

IT'S A BREEZE



42

LIVELY ENGLISH
LESSONS ON
AMERICAN IDIOMS

WRITTEN BY

TONI ABERSON

CO-AUTHOR OF COMPELLING CONVERSATIONS

IT'S A BREEZE

42 LIVELY ENGLISH LESSONS
ON AMERICAN IDIOMS

BY TONI ABERSON

co-author of *Compelling Conversations* and
Compelling American Conversations

Edited by Eric H. Roth and Hal Bogotch

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42 Lively English Lessons on American Idioms

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to Lisa Aberson (1947 – 2007)



Lisa lived with strength and gusto.
She had a passion for words and an enthusiasm for life.
I miss her daily.

INTRODUCTION

He's wet behind the ears.

The test was a piece of cake.

She came right out of the blue.

Do you know the words, but don't understand the meaning? These short sentences use common American idioms. You will find idioms on television, in sports, at work, and at school.

Idioms are one reason English can be a difficult language for many adults to learn. You have to learn common American idioms to really speak English in a natural style.

The good news is that studying idioms – even as an intermediate English student – can be fun! We will go at a comfortable pace, learning idiom by idiom. In fact, each short lesson is built around a single common American idiom and its meaning. You will read a brief story of daily life, learn some vocabulary, write a few sentences, and ask and answer some conversation questions. The lively lessons encourage thinking and sharing in a relaxed atmosphere. Lessons have been organized together in six units. The early units are easy, and later units are a bit more difficult. You will get a chance to show your increased knowledge on unit quizzes, too.

As you know, in today's world, learning English is key to a better life. These lessons will help you use more colorful English in your life. These lessons will also help you gain a better understanding of the English you hear around you and on television, learn more about American culture, and speak more like an American. Idiom by idiom, you will find speaking English less difficult and more fun. You might even find that speaking English is “a breeze.”

Enjoy!

Toni Aberson

October 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNIT ONE: LET'S GET STARTED

1. IT'S A BREEZE
2. LEARN THE ROPES
3. TOOT YOUR OWN HORN
4. BUCKET LIST

— • —

UNIT TWO: FUN WITH FOOD

5. A PIECE OF CAKE
6. IN A PICKLE
7. A PEACH
8. EAT HIS WORDS
9. SOMETHING IS FISHY
10. COUCH POTATO
11. WALKING ON EGGSHELLS
12. PIE IN THE SKY

MORE FOOD PHRASES

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: REVIEW OF UNIT TWO

— • —

UNIT THREE: BODY LANGUAGE

13. A PAIN IN THE NECK
14. PULLING MY LEG
15. TURNS A BLIND EYE
16. WET BEHIND THE EARS
17. THIN-SKINNED

18. OUT OF YOUR MIND

MORE BODY LANGUAGE

BODY BUILDING: REVIEW OF UNIT THREE



UNIT FOUR: ANIMAL WISDOM

19. LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG

20. GETS MY GOAT

21. THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

22. DARK HORSE

23. LIKE A FISH OUT OF WATER

24. LET'S TALK TURKEY

MORE ON ANIMAL WISDOM

ANIMAL INSTINCT: REVIEW OF UNIT FOUR



UNIT FIVE: COLORFUL LANGUAGE

25. IN THE BLACK

26. FEELING BLUE

27. SEE RED

28. GREEN WITH ENVY

29. OUT OF THE BLUE

30. TICKLED PINK

COLOR CLUES

DO YOU KNOW YOUR COLORS?

COLORFUL COMMENTS: REVIEW OF UNIT FIVE



UNIT SIX: HOW'S THE WEATHER?

31. UNDER THE WEATHER

32. RAINING CATS AND DOGS

33. FAIR-WEATHER FRIEND

34. CHILL OUT / BE COOL

35. IN HOT WATER

HOT TIME

WEATHER REPORT: REVIEW OF UNIT SIX



UNIT SEVEN: WHERE ARE YOU?

36. SITTING ON THE FENCE

37. OUT ON A LIMB

38. UP IN THE AIR

39. DOWN IN THE DUMPS

40. BETWEEN A ROCK AND HARD PLACE

41. OUT OF THE LOOP

42. FLYING UNDER THE RADAR

HERE YOU ARE: REVIEW OF UNIT SEVEN

— • —

DO YOU REALLY KNOW YOUR IDIOMS?

