefore D-E is a pair.
 Hence, the correct answer is **option (e)**.

I. MANY VERBS, WHICH ARE FOLLOWED BY PREPOSITIONS OR ADVERBS, BECOME IDIOMS OR ACQUIRE AN IDIOMATIC QUALITY.

IDIOM	MEANING	EXAMPLE
Hanging around (hanging about)	lingering; loitering, in an aimless manner	People should be barred from hanging around the hotels where cricketers are put up.
Trumped up	fabricated	Your trumped up story will not stand up to judicial scrutiny.
Longed for	strongly wished for	During the day, the new bride often longed for her husband's presence.
Shake off	to be rid of	Despite great efforts made on his part, the fugitive could not shake off the determined police.
Hit upon	discovered or found	The company hit upon a great plan to bring down the prices of its products.
Fix on (fix upon)	to choose or decide	The Commissioner fixed upon the courageous police inspector to be the next encounter specialist.
Clear up	to make clear, to explain or solve; to tidy up; improve or brighten (weather)	The prosecuting attorney has cleared up the case and there is no doubt in anyone's mind about the guilt of the accused.
Stick up for	speak for; defend	The union is always sticking up for the rights of the labourers.
Blow over	Recede	The present economic downturn will soon blow over.
Eaten away	corroded or worn away	Acid has eaten away at the iron bars.
Close in on	to surround and entrap	The robbers closed in on the terrified man.
Grow on (grow upon)	to gradually accept or even start liking	Her looks are the kind that tend to grow upon a person.

Stave off	Avert	Only Sachin could have staved off defeat for his team when it came to playing against Australia.
Light upon	chance finding	During our evening stroll, we happened to light upon a golden Labrador puppy.
Hear me out	listen to me to the very end	The truck driver who had caused the mishap pleaded with the mob that had gathered to at least hear him out
Dispose of	discard, get rid of; sell	He had no choice but to dispose of his brand new car when he heard that he had been transferred back to India.

IV. METAPHORS CAN ALSO BE A PART OF IDIOMS.

IDIOM	MEANING	EXAMPLE
Hand to mouth	meagre, bare livelihood	That family leads a hand to mouth existence.
In cold blood	deliberately or ruthlessly	The businessman was killed in cold blood.
No love lost	dislike for each other, animosity	There is no love lost between the English and Pakistani cricket teams.
Fallen flat	failed completely	The comedian's act fell flat among the sophisticated audience.
Hand in glove (hand and glove)	discovered or found	The lawyers were hand in glove with the police.
In full swing	to choose or decide	The marriage preparations are going on in full swing.
Made his mark	made a name for himself	Bill Gates had already made his mark in the business world by the age of 30.
Hit the nail on the head	say or do the right thing	The article hit the nail on the head by describing corruption and not terrorism as the main threat to the country.
Take stock of	to survey and come to a conclusion	Recessionary times are perhaps ideal for companies to take stock of their strengths and weaknesses.
Stick to one's guns	to maintain one's position in spite of great opposition	Even after being put through intense interrogation, the revolutionary stuck to his guns and maintained that his cause was Just
Bring to light	to reveal	The autobiography brought to light some surprising facts about the man.
Put on the market	to be put up for sale	The family put their house on the market in order to pay off their debts.
Burn one's fingers	unpleasant results of an action	The business magnate burnt his fingers by investing in a company owned by the mafia
Go back on	to betray, treacherous	Politicians are known to go back on the promises that they make during the time of the elections.
Piece of one's mind	to scold or chastise	I gave him a piece of my mind for his uncouth behaviour.
Blow one's trumpet	to praise oneself loudly	His propensity to blow his own trumpet made him easy to dislike.
Take someone to task	scold or rebuke	The teacher took him to task for not having done his homework.
Won laurels	to make a name; distinguish oneself in	The failed actress went on to win laurels as a bestselling author.
Bury the hatchet	to reconcile and make peace	The two business rivals decided to bury the hatchet.
Went out of his way	took special pains	The two candidates went out of their way to provoke one another.
Out of the question	unthinkable	Granting leave to employees at this time of the year is out of the question.

