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Unit

Idioms

Passage 1 »» English Idiom

Directions: In this section, you are going to read a passage with ten statements attached to it. Each statement contains information given in one of the paragraphs. Identify the paragraph from which the information is derived. You may choose a paragraph more than once. Each paragraph is marked with a letter. Please answer the questions by marking the corresponding letter.

English Idiom

- A) Idioms occur in all languages on every continent throughout the world. They are known as a form of formulaic language. This type of language is not meant to be taken literally in most cases. These phrases are meant to have a figurative meaning that paints a picture in someone's mind as a comparison with what is literally implied by the terminology being used. Idioms are used every day in all types of conversations and discussions about many topics.

The history of English idiom

- B) Most English idioms have an extensive history of being used over an extended period of time. Many have origins in the Bible and even more are derived from Old English or Latin phrases and words. Well-known authors like Shakespeare,

Chaucer, and many others have used or are solely responsible for the creation of some English idioms in their works of poetry, drama, plays, and more. These well-known authors used English idioms to prevent their writing from sounding bland, mundane, and repetitive. In fact, most of the popular English idioms that we still use to this very day have stood the ultimate test of time.

English idiom examples

- C) Native speakers of English, or of any language for that matter, naturally inherit the knowledge of what idioms mean because they are exposed to these expressions on a daily basis as they grow up. However, when you are learning English as a secondary language and it is not your native tongue, idioms and other forms of figurative language can be extremely difficult to understand. Understanding them, as a matter of fact, is an essential part of being able to communicate effectively with those around you and for them to communicate effectively with you.
- D) Hit the books: This idiom simply means to study, especially with particular intensity. It is used as a verb.
- E) On the ball: This idiomatic expression is used to refer to someone who is alert, active, or attentive. If you say someone is “on the ball,” you mean that he or she understands the situation well.
- F) Pull someone’s leg: This idiom means to tease someone, to lead someone on, or to goad someone into overreacting. “I hadn’t pulled Ms. Jane’s leg for any of that stuff, she had just handed it to me on a platter, and that wasn’t my fault.”
- G) Hit the sack: This idiomatic phrase generally means to go to bed. You can also say “hit the hay” which has the same meaning.

The importance of English idiom

- H) You might be wondering why we choose to complicate things by using idioms in English at all. Wouldn’t it just be easier to say what we literally mean? Well, yes, it might be easier but it would also be a little boring. Using idioms is a way of expressing ourselves figuratively instead of literally. It’s a way to express meaning at a more relatable and deeper level. When we hear or read English idioms we are able to use our imagination more to really understand the meaning that the person is trying to get across to us. It’s almost like we understand their meaning even more.

- I) Take “over the moon” for example. One could just say that they are “really happy” about whatever it is that is making them happy. But by using the idiom and expressing themselves figuratively, we understand what they mean and it carries with it a little more meaning than the literal version. Essentially, we can form an image in our mind of this person being so overjoyed that they could jump over the moon with happiness. If that isn’t more meaningful than someone saying “I’m really happy,” then we don’t know what is.
- J) English idioms are important because they allow people to express themselves in a more open and creative way. They allow the speaker or the writer to get a point across to somebody in a way that might not always be clear initially, but in the context of what they are saying makes perfect sense. They can be really good as a short way of expressing a more complicated idea. “Over the moon” is much easier than saying “I’m really happy; I could jump for joy and land on the moon.” Most people know what “over the moon” means anyway, so it communicates the meaning clearly and quickly.

How and when to use idioms in English writing

- K) Unfortunately, it isn’t always acceptable to use idioms in English writing. If, for example, you are writing something that is going to be placed on the internet for a potential worldwide audience, English idioms might become confusing. You have to understand that idioms might be unique to you in some sense, and that others might struggle to understand what you are saying. With idioms, context is everything. People who are learning English as a second language won’t be familiar with the quirky sayings and phrases that English idioms represent, and sometimes even people who have English as a first language might never have come across the particular idiom you are using. So, try to avoid idioms if you think your meaning might become unclear to your audience.
- L) English idioms are also seen as quite an informal way of writing, so you should avoid using them for anything that needs to be formal in tone. Writing to a company that has just appointed you as their new Communications Manager for example, might not be the best time to tell them that you are “over the moon” and that the task might be a “tall order” but you’re certain that you can “move the needle” and have everything ready “on the dot.” The point is, these meanings can get lost easily, and in formal or professional writing you should always aim to

be as clear as possible.