INDEX OF IDIOMS AND EXPRESSIONS

ANSWER KEY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ABOUT THIS BOOK AND CHIMAYO PRESS

UNIT ONE

LET'S GET STARTED!

Here are some easy lessons about idioms that are common in the United States. Doing these few warm-up lessons will help you **learn the ropes**. If learning about American culture is on your **bucket list**, you will enjoy these lessons. If you learn all the vocabulary in this book, you can **toot your own horn**. See how idioms work? Once you start using them, it is hard to stop. They are fun. They make writing and speaking more interesting. Let's get started! You will see. **It's a breeze**.



A person has to learn the ropes to sail a boat.

It's a breeze – it's easy; it's pleasant.

Learn the ropes – learn how to do the job.

Bucket list – a list of experiences you would like to have sometime in your life.

Toot your own horn – brag about how great you are.

IT'S A BREEZE

— 1 —

USAGE

Don't worry about the written driving test. **It's a breeze.**

MEANING

It's a breeze means it's easy and pleasant.

STORY

Jana had a new job working as a cashier in the local grocery store. She was a little worried, because she had never worked a cash register before. The manager said, "There's no need to worry. An experienced cashier will work with you the first few days. She'll show you how to scan groceries and how to put groceries in a cloth sack or paper bag. If there's an unexpected problem, she'll take over. Trust me, **it's a breeze.**"

VOCABULARY

breeze – a gentle wind.

- *The people on the beach enjoyed the cool breeze from the ocean.*

cashier – the person who totals the amount due, collects the payment from the customer, puts the money in the cash register, and gives appropriate change back to the customer.

- *Managers and customers like cashiers who are friendly.*

scan – to move or hold each item so that its code can be read and the price of the item can be entered into the electronic cash register.

- *For some reason, the spaghetti package would not scan, so the cashier entered the code by hand.*

sack – a paper, plastic, or cloth bag, used to carry things.

- *A good cashier puts heavier items at the bottom of the sack, or grocery bag, so that lighter items are not broken.*

unexpected – not expected; unplanned; surprising.

- *I received an unexpected letter from an old school friend.*

PRACTICE

* For all practice exercises in this e-book, please use a notebook or the “notes/notepad” feature on your e-reader to write down your answers.

1. In each of the following sentences, fill in the blank with the vocabulary word that best completes the sentence.

A grocery _____ often stands on her feet for hours.

Be careful when you _____ the eggs.

The pleasant _____ suddenly became a strong wind.

2. Use each of the letters in the word groceries (G R O C E R I E S) as the first letter of something you could buy at a grocery store or supermarket. You may work with a partner. Note the example with the letter G.

G: grapes

R:

O:

C:

E:

R:

I:

E:

S:

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever worried about something that later **was a breeze**? How did you feel before the event? How did you feel afterward?
2. Have you ever had a job where you handled money? What kind of job was it? Have you ever worked a cash register? If so, was it easy? What is the hardest part of using a cash register?
3. Do you sometimes help with the grocery shopping for your family? Are there differences between shopping for food and groceries in the U.S. and shopping for groceries in your native country? What are the differences? Which do you prefer? Why?

Other choices: Instead of saying **it's a breeze**, one might say it was **a walk in the park**. Both idioms mean that the experience was easy and pleasant.

LEARN THE ROPES

— 2 —

USAGE

Whenever you start a new job, you have to **learn the ropes**.

MEANING

When you **learn the ropes**, you learn how to do the job. The meaning of this idiom comes from learning how to sail a boat. Now it means learning how to do any job.

STORY

Steve got a job as a server at a popular Italian restaurant. He wanted to start serving customers his first night on the job so he could earn tips, in addition to his salary. The boss said, “Slow down. Don’t rush things. Work with Mario for a few days, and you will see how we do things here. First, you will **learn the ropes**. Then we’ll talk about your work schedule.”

VOCABULARY

ropes – thick, coarse lengths of material used to tie objects together.

- *Cowboys use ropes for many jobs on the ranch.*

restaurant – a place where people order food and sit down to eat breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

- *The Indian restaurant had many good vegetarian dishes.*

server – a waiter or waitress; the person who brings food and drinks to customers in a restaurant.