Bone of contention	cause of dispute	Kashmir has been a bone of contention for India and Pakistan for many decades now.
On one's mind	in one's thoughts all the time	The young man has car racing on his mind.
All the rage	very popular	This summer, silk is all the rage for fashion conscious women.
In the air	current; something that is prevalent	There are rumours in the air that more terrorist attacks are likely in Mumbai.
For good	forever	He is leaving his wife for good.
Right hand man	an invaluable assistant	Being the CEO's right hand man meant that he wielded enormous power within the company.
Lose one's nerve	to lose control and courage at a critical moment	The team lost its nerve and went on to lose the game.

V. PHRASES

A phrase is a sequence of two or more words that usually lack a finite verb and hence it is not a complete sentence. In MBA entrance examinations, a phrase will be given and you are expected to decipher its meaning. A good grounding in vocabulary is required to be able to score in this question type.

VI. TYPES OF QUESTIONS - PHRASES

A. In this question type, a phrase will be given followed by several options and you are expected to choose the option which gives the correct meaning of the phrase.

Example 7:

Choose the option that is closest in meaning to the following phrase.

- (a) Keep one's cool
- (b) To keep one's body from warming up
- (c) To get angry
- (d) To censure or rebuke
- (e) To remain calm and composed
- (f) To keep one's food in a cool and dry place

Explanation:

"Keep one's cool," means 'to remain calm and composed, especially in a provocative situation'. This meaning tallies with option 4. Hence, the correct answer is **option (d)**.

A. Alternatively, the meaning of a phrase may be given along with several phrases as options. You are expected to identify the phrase which matches with the meaning.

Example 8:

Choose the phrase from the options which means. "an unexpected success"

- (a) A dark horse
- (b) Make a killing
- (c) Catch on
- (d) Earn one's keep
- (e) Halfway decent

Explanation:

'A dark horse' means 'an unexpected success'. Hence, the correct answer is **option (a)**.

C. In this question type, a statement will be given with a blank which has to be filled up with the correct phrase.

Example 9:
Fill in the blank with the appropriate phrase.

He _____ a letter stating that he would be arriving the following week.

- (a) chalked up
- (b) kept an eye out
- (c) dashed off
- (d) dashed on
- (e) dashed up

Explanation:

“Chalk up” means ‘to earn or score and is not logically consistent with the statement “Keep an eye out” means ‘to watch for something’ and is not logically consistent with the rest of the statement

“Dashed on” is not a valid phrase. “Dashed up” means to run up (a flight of stairs or a steep incline)’. Therefore, options 1, 2, 4 and 5 can be eliminated. “Dash off” means ‘to write quickly or informally’ and is the correct phrase for the blank. Hence, the correct answer is **option (c)**.

D. Sometimes several sentences maybe given, each containing a phrase. You are expected to choose the sentence(s) where the phrase has been used in a correct manner.

Example 10:
Choose the sentences in which the phrase has been used correctly.

- (a) The daily grind of household chores aged the woman far beyond her years.
 - (b) He ganged up on them and succeeded in overpowering them.
 - (c) The jet set cannot afford conspicuous consumption.
 - (d) He was mad as a March hare when he heard that he had failed in his board examinations.
 - (e) The young man was as nervous as a cat when he was lying peacefully on the beach.
1. (a), (b) and (d) 2. (b), (d) and (e) 3. (a) and (c) 4. (a) and (d)
 5. (d) and (f)

Explanation:

“Daily grind” means routine monotonous work and fits in logically with the rest of the sentence. Therefore statement A is correct “Gang up on” means ‘to join together in a gang to overpower someone’. This does not fit in logically with the rest of the sentence since one person- “he”- cannot gang up on his own. A group of persons form a gang. Therefore, statement B is incorrect. “Jet set” means ‘the rich and wealthy’ who can definitely indulge in conspicuous consumption. Therefore, statement C is incorrect. “Mad as a March hare” means ‘to be crazy or demented’ which is the apt emotion in this case since the boy has failed his board examinations. Therefore, statement D is correct. “Nervous as a cat” implies being ‘very nervous’ which is logically inconsistent in this case since the young man was lying peacefully on the beach. Therefore, statement E is incorrect.

The correct statements are statements A and D. Hence the correct answer is **option 4**.

E. A sentence may be given which contains an incorrect phrase. You are expected to identify the correct phrase from the options provided, which would logically fit in with the sentence.

Example 11:
A sentence is given with the wrong phrase. From the options given below choose the right phrase.