- M) That being said, if you are writing something that can be informal in tone and you know that the audience is going to understand your meaning because it's commonly used in your local area or the meaning is easily deduced through context, then you absolutely should make use of English idioms in writing! They are an excellent way of communicating an idea, and they will mean more to an individual who understands them than if you simply say everything literally.
- N) English idioms are very useful in day-to-day communications, and using idioms yourself, now that you better understand them, could save your time, express your meaning more clearly, and help people feel more connected to what you are saying or writing!

(1,107 words)

1. English idioms are not suggested to be used in the context unfamiliar to the audience, where ambiguity may occur.
2. English idioms convey more meaning than literal expressions, as in the case of “over the moon” representing extreme joy.
3. English idioms aid daily communication by saving time, improving clarity, and fostering greater connection.
4. Although native speakers grasp idioms easily, second language learners have to put more effort into understanding idioms in order to achieve effective communication.
5. The importance of English idioms lies in the fact that people can be given more freedom and creativity in expression to convey subtle ideas clearly and vividly.
6. Idioms are a type of language that people often use in everyday life, the meaning of which however, can't always be understood literally.
7. Generally speaking, English idioms should not be used in formal expressions so as to avoid confusion.
8. Idioms require our imagination to capture what on earth others are trying to say.
9. Many famous authors have contributed a large number of idioms to English language in their literary works.
10. The use of English idioms will make your writing more expressive if you feel very sure that the audience can perfectly understand what you mean.

Passage 2 »»

Get Your Act Together & Cut to the Chase

Directions: In this section, there is a passage with ten blanks. You are required to select one word for each blank from a list of choices given in a word bank following the passage. Read the passage through carefully before making your choices. Each choice in the bank is identified by a letter. Please mark the corresponding letter for each item. You may not use any of the words in the bank more than once.

Get Your Act Together & Cut to the Chase

A woman from Japan was telling a friend about her trip to the United States. The woman had visited major businesses and investment companies in New York City and Chicago.

"I studied English before I left home," she said. "But I still was not sure whether people were speaking English."

Her problem is easy to understand. Americans in business are like people who are in business anywhere. They have a language of their own. Some of the words and expressions deal with the special areas of their work. Other expressions are 1 from different kinds of work such as the theater and movie industries.

One such saying is "Get your act together." When things go wrong in a business, an employer may get angry. He or she may shout, "Stop making mistakes. Get your act together." Or, if the employer is calmer, he or she may say, "Let us get our act together." Either way, the meaning is the same. "Get your act together." is to get 2. In business, it usually means to develop a calm and 3 plan of action.

It is difficult to tell 4 where the saying began. But, it is probable that it was in the theater or movie industry. Perhaps one of the actors was nervous and made a lot of 5, so the director might have said, "Calm down, now. Get your act together."

Word expert James Rogers says the expression was 6 by the late 1970s. Mister Rogers says *The Manchester Guardian* newspaper used it in 1978. The newspaper said a reform policy required that the British government “get its act together.”

Now, this expression is often heard when officials of a company meet. One company even called its yearly report “Getting Our Act Together.”

The Japanese visitor was confused by another expression used by American business people. It is “Cut to the chase.” She heard that expression when she attended an important meeting of one company. One official was giving a very long report. It was not very interesting. In fact, some people at the meeting were 7 asleep. Finally, the president of the company said, “Cut to the chase.” “Cut to the chase” means to stop spending so much time on 8 or unimportant material, hurry up and get to the good part.

Naturally, this saying was started by people who make movies. Hollywood movie producers believe that most Americans like action movies. Many of their movies show 9 in which the actors chase each other in cars, airplanes, or on foot. “Cut” is the director’s word for stop. The director means to stop filming, leave out some material, and get to the chase scene now.

So, if your employer tells you to “cut to the chase,” be sure to get to the main 10 of your story quickly.

(466 words)

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| A. anticipating | B. borrowed | C. common | D. details |
| E. essence | F. exactly | G. falling | H. keen |
| I. mistakes | J. orderly | K. organized | L. point |
| M. potentially | N. scenes | O. theory | |

Passage 3 »»

Ace in the Hole

Directions: In this section, there is a passage with ten blanks. You are required to select one word for each blank from a list of choices given in a word bank following the passage. Read the passage through carefully before making your choices. Each choice in the bank is identified by a letter. Please mark the corresponding letter for each item. You may not use any of the words in the bank more than once.