- *Since the server was so friendly and helpful, we left an extra ten dollars on the table.*

salary – a fixed amount of money paid to a worker every week or twice a month.

- *An office manager usually earns a salary.*

tips – extra money paid by customers to servers for good service.

- *Waitresses who work quickly and smile often earn good tips.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each blank with the vocabulary word that best completes the sentence.

If the server does not bring the right food, a customer may leave a smaller _____ than usual.

My grandmother seldom ate in a _____.

The boss said that if I worked for six months and did a good job, my _____ would increase by 10%.

2. List all the words used in this lesson that you did not know. Try to guess their meanings. Then, look in a dictionary for the definitions of the words you listed. Did you guess correctly?

CONVERSATION

Sometimes people have to **learn the ropes** at a new school. Sometimes people have to **learn the ropes** on a new job. Sometimes people have to **learn the ropes** in a new country.

- 1) Describe a situation in which you had to **learn the ropes**. Did anyone help you? How?
- 2) Describe a situation in which you helped someone else **learn the ropes**. Were you a patient teacher? Was your student a fast learner?

TOOT YOUR OWN HORN

— 3 —

USAGE

Muhammad Ali enjoyed **tooting his own horn**.

MEANING

A person who **toots his own horn** is bragging about himself. He is telling the world about his abilities. At times, it is considered not appropriate or poor manners to **toot one's own horn**. In some situations, bragging about oneself is okay. In America, athletes and politicians often **toot their own horns**.

STORY

When the boxer Muhammad Ali first announced, “I am the greatest,” some people felt uncomfortable. They had been taught that people should not brag about themselves. He said, “I float like a butterfly and sting like a bee.” He liked to play with words. He liked to tease. After a while, when Ali **tooted his own horn**, most people smiled and enjoyed his fun.

VOCABULARY

toot – to blow a horn; the short, sharp sound of a horn or other wind instrument.

- *The young children toot their toy flutes.*

brag – speak proudly about oneself or about a family member.

- *When Johnny hit a home run in the baseball game, his father bragged, “That’s my son!”*

boxer – an athlete who fights according to certain rules; a prizefighter.

- *The boxer, Manny Pacquiao, is famous throughout the world.*

comfortable – at ease; relaxed.

- *I am comfortable when I wear my old sweatshirt.*

uncomfortable – feeling stress or strain; not able to relax.

- *The baby felt uncomfortable in her wet diaper.*

appropriate – correct and proper in situations.

- He dressed in appropriate clothes for the party.

PRACTICE

1. Write a sentence using the idiom **toot your own horn** correctly.
2. Fill in the blank in each of the following sentences with the vocabulary word that best completes the sentence:

Joe Louis was a heavyweight champion _____.

When the heat is turned up too high, I feel _____.

We heard the circus clown loudly _____ his big, funny horn.

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever **tooted your own horn**? About what? How did others react?

2. Have you ever become upset when someone else **tooted his own horn**? Why? How did you feel?
3. List three situations in which it might help you to **toot your own horn**.

BUCKET LIST

— 4 —

USAGE

I want to visit Ireland before I **kick the bucket**.

A trip to Ireland is on my **bucket list**.

MEANING

The expression **kick the bucket** is a casual way to refer to death. If someone says, “I want to visit Ireland before I **kick the bucket**,” it means she wants to visit Ireland sometime in her life. From this idiom comes the phrase **bucket list**. A **bucket list** is a list of things you want to do before you **kick the bucket**. In other words, your **bucket list** would be a list of the experiences you want to have sometime in your life.

STORY

Nancy and Sue were talking about their **bucket lists**. Nancy said, “I want to visit New York and see the Statue of Liberty before I **kick the bucket**.”

Sue said, “I would rather go to Hawaii. My dream is to live there someday.”

Nancy said, “That is a good one. I’m going to add spending some time in Hawaii to my **bucket list**.”

VOCABULARY

bucket – a pail; a container with a handle for carrying water, soil, or other materials.

- *The farmer filled a bucket of water for his thirsty horse.*

casual – informal; relaxed.

- *In our office, we can wear casual clothes to work on Fridays.*

death – the end of life.