He made a leg in the stock market

- (a) Made a meal of
- (b) Made a killing
- (c) Made a monkey out of
- (d) Narrowed down
- (e) Called forth

Explanation:

“To make a meal of” means ‘to eat something as a full meal’. This is not logically consistent with the rest of the statement and option 1 can be eliminated. “To make a monkey out of” means to cause a person to look foolish or inferior and is logically inconsistent. Therefore, option 3 can be eliminated. “Narrow down” means ‘to converge and make more specific’, which is nonsensical with the rest of the statement. Therefore, statement 4 can be eliminated. “Called forth” means ‘to induce’. The phrase is not apt in relation to the rest of the statement. Therefore, statement S can be eliminated. “Make a killing” means ‘to win or make a large amount of money’ and is logically consistent with the rest of the statement. Hence, the correct answer is **option (b)**.

F. The left side has four phrases while the right side has their corresponding meanings. You are expected to match each phrase with its correct meaning.

Example 12:

Match the phrases on the left (A,B,C,D) with their corresponding meanings on the right (E,F,G,H). Choose the option that lists down the correct combinations.

A	Neither fish nor fowl	E	Tiny or insignificant
B	Back of beyond	F	To receive enthusiastically
C	A drop in the ocean	G	Not fitting neatly in any group
D	Lap up	H	A very remote place

1. A-C, B-H, C-F, D-F
2. A-G, B-E, C-F, D-H
3. A-E, B-H, C-F, D-C
4. A-E, B-F, C-H, D-G
5. A-F, B-E, C-C, D-H

Explanation:

“Neither fish nor fowl” easily categorized or means ‘something not fitting neatly in any established group’. Therefore, A-C is a pair and options 3, 4 and 5 can be eliminated. “Back of beyond” means ‘a very remote place’. That makes B-H a pair and option 2 can be eliminated. “A drop in the ocean” means ‘a drop in a bucket or a very tiny or insignificant amount’. Therefore C-E is a pair. “Lap up” means ‘to receive enthusiastically’. Therefore, D-F is a pair. Hence, the correct answer is **option 1**.

VII. SOME COMMONLY USED PHRASES WITH THEIR MEANINGS.

PHRASE	MEANING
A cut above	of a higher quality
Back burner	something of low urgency or importance
Back down	to take a less aggressive or more conciliatory position
Chalk up	to earn or score; to charge or ascribe to
Catch on	to begin to understand; to realize or detect
Call the shots	to be in charge
Keep up with	stay informed
Keep one's cards close to one's chest	to avoid revealing one's thoughts or plans
Damp squib	something that fails to come up to expectation
Daily grind	the routine monotonous tasks performed daily
Earn one's keep	to work well enough to deserve what one is paid
Face up to	to confront or acknowledge
Get a grip	to come to one's senses and become more rational
Halfway decent	barely adequate
If looks could kill	a nasty look of disapproval
Jack of all trades	a person who is competent in many areas, but is not an expert in any one
Keep an eye out	To watch or look for
Labour of love	an altruistic work
Make a mountain out of a molehill	to blow something out of proportion

Needle in a haystack	something that is very difficult or even impossible to locate
Object lesson	a punishment inflicted so as to act as a deterrent to others
Palm off	an attempt made to pass off something fake or inferior as genuine
Quick on the uptake	able to understand things readily and without difficulty
Rack one's brain	to struggle to think of or remember something
Sacred cow	something that cannot be criticized for fear of a public outcry
Tag along	to accompany
Under a cloud	under suspicion
Vote with ones feet	to demonstrate a lack of support for something by departing
Zero in on	to converge on something