Ace in the Hole

It is surprising how many expressions that Americans use every day come from the card game of poker. For example, you hear the expression “ace in the hole,” which is used by many people who would never think of going near a poker table. An “ace in the hole” is an argument, plan or thing kept hidden until needed. It is used 1 when it can turn failure into success.

In poker and most card games, the ace is the highest and most valuable card. It is often a(n) 2 card. In one kind of poker game, the first card to each player is given face down. A player does not show this card to the other players. The other cards are dealt 3 up. The players bet money each time they receive another card. No one knows until the end of the game whose hidden card is the winner. Often, the ace in the hole wins the game.

Smart card players, especially those who play for large amounts of money, closely watch the person who deals the cards. They are watching to make sure he is dealing 4. They want to be sure that he is not dealing off the bottom of the stack of cards. A dealer who is doing that has stacked the deck. He has fixed the cards so that he will get higher cards. He will win and you will lose.

The expression “dealing off the bottom” now means cheating in business, as well as in cards. And when someone tells you that the cards are stacked against you, he is saying you do not have a(n) 5 to succeed.

In a poker game, you do not want to let your 6 know if your cards are good or bad. So having a “poker face” is important. A “poker face” never shows any 7, and never expresses either good or bad feelings. No one can tell – by looking at your face – if your cards are good or bad.

People now use “poker face” in everyday speech to describe someone who shows no emotion. Someone who has a “poker face” usually is good at bluffing. Bluffing is trying to 8 a person into believing something about you that is not true.

In poker, you bluff when you bet heavily on a poor hand. The idea is to make the other players believe you have strong cards and are sure to win. If they believe you, they are likely to 9 out of the game. This means you win the money they have bet.

You can do a better job of bluffing if you “hold your cards close to your vest.” You hold your cards close to you so no one can see what you have. In everyday speech, “holding your cards close to your vest” means not letting others know what you are doing or thinking. You are keeping your plans 10.

(483 words)

- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|
| A. chance | B. face | C. drop | D. emotion |
| E. especially | F. facilitating | G. graded | H. honestly |
| I. influence | J. opponents | K. secret | L. series |
| M. trick | N. ultimately | O. winning | |

Passage 4 »»

Deep-Six: It Is Well-Hidden

Directions: In this section, the passage is followed by some questions or unfinished statements. For each of them there are four choices marked A, B, C and D. You should decide on the best choice and mark the corresponding letter.

Deep-Six: It Is Well-Hidden

Sailors seem – to those of us on land – to lead exciting, even mysterious lives. Many things are different at sea. Even the language is different.

Simple words like “right” and “left” are not the same. On a ship, “right” is “starboard” and “left” is “port.”

Sailors also are responsible for many colorful English expressions.

One of these is “deep-six.” It means to hide something or put it where it will not be found. You can also “deep-six,” or reject a proposal. One language expert says that “deep-six” is the bottom of the ocean. “Deep,” in this case, means the deepest. “Six” in the expression comes from the six feet that make up a fathom (英寻), which is a little less than two meters. Sailors measure the depth of the water in fathoms. Thus, the deep-six is the deepest fathom – the final six feet at the bottom of the ocean. A sailor who never wants to see something again will give it the deep-six. He will drop it from the ship to the ocean bottom. You can deep-six something even if you are not a sailor. What you do is to throw it away or put it somewhere it will never be found. You might, for example, deep-six an unpleasant letter from a former friend.

Another expression linked to sailing is “batten down the hatches.” That is what sailors do to prepare their ship for a storm at sea. Battens are long narrow pieces of wood. Hatches are the openings in the deck. Before a storm, sailors cover the hatches with waterproof material. Then they nail on battens to hold the hatch coverings firmly in place. This keeps rain and waves out of the ship.

Now, people use the expression to mean to prepare for dealing with any kind of trouble. A news report, for example, might say that people in Washington were “battening down the hatches” for a big winter storm. Or a newspaper might report that “defense lawyers were ‘battening down the hatches’ for testimony (证词) by someone who observed the crime.”

An old expression of the sailors that is still heard is “sail under false colors.” Experts on language say the expression comes from maritime piracy, when pirates sailed the seas, attacking and robbing trade ships.

Pirate ships often flew the flag of a friendly country as they sailed toward the ship they planned to rob. They sailed under false colors until they were close enough to attack. Then the pirates pulled down the false flag, and showed their true colors. They raised the pirate flag – with its picture of a skull and crossed bones.