- *The poet Maya Angelou's death was a major news story.*

Statue of Liberty – a very large statue in New York Harbor that has been a symbol of freedom for many people.

- *Our tour bus stopped so we could see the Statue of Liberty.*

dream – a hope for the future; a goal one wants to achieve.

- *My dream is to have a large garden with a waterfall.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each of the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate vocabulary word.

The _____ has been a symbol of freedom.

After they won the game, the football players dumped a _____ of cold water on the coach.

My _____ is to live in a big, beautiful house someday.

2. Where do you definitely want to go sometime in your life? What do you definitely want to see sometime in your life? What do you definitely want to do sometime in your life? List at least three things that would be on your **bucket list**.

CONVERSATION

1. Discuss your **bucket list**. If there is an item you do not want to share, you may decide not to tell it to your partner. Do you think it is a good idea to make a **bucket list**? Why or why not?

2. Do you have a dream for the future? Where would you like to live? What kind of house would you like to live in? Again, if there are some things you do not want to share, you may keep them to yourself.

UNIT TWO

FOOD IDIOMS

Many people grow food. Many people shop for food. Many people cook food. We all think about food, and we all talk about food. Food invites us with its wonderful smells and colorful appearance. Words about food are all around us.



It's simple. It's easy. It's a piece of cake.

Because tastes in food are different from one country to another, expressions that refer to food are also different in each country. In the United States, common idioms include **couch potato** and **a piece of cake**. Do you know the meanings of these expressions? By the time you finish this unit, you will understand these expressions and many more. Enjoy your word feast!

A PIECE OF CAKE

— 5 —

USAGE

The math test was **a piece of cake**.

MEANING

The expression **a piece of cake** means very easy. If something is **a piece of cake**, the person has no difficulty doing it.

STORY

Selena was worried about her upcoming interview for admission into art school. What would the director ask her? How could she prepare? She decided to take her best drawings. But what if they weren't good enough? What if the director felt she had no talent? She slept poorly the night before the interview. Her mother tried to reassure her, but Selena remained very nervous. When Selena came home, her mother asked, "How did it go?"

Selena smiled and said, "It was **a piece of cake**. They were so kind! They really liked my work. I can start in the fall. I had no reason to worry so much."

VOCABULARY

upcoming – in the near future.

- *The basketball team that wins the upcoming game will be the state champion.*

interview – a meeting and conversation for a certain purpose, such as an interview for a job.

- *It is important to dress appropriately for a job interview.*

difficulty – problem.

- *My difficulties started when I lost my passport.*

prepare – do work before an event so it will be successful; get ready.

- *Donna ran five miles each day to prepare for the marathon race.*

reassure – encourage; give confidence to.

- *The coach reassured his team that they could still win the game.*

PRACTICE

1. Write the vocabulary word that best fits the meaning of each sentence.

I will _____ most of the meal before my guests arrive.

I was nervous about the _____ chemistry test.

I think the job _____ went very well.

2. List three things that are **a piece of cake** for you.

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever been worried about something, and then you found out later that it was **a piece of cake**? What was your experience? What were you afraid it was going to be like? How did you feel afterwards?

2. When you are worried about an upcoming event or appointment, is there anything you do to calm or reassure yourself? Describe it. How does it make you feel?

Other choices: Another expression with the same meaning as **a piece of cake** is **easy as pie**. One may say, “The exam was **a piece of cake**,” or “The exam was **easy as pie**.”

“It’s a piece of cake until you get to the top.”

Richard M. Nixon (1913–1994), U.S. Senator, Vice President, and 37th President of the United States.

IN A PICKLE

— 6 —

USAGE

John missed his airplane flight, and now he is **in a pickle**.

MEANING

If a person is **in a pickle**, he is in a difficult situation. He is dealing with a tough problem. There is no easy answer to his problem.

STORY

Alex is a traveling salesman. He spends part of his time in Los Angeles, California, and he also stays in Houston, Texas. He isn't married, but he has a girlfriend in Los Angeles and another girlfriend in Houston. Alex told each woman that she was his only girlfriend. On his birthday, Alex was working in Los Angeles. His girlfriend from Houston flew to Los Angeles as a special surprise for him. The two women met, and now both women are very angry with him. Alex is **in a pickle**.