VIII. LIST OF THE MORE POPULAR IDIOMS AND PHRASES

IDIOM/PHRASE	MEANING	EXAMPLE
Add fuel to the fire	worsen an already bad situation	His sharp ripostes and supercilious manner added fuel to the fire.
Attend to	to look into and solve; pay attention to	The teacher urged the students to attend to every bit of the lecture.
Ask after	to ask about the state of health or condition	When Sally met her friend after almost a decade, she immediately asked after the health of her friend's mother.
Asked for	to look for trouble	She asked for it by marrying a man of such dubious credentials.
Account for	to answer explaining one's conduct	The student had to account for his lengthy absence from school.
Abide by	to act in accord with, agree with	In a democracy, one has to abide by the law.
Bear down	quell, put down	The Dictator was able to bear down all the rebellious groups in the country.
Backlash	a strong or violent reaction	The Finance ministry could not take tough measures to curb inflation as it feared a backlash from commercial organisations.
Bears out	confirms, corroborates, justifies	The witness' testimony bears out the plaintiff's plea.
Bear the brunt	receive the main force or impact	The Soviets bore the brunt of the Nazi offensive during World War II.
Break the ice	to make a beginning	Her efforts to break the ice with the handsome boy in the - class yielded no results.
Bear up	to endure; face hardship bravely	Her faith in God gave her the strength to bear up with the loss of her son.
Bear with	be patient with	Parents have to bear with their children's pranks.
Bore away	won, took away	Ramesh bore away many prizes in school.
To bleed someone white	to deprive someone! Entity of all his/its resources	Corruption is bleeding the country white.
Bear a grudge	to harbour a feeling of ill will or resentment	The prize fighter bore a grudge against his victorious opponent for many years.
Broke down	failed, wept	The victim broke down while narrating her travails.
Broke into	to enter by force	The robbers broke into the building.
Broke off	to stop abruptly	The urchins broke off their mischievous pranks when they saw a man approaching.
Bring forth	Cause	Monsoon rains bring forth an abundant crop.

Blue-blooded	belonging to the nobility or aristocracy	The blue-blooded are well known for patronizing the arts.
Brings in	Yields	That piece of land brings in thousands of rupees a month.
Brave the elements	to encounter inclement weather	The ship had to brave the elements in order to reach shore.
Bring out	show, decipher the meaning	The teacher often told her students humorous stories to bring out the meanings of lessons.
Buckle under	to surrender or yield, submit	The bridge buckled under the weight of the juggernaut.
Bringing him round	converting him, influencing him	The pastor had great difficulty in bringing the man round to his views.
To look as if butter won't melt in one's mouth	to act as if one was not guilty, to act very innocent	Jack looked as if butter would not melt in his mouth but his mother knew he had skipped school to watch the football match.
Blue moon	occurring over a very long time	The family holidays once in a blue moon.
Brought about	produced, caused	His stupidity has brought about his ruin.
Bolt from the blue(or bolt out of the blue)	a sudden and entirely unexpected event	Her decision to seek a divorce was a bolt from the blue for the entire family.
Brought forward	something pertinent or conclusive, adduced	He brought forward several reasons as to why the law should be changed.
Brought out	Published	The tabloid brought out a distorted version of the scandal.
Butt in	to intrude into someone's conversation	The Professor flew into a rage because John was constantly butting in and interrupting his lecture.
Brought up	raised, reared	She brought up the puppy with great love and affection.
Build one's hopes upon	Believe	Gullible villagers should not build their hopes upon vacuous government promises.
Call out	reveal, draw forth	Challenges often call out for qualities one did not suspect one possessed before.
Call in	summon, send	The child's illness made his mother call in a doctor immediately.
Called for	demanded or needed	The principal called for an apology for the boy's conduct.
Called on	pay a brief or short visit	The visiting dignitary called on Mother Teresa and made a large donation.
Call up	remember, recollect	The senile man could not call up events that had occurred during his childhood.
Carry out	execute, accomplish	The brave commander agreed to carry out the General's orders.
(get) Carried away	lose self-control	His passion for music carried him away during the recent festival.
Carried off	killed (especially in large numbers)	The epidemic carried off thousands of people.
Carried on	managed, to take over and run something	The son carried on the business after his father had passed away.
Cast down	to lower someone's spirits; saddened, depressed; humbled	He was very much cast down by the death of his aunt.
Cast away	wrecked; rejected, discarded	The ship was cast away due to the absence of a Light house.
Come around	revive; visit	The steroids administered to the patient succeeded in making him come around.
Come round/around	change one's opinion, especially to agree with another	Thanks to a brilliant presentation made by our marketing manager, the client finally came round to our views.
Close fisted	miserly or parsimonious	The recession made everyone close fisted.

