

Idioms and Phrases

Idioms are expressions that usually cannot be understood by defining the separate words. Most idioms don't seem to make any sense because their origins are so old. Some of them come from ancient literature or even classic films. Learning the background of idioms can help you to remember them. . For example, if your host mother says, "I think it's time to hit the hay", she means, "I think it's bed-time"! You would not be able to understand her by looking up the words hit and hay. Like phrasal verbs, these expressions need to be memorized as a whole. Try visualizing them or drawing pictures when you study them.

Some examples are shown below

1. You want to know why I've got a bee in my bonnet.

- a. a headache
- b. a fly in my head
- c. a problem on my mind
- d. a difficulty with my hair

Ans: (c)

2. Yes, tell me about it. I'm all ears.

- a. listening carefully
- b. listening quietly
- c. listening quickly
- d. listening completely

Ans: (a)

3. You remember I told you about that car that cost me an arm and a leg?

- a. a fair amount of money
- b. a small amount of money
- c. a good amount of money
- d. a huge amount of money

Ans: (d)

4. The one you bought from the man you called the big cheese?

- a. the man with big ears
- b. the man with the important job
- c. the man with the yellow teeth
- d. the man with the big smile

Ans: (b)

5. Well, he's not that at all. He's a bird brain.

- a. a fool
- b. a criminal
- c. a conman
- d. a devil

Ans: (a)

Exercises

Directions—(Q. 1–5) Which of the phrases (A), (B), (C) and (D) given below should replace the phrase given in bold in the following sentence to make the sentence grammatically meaningful and correct. If the sentence is correct as it is and 'No correction is required.' mark (E) as the answer.

1. **Each of the loan** must be approved by the Branch Manager—

- (A) Every loan
- (B) Each one of the loan
- (C) Any of the loans

- (D) All of the loan
- (E) No correction required

2. The issue was **taken before** the Municipal Corporation meeting last week—

- (A) Taking place at
- (B) Taken after
- (C) Being taken in
- (D) Taken up at
- (E) No correction required

3. **He has asked** for the names of those employees involved in the project.

- (A) had asked
- (B) having asked about
- (C) was asked that
- (D) is asking
- (E) no correction required

4. **Considerate** the traffic, it is better to leave for the airport an hour early—

- (A) While considering
- (B) Consideration of
- (C) Considering
- (D) Being considerate to
- (E) No correction required

5. He is a good leader, **knowing that** to motivate his employees to achieve—

- (A) That known when
- (B) Who knows how
- (C) Which knows how
- (D) Knowing what
- (E) No correction required

6. His wife never lets him do what he wants and as a result he **leads a dog's life**.

- (A) eats what he can
- (B) never sleeps
- (C) has an unhappy time
- (D) goes everywhere on foot

7. A word of warning: don't let him **make a monkey of you**.

- (A) make you jump up and down
- (B) make faces at you
- (C) make you spend your money
- (D) make a fool of you

8. I would advise you to wait and see **which way the cat jumps**.

- (A) what develops
- (B) what goes
- (C) what comes
- (D) what falls

9. I don't honestly think he is capable of being polite as **the leopard never changes his spots**.

- (A) people always complain
- (B) people sometimes differ
- (C) people never change
- (D) people often shout

10. He's very greedy when it comes to eating and always takes the **lion's share of the food**.

- (A) last portion
- (B) smallest portion
- (C) first portion
- (D) largest portion

11. Until he is more serious in his job and stops **playing the goat**, he won't get any more money.

- (A) arriving late all the time
- (B) eating too much all the time
- (C) making too much noise all the time
- (D) making jokes all the time

12. He never makes any silly mistakes because he's got too much **horse sense**.

- (A) common sense
- (B) nonsense
- (C) absolute sense
- (D) full sense

13. Charlie doesn't like getting too tired so he gets his assistant to do all the **donkey work**.

- (A) academic work
- (B) artwork
- (C) homework
- (D) hard work

14. He doesn't really go around with many people because he's a bit of **alone wolf**.

- (A) single person
- (B) lonely person
- (C) unhappy person
- (D) simple person

15. And really the only reason you were there was because **you had a bone to pick with him?**

- (A) you wanted to have a discussion with him
- (B) you wanted to have a chat with him
- (C) you wanted to have a talk with him
- (D) you wanted to have an argument with him

Answers

- 1. (A)
- 2. (D)
- 3. (E)
- 4. (C)
- 5. (B)
- 6. (C)
- 7. (D)
- 8. (A)
- 9. (C)
- 10. (D)
- 11. (D)
- 12. (A)
- 13. (D)
- 14. (B)
- 15. (D)