VOCABULARY

pickle – a cucumber that has been kept in vinegar and spices.

- *I like pickles and tomatoes on a hamburger.*

difficult – not easy; hard.

- *Sarah thought the history test was difficult.*

traveling salesman – a person whose job requires him to travel to different places to sell his goods and services.

- *A traveling salesman often stays overnight in hotels, motels, or inns.*

surprise – an unexpected event.

- *The ending of the latest Star Wars movie was a surprise to me.*

angry – mad; very upset; strong feeling of resentment.

- *I became angry when I saw the man hitting his dog.*

PRACTICE

1. Read the following sentences. Then fill in each of the blanks with the most appropriate vocabulary word.

Arthur Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman*, is about the life of a _____ and his family.

When I am _____, I try my best to stay calm.

A dill _____ is often served with a roast beef sandwich.

2. Read each of the following sentences. If the sentence describes a person who is **in a pickle**, circle *Yes*. If the person in the situation described is not **in a pickle**, circle *No*.

John's car got a flat tire on the highway, and he had no spare tire.

Yes / No

It was a surprise when Susie got a gift card from her boss.

Yes / No

Bill got 100% on his History test.

Yes / No

Karla forgot the words she was supposed to say in the school play.

Yes / No

Discuss your answers with your classmates.

CONVERSATION

1. Have any of your friends ever been **in a pickle**? What happened?
2. Can you think of a character in a movie or TV show who was **in a pickle**? What happened?
3. Do you like pickles? Do you prefer sweet, dill, or sour pickles?

Other choices: There are many idioms for being in a difficult situation. You may say **in a jam** instead of **in a pickle**. You may also say **up a creek** or **up a creek without a paddle**.

A PEACH

— 7 —

USAGE

She is a peach!

MEANING

If you say a person is **a peach**, you mean that she is a rare and wonderful person. You value her highly. She is great! She is **a peach**.

STORY

John has two pets: a big dog and a small dog. When John broke his hip and was taken to the hospital, he worried about his dogs. Who would feed them? Who would take them for walks? Who would play with them? His neighbor Mary said, “John, please don’t worry. I’ll take care of Bowser and Spot as long as you need help. They know me, and they like me. We’ll be fine. You just get well.”

John said, “Mary, you’re **a peach**. You are **a real peach**. What would I do without you? Thank you so much!”

VOCABULARY

peach – a round, juicy fruit with a fuzzy skin outside and a large, hard pit inside.

- *My grandparents grew peaches on their farm in Georgia.*

rare – difficult to find; unusual; uncommon; valuable.

- *White tigers are very rare, large, wild cats from India.*

wonderful – very good; excellent; great; marvelous.

- *Bob had a wonderful time at the party.*

value – consider someone or something to be important or special.

- *We should value our parents.*

pets – tame animals that are kept as companions and cared for.

- *Studies show that people who have pets live longer than people who live without animals.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each of the blanks with the most appropriate vocabulary word.

This _____ bird is found only on a small island in the Pacific.

We had a _____ time at the birthday party.

Some people keep snakes and lizards as _____.

2. List five different kinds of fruit.

CONVERSATION

1. What is your favorite fruit? Have you ever picked fruit from a tree, bush, or vine? How old were you? What kind of fruit was it? Did you eat too much of it?
2. Have you ever broken an arm, a leg, or another bone? How old were you then? How did it happen?

3. Have you ever had a pet? If so, what kind of animal was it? Did you take care of it? What kind of animal would you like to have as a pet someday?

EAT HIS WORDS

— 8 —

USAGE

Jim predicted a Los Angeles Lakers victory in the NBA Finals, but he had to **eat his words** when the Dallas Mavericks won the championship.

MEANING

A person who has to **eat his words** will be embarrassed. If someone has to **eat his words**, it means that what he said was false, and now others know it. Perhaps he said his favorite team would win, and then they lost. Perhaps he said that it wouldn't rain all weekend, and then it rained Saturday and Sunday. His words were not true, so he had to **eat his words**.

STORY

Steve is an excellent car salesman. Every month the person who sells the most cars receives an extra \$1,000. Steve was ahead for most of the month of April. He teased the other salesmen. Steve said they did not have a chance. Then, on the final day of April, Fred sold six cars. Fred beat Steve, and Fred got the \$1,000 bonus. Steve was embarrassed. He had to **eat his words**. He had to admit that Fred had won. Fred laughed and shook hands with Steve. They would compete again in May.