Too close to call	too narrow a margin to predict a winner	The last Presidential election was too close to call.
Come by	get find or come across	How did you come by this book?
Came about	Happened	These things came about because of your stupidity.
Came up	open to discussion or debate	The matter came up during the meeting.
Come off	happen, take place; to be successful	When does the show come off?
Come out	reveal or become known	When the wine goes in, the truth comes out.
Came to	Totalled	His life savings came to a large sum.
Cry out	to protest	People will always cry out against tyranny.
Cut down	Decrease	He should cut down on his intake of cigarettes.
Cut him up	to be deeply affected by	The national team's loss to arch rivals Pakistan cut him up deeply.
Cut out	suited for	He is cut out for a life in the armed forces.
Cold feet	a loss or lack of courage or confidence	Everybody developed cold feet when the teacher requested a volunteer to sing.
Cut off	to stop suddenly; to disinherit; to interrupt; to separate; to expire	Displeased by his wild ways, the old lady cut off her grandson from her will.
Die down	to subside or fade slowly	The storm eventually died down and people could once again come out of their houses.
Dressing down	to scold or reprimand	The team received a dressing down from their coach after the game.
Done for	finished, ruined	Since he has not acquired any skills, he is done for.
Drop off	to decline, to fall asleep	Sales dropped off after the festive season.
Damper on	something that restrains or depresses	The rains put a damper on our plans to go for an outing.
Egg on one's face	an embarrassing situation caused by saying or doing something foolish	The national team's defeat to a lowly ranked team left the coach with egg on his face.
Fallen off	Declined	The efficiency of our public health services has fallen off over the past decade.
Flash in the pan	short-lived success	Many felt that the debutants hundred was a flash in the pan.
Fallen through	not succeeded	The plan for a picnic has fallen through because of the rains.
Fail in with	is suited for; meets	The law falls in with the people's demands.
Fell back	Retreated	Due-to heavy shelling, the platoon fell back
Fly off on a tangent	to start talking about an unrelated topic	Jack's habit of flying off on a tangent made his teacher furious.
Fallen out	to part ways in an acrimonious manner	The media highlighted the fact that the President and the Prime Minister have fallen out
Get at	to suggest; to reach	The actor asked the nosy reporter what he was trying to get at by making such insinuations.
Get on (get along)	to be in harmony with	One can never get on with a man with violent tendencies.
Got through	Passed	The star cricketer has got through the rigorous medical test
Get off	to be let off lightly; to escape; to leave	Since it is a minor offence, he is likely to get off without being incarcerated.
Give in	submit surrender	The government should not give in to the pilots' irrational demands.
Give up on	lose hope; stop believing	His parents have given up on him due to his lazy and violent ways.
Give off	to give forth or release	The open garbage cans gave off a foul odour.
Gave himself up	to surrender or to give up	The mass murderer gave himself up to the police.

Give out	to become exhausted	Most of the runners gave out halfway up the steep incline.
Gave way	Broke	The rope holding the gangway gave up, sending five people tumbling down to their deaths.
Gave away	distributed; handed over	The Chief Guest gave away the prizes.
Go ballistic	to be overwrought with emotion	Pam's announcement that she was marrying a black man made her parents go ballistic.
Go by	decipher; judge from	One should not go by appearances when it comes to recruiting people.
Go down	to be believed; to decrease or descend; to be defeated	The salacious story in the tabloid won't go down well with the readers.
Go through	to inspect; to experience; to use up	Auditors must go through the company's accounts before the company can reveal them to the public.
Go through	experienced a lot of distress and suffering	The Iraqi people have gone through much over the past decade.
Golden handshake	a special incentive to an older employee to induce early retirement	After the company announced record losses, the managing director opted to retire & was awarded a golden handshake.
Go into	to inspect or scrutinize carefully; to take up as study or work	The government promised to go into the cause of the riots.
To go off the deep end	become overwrought emotionally	Jane's announcement that she was leaving her lucrative job to take up social service caused her mother to go off the deep end.
Went over	Scrutinized	The researchers went over the findings.
Hit the ceiling	to be enraged	When the employee presented a large conveyance bill, his manager hit the ceiling.
Hold out	resist; refuse to give up	The regiment held out against the invading army before reinforcements came in.
Hot air	empty and verbose talk	The government's announcement to provide employment to the jobless youth turned out to be nothing but hot air.
Head over heels	Completely	He fell head over heels in love with the sultry actress when he first saw her on the screen.
Hold over	Postponed	The recruitment for senior positions was held over for the next day when the Director would be present.
To be left holding the baby	to be burdened; to be left with the responsibility suddenly	The company defaulted on its debts and the shareholders were left holding the baby.
Hold up	to stopped at gunpoint by force with the purpose of robbery; to delay	The tourists were held up by armed robbers.
In the same vein	along similar lines	Since he continued speaking in the same vein, I mentally switched off and stopped listening.
Keep back	Conceal	One should not keep back anything from one's doctor.
Know the ropes	to understand the particulars of a subject	It was apparent that the new employee knew the ropes of his job and had had previous work experience in the same field.
Keep one's head above water	to remain solvent	Despite the many setbacks, the family managed to keep their heads above water.
Knocked down	sold (especially in an auction)	The jade statue was knocked down for a very large sum.
Knocked up	Tired	The joggers were knocked up by the time the sun appeared.
Laid up	confined indoors	He is laid up with a broken leg.
Lap up	receive very eagerly	She lapped up all his stories about the exotic orient.
Look daggers at	to look angrily	The host's suggestion that the guests have another