Today, a person, not a ship, is said to "sail under false colors." Such a person appears to be something he is not. His purpose is to get something from you. If you are careful, you will soon discover his true colors, and get away from him.

(488 words)

5. The pirates' purpose to fly the false flag is to _____.
A. disguise themselves in order to approach the target ship
B. give the approaching ship a surprise
C. show that they do not have their own flag
D. show that they are entitled to fly the flag of any country

Passage 5 »»

Hot: He Was a Hotheaded Hot Shot

Directions: In this section, the passage is followed by some questions or unfinished statements. For each of them there are four choices marked A, B, C and D. You should decide on the best choice and mark the corresponding letter.

Hot: He Was a Hotheaded Hot Shot

Every language has its own special words and expressions. And a story can be told about each of them. “Hot” is a simple, easily-understood English word. So are most of the expressions made with the word “hot.” But not always, as we shall see.

The words “hot” and “potato,” for example, give you no idea at all about the meaning of the expression, “hot potato.” The potato is a popular vegetable in the United States. Many people like baked potatoes, cooked in an oven or fire. Imagine trying to carry a hot, baked potato in your hand. It would be difficult, even painful, to do so. Now we are getting close to the meaning of “hot potato.”

Some publicly-disputed issues are highly emotional. The issues must be treated carefully, or they will be difficult and painful if an elected official has to deal with them. As difficult and painful as holding a hot potato.

One such “hot potato” is taxes. Calling for higher taxes can mean defeat for a politician. And yet, if taxes are not raised, some very popular government programs could be cut. And that also can make a politician very unpopular. So the questions must be dealt with carefully – the same way you would handle any other hot potato.

Another expression is “not so hot.” If you ask people how they feel, they may answer, “Not so hot.” It means that they do not feel well. “Not so hot” is also a way of saying that you do not really like something. You may tell a friend that the new play you saw last night is “not so hot.” That means you did not consider it a success.

“A hot shot” is a person – often a young person – who thinks he can do anything. At least he wants to try. He is very sure he can succeed but often he fails. The expression was born in the military forces. “A hot shot” was a soldier who fired without aiming carefully.

“Hot” is a word that is often used to talk about anger. A person who becomes angry easily is called a “hothead.” An angry person’s neck often becomes red, so we say he is “hot under the collar.” You could say that your friend is no hothead, but he got “hot under the collar” when someone took his radio without his permission.

The “hotline” was a direct communications link between the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States. The “hotline” had an important purpose: to prevent accidental wars between the two competitors during the period known as the Cold War. The American president and the Soviet Union leader were able to communicate directly and immediately on the “hotline.” This helped prevent any conflict during an international crisis.

(467 words)

1. What does “hot potato” really mean in daily use?
 - A. Something that is difficult and painful and needs dealing with carefully.
 - B. Something that is very popular among the public.
 - C. Something that is easy to cook and tasty.
 - D. Something that arouses concerns among the public.
2. Which of the following meanings is NOT mentioned in the passage about the expression “not so hot”?

A. Not feeling well.	B. Not really fond of something.
C. Not attractive.	D. Not considering something a success.
3. According to the passage, “a hot shot” is a person who _____.

A. is not able to succeed	B. is sure he can succeed but often fails
C. thinks he must fail	D. is sure he must fail but often succeeds
4. According to the passage, which kind of emotion is conveyed by the idiom “hot under the collar”?

A. Delight.	B. Sadness.
C. Pain.	D. Anger.

5. Which of the following statements is NOT true about “the hotline”?
 - A. It originated during the period of the Cold War.
 - B. The American and the Soviet Union leaders were able to communicate directly and immediately on it.
 - C. It existed to avoid a sudden crisis of war or other conflicts between the two sides.
 - D. Many countries modeled it to settle disputes after the Soviet Union and the United States.

Understanding China

New security architecture

新安全格局

We must take the people's security as our ultimate goal, political security as our fundamental task, economic security as our foundation, military, technological, cultural, and social security as important pillars, and international security as a support. We will take coordinated steps to ensure external and internal security, homeland and public security, traditional and non-traditional security, and our own security and common security. We will both uphold national security and create the conditions for ensuring it. We will strengthen popular support for national security and social stability, improve the mechanisms for our participation in global security governance, and advance the Peaceful China Initiative to a higher level. With this new security architecture, we will be able to better safeguard China's new pattern of development.