VOCABULARY

predicted – said something would happen in the future.

- *The coach predicted the new player would be a big star someday.*

embarrassed – feeling uncomfortable or foolish in front of other people.

- *I felt embarrassed by the judge's questions about my personal life.*

bonus – something more than what is usually given; extra money.

- *The client gave his lawyer a bonus when she won his case.*

final – describing the last in a series of things.

- *The salesman said, "Today is the final day of our big mattress sale."*

compete – to take part in a contest.

- *Thirty chefs were going to compete for the grand prize.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blank in each of the following sentences with the vocabulary word that best completes the sentence.

The baseball player received a _____ for each home run he hit.

The announcer said, "This is the _____ boarding call for Flight 294."

Rene was training to _____ in the Boston Marathon.

2. List five dishes you like to prepare for your family or friends.

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever had to **eat your words**? What did you say? What happened? Does it seem funny to you now?

2. What is your favorite sport? Which is your favorite team? Have you ever had to **eat your words** about a sports prediction?

Other choices: Another expression that means the same as **eat your words** is **swallow your words**. If you **swallow your words**, you have been shown to be wrong. Another related expression is **swallow your pride**. If you **swallow your pride**, you have to admit that someone else is right and you are wrong.

“In the course of my life, I have often had to eat my words, and I must confess that I have always found it a wholesome diet.”

Winston Churchill (1874–1965), British Prime Minister and Statesman

SOMETHING IS FISHY

— 9 —

USAGE

I think **something is fishy** about his offer.

MEANING

If you think **something is fishy**, then you think something is suspicious. Perhaps someone seems untrustworthy. Perhaps you think someone is trying to cheat you. Perhaps you think someone is lying to you. Something is definitely wrong.

STORY

Aaron wanted to start his own business, but he did not have the necessary capital to buy the equipment he needed. The economy in his town was improving; however, the bank would not give him a loan. Aaron heard about a man who would give him a loan. When Aaron read the contract the man had written, it did not seem fair. Aaron thought **something was fishy**. Aaron said, “I want to have my lawyer read this contract before I sign it. I want to feel comfortable before I sign anything. I’d rather be safe than sorry.”

VOCABULARY

suspicious – not trusting; not sure; feeling that a person or a situation is not safe or honest.

- *Mario became suspicious when Julio lied to him.*

economy – the prosperity or earnings of a city, state, or region.

- *The economy of Detroit depends on the success of its automobile industry.*

necessary – needed; required.

- *In the United States, it is necessary for children to get a medical checkup before they start school.*

capital – money used to make more money; funds to be invested in a business.

- *Randy needed \$150,000 in capital to buy the restaurant.*

contract – a legal agreement.

- *Ruth signed a contract promising to repay the loan within a year.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blank in each of the following sentences with the most appropriate vocabulary word.

The football star signed a three-year _____.

It seemed _____ to Alfonso that the man was wearing a long overcoat on such a hot day.

U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt created many programs to improve the _____ during the 1930s.

2. Carefully read each of the following situations and decide if it seems fishy to you. Write yes if you think it's fishy; write no if it doesn't seem fishy to you.

A man in front of a liquor store says he has a big diamond ring that he will sell you for \$50.

Is this situation fishy?

Only 65,000 people were eligible to vote in the city election, but more than 85,000 ballots were counted.

Is this situation fishy?

Bob and Ted tell their wives that they are going to a golf resort for the weekend, but they do not take their golf clubs.

Is this situation fishy?

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever been cheated by a salesperson? Have you ever been too trusting in a business deal? Are you more trusting or less trusting than you were when you were younger?
2. There is a saying, "If something seems too good to be true, it probably is." What does this mean? Do you agree?

Other choices: Another expression that means the same as **something is fishy** or **something smells fishy** is **I smell a rat**. When you feel someone is lying to you or doing something wrong, you can say **I smell a rat**.

COUCH POTATO

— 10 —

USAGE

If you don't get up off the sofa, you'll become a **couch potato**.