		round of drinks made his wife look daggers at him.
Laid Lay down	to surrender or submit to assert firmly	The soldiers laid down their arms.
Let off	leniently or lightly punished	Since it was a minor offence, the motorist was let off with a warning.
Let into	given the details of; allowed to participate; allowed entrance	My friend was let into on the secret
Look into	Examine	The government promised to look into the matter.
Looked on (looked upon)	to consider or regard	He was always looked on by his in-laws as a son they never had.
Look up	search for, find	That novel had many I had to look up the difficult words which I had to look up in the dictionary.
Looking up	improving scenario	The stock market is looking up.
Look up to	respect revere	I still look up to my teachers.
Looks down on/upon	to be contemptuous of	He looks down upon his.
Make light of	to see something as unimportant	His parents made light of his sporting accomplishments.
Make out	Decipher	I could not make out what the speaker was trying to imply.
Move heaven and earth	to make a supreme and superhuman effort	He moved heaven and earth to be able to attend his friend's marriage.
Make do	inferior substitute	We had to make do with candles during the long power cuts that took place this summer.
On the carpet	to earn a rebuke or reprimand for one's actions before a superior authority.	The military tribunal put the young soldier on the carpet the young soldier for flouting all norms.
Passed himself off	to pretend to be someone else	He passed himself off as a policeman.
Pass muster	be adequate or pass a superficial inspection	His grades won't pass muster for admission into a reputed medical college.
Paint the town red	to celebrate boisterously and noisily	Having received my bonus, I decided to paint the town red.
Passed (someone/some thing) by (pass over)	ignored or overlooked	The selectors passed the little girl by and chose the older children for the school play.
Pass by(someone/somethin g)	move past	Many clowns on colourful floats passed by us during the annual parade.
Picking up	Regaining or recovering; improve; lift; learn; accelerate	He was severely ill for some time, but his health is now picking up.
Picked out	chose, selected	His impeccable credentials were the main reason as to why he was picked out.
Pull down	demolish; lower	The real estate magnate pulled down the dilapidated structure to build an imposing mansion.
Pulled up	censured, rebuked; come to a stop	He was pulled up by the committee because of his disgraceful behaviour.
Pull through	get over with some difficulty; survive	I think I can pull through my current job for a couple of years more.
Pull together	Cooperate	Unless the miners pull together it would be difficult to rescue them.
Pull someone's leg	make fun of; tease	His friends always pulled his leg because of his habit of stuttering whenever he got nervous.
Put through	to complete; to bring about; to let go by, pass	The amendment to the postal bill has not yet been put through.
Put up with	to tolerate or endure	Tourists to our country have to put up with numerous