MEANING

A **couch potato** is a person who watches television for hours and stays in one place. If someone is a **couch potato**, he seems to be glued to one spot and just sits there. A couch potato is not being active. The expression **couch potato** suggests that the person is out of shape and sluggish. He is only interested in watching television.

STORY

Since Steve lost his job, he has become a **couch potato**. He just stays at home and watches television. His mother doesn't know what to do. She told him, "Turn off the TV and start looking for a job. Go out with your friends. Do something." He does not seem to hear what she is saying. He just sits there and watches TV. "It's like you're in a trance," his mother said. "You have become a **couch potato**."

VOCABULARY

couch – a piece of furniture that seats more than one person; a sofa.

- *Three people can sit comfortably on our new couch.*

glued – to join things together with an adhesive; stuck in one spot (as if with glue).

- *The child glued shiny glitter onto her paper in art class.*

sluggish – without energy; moving slowly, or not at all.

- *Until she drank a big cup of coffee, Jane felt sluggish in the morning.*

active – often in motion; engaged or involved in work or at play.

- *Mila is very active in her book club.*

trance – a sleep-like state of not being aware; not knowing what is happening in one's surroundings.

- *The magician put Alex in a trance.*

PRACTICE

1. Choose the most appropriate vocabulary words to fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

Jack _____ the newspaper article into his scrapbook.

The horse was _____ at the start, but he ran faster and won the race.

Most Americans have a _____ in their living room.

2. Which of the following words fit you? Circle the adjectives that you think describe you best.

cautious • athletic • healthy • smart • short

curious • handsome • serious • lazy • tall

enthusiastic • modern • traditional • playful • comfortable

calm • happy • spiritual • generous • polite

nervous • shy • talkative • liberal • rich

kind • conservative • driven • retired • nice

energetic • tired • single • married • friendly

silly • strong • balanced • busy • ambitious

smart • sad • confident • optimistic • hardworking

How else would you describe yourself? What groups do you belong to? Sometimes, we also describe ourselves as members of a group.

I am a salesman. (driver / engineer / nanny / nurse)

I am a parent. (a sister / an uncle / an only child)

I am a/an _____.

I am also a/an _____.

CONVERSATION

1. If your son or daughter were acting like a **couch potato**, what would you do to change the situation?
2. How much television do you usually watch in a day? Do you watch more on Saturdays? Is there a day you don't watch any television?
3. Have you ever felt it would be nice to just watch TV all the time? Have you ever wished there were no such thing as television?
4. Which TV shows are your favorites? Why?

5. If you have children, do you let them watch as much television as they want? Do you decide which programs they can watch? Why or why not?

Other choices: Two other expressions that are similar to **couch potato** are **like a bump on a log**, which describes someone who's not moving, and **a stick in the mud**, which means a person who doesn't want to join in the fun.

WALKING ON EGGSHELLS

— 11 —

USAGE

Since I dented my uncle's new car, I have been **walking on eggshells** whenever I am around him.

MEANING

One who is **walking on eggshells** is acting very carefully. One who is **walking on eggshells** is tense and worried about someone else's reaction. One who is **walking on eggshells** is trying to avoid unpleasantness.

STORY

Luis and Ernesto used to joke and tease with their father. He would laugh and tease them in return. Since their parents got divorced, though, their father has changed. He's not fun anymore. He gets angry when they just want to play with him. He yells at them for small things. Luis and Ernesto have started **walking on eggshells** whenever they are around their father.

VOCABULARY

tense – uneasy; tight; anxious; nervous; stressed.

- *Sam is always tense before midterm exams.*

reaction – a response to another person, an idea, or an event.

- *What was your reaction to the President's speech last night?*

avoid – stay away from someone or something; to not discuss an issue.

- *Sheila avoids her former boyfriend.*

unpleasantness – something that is displeasing, painful, or disagreeable.

- *When there is unpleasantness at mealtime, I don't enjoy my food.*

tease – make fun of in a joking way; annoy, bother, or provoke someone.

- *Bob likes to tease Barbara about her red hair.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each blank in the following sentences with the appropriate vocabulary word.

I always feel less _____ after a massage.

My aunt Nancy tries very hard to avoid _____.

Uncle Joe tells jokes and _____ the girls whenever he comes for a visit.

2. Use the phrase **walking on eggshells** in a sentence. Your