		beggars while travelling by road.
Put out	angered; annoyed	She was put out when I refused to accompany her home.
Put out	to extinguish	The firemen toiled for 10 hours to put out the fire.
Put off	to postpone or defer	He put off his trip to the Middle East due to his wife's illness.
Puts on	feign; wear (clothes)	He puts on an aristocratic manner to impress his clients.
Push to the wall	to push someone into a situation where there is only one choice to make	The CEO was confident of winning the deal after he had pushed his competitors to the wall and he knew they had no option left but to give in to his demands.
Rub (someone) the wrong way	to irritate or annoy a person	His servile behaviour rubbed me the wrong way.
Run into	to incur or incite; to crash into; to meet without planning	The economy has run into a deep recession.
Runs down	to disparage or mock; to chase; to peruse; to stop working	He always runs down his brother.
Run over	to repeat; to hit and knock over	The debutante actress kept mentally running over her lines in preparation for the opening night show. We ran over that song again.
Rundown	weak and feeble	Due to his long illness, John is rundown.
Running over	flow over, inundate, to overflow	The bucket was running over.
Run out	to have ended	The advance rent paid for the building has run out.
Run up	grown or increased; incur	Thanks to the festive season my expenses have run up considerably.
See him off	accompany him at for his departure.	His family was present to see him off at the airport.
Saw See through	detected, found find out	She saw through my cultivated façade.
Set off	begin; depart	I set off for Mumbai this evening.
Set aside	reject; abolish, ;cancel; reserve	The committee set aside the findings.
Set upon	to assault	The bandits set upon the villagers.
To sink one's teeth into	to do something with great enthusiasm	The engineers sank their teeth into the mammoth construction project
Sight for sore eyes	a welcome sight	After a month at sea, the outline of the mainland in the distance the sight of land was a sight for sore eyes.
Size up	to estimate or appraise	The experienced editor could size up a young reporter in one searching glance
Sit pretty	be in a comfortable position	He inherited a legacy from his parents and is now sitting pretty.
See one's true colours	true character or personality	He was a popular figure because he lacked any pretensions & always showed his true colours.
Sow one's wild oats	to be reckless & promiscuous before marriage.	The star footballer is sowing his wild oats just as his predecessors had done before.
Sit on the fence	to remain neutral; to lack the courage to take a stand	The United States can no longer sit on the fence with regard to the worsening bilateral relations between
Speak out	speak fearlessly and freely	On seeing the innocent man cower in front of the bully, I was obliged to speak out.
Speak of	insignificant, not worth mentioning	His innings was nothing to speak of.
Spill the beans	to reveal a secret and ruin a surprise	The young accountant spilled the beans on the venal practices being indulged in by the company's directors.
Stand in for	to substitute for	The celebrity look alike stood in for the star during the

		parade.
Standing up for	supporting, championing	The sensitive girl was always standing up for the poor and the marginalized.
Stand by	Support	The Indian cricket team would be a formidable unit if they stand by one another.
Struck Strike off	deleted, removed	The student's name was struck off by the college authorities.
Swan song	the last act of someone	His great innings turned out to be his swan song to the dismay of his fans.
To sweep under the Carpet	to hide some unpleasant fact	The government decided to sweep under the carpet the findings of the anti-corruption bureau.
Take in	understand, decipher; permit to enter; to include; to alter clothing); to deceive	It is difficult for a school boy to take in Shakespeare.
Take the wind out of one's sails	to shock or stun with bad news.	India's loss to Bangladesh in the last World cup took the wind out of everyone's sails.
Take on	to challenge or contend with	The young batsman decided to take on the great fast bowler.
Takes after	to resemble or be similar to	In her stubbornness she takes after her mother.
Taken to	to be habituated or addicted to something	John has taken to playing the stock market.
Take up	occupy, fill up	Household chores take up a lot of her time.
Talk him over	to convince him through persuasion; discuss thoroughly	The company's management hopes to talk him over from leaving.
Talk into	persuade or convince someone	He was talked into buying the product by the slick salesman.
Telling upon	influencing or affecting	His marital woes are telling upon his health.
Thrown out	rejected or nullified	The controversial bill was thrown out by parliament.
Throw caution to the winds	to act in a rash manner	The batsman threw caution to the winds and played some audacious shots.
Thrown away	wasted, useless	The surplus food was thrown away.
Turn up	to make an appearance	The Chief Guest failed to turn up.
Turn up	occur; appear	Something good should turn up in a few months.
Turn out	to be proven or confirmed as	He turned out to be a charlatan.
Turn out	produces, manufactures	The mill turns out 100 tons of paper every day.
Turned against	to go against and be hostile to	His family turned against him due to his philandering ways.
Wink at	to deliberately ignore something	The government is winking at press reports highlighting corruption in high places.
Worked out	solved,; found find the answer to	The engineer worked out the cause for the overflow.
Worked upon	to influence	The broker worked upon the gullible villagers.
Which way the wind blows	tendency or probability to	I met him to decipher which way the wind was blowing regarding the signing of the new contract.
Work up	incite, provoke	His speeches are sure to get the crowd worked up.
Work on	influence or convince	She worked on him and succeeded in extracting a large sum of money.
Well heeled	Rich	Well-heeled Arabs are always a welcome sight for Mumbai's hoteliers.
Walk on eggs	to walk or act cautiously	The young trainee was walking on eggs on being called to the Chairman's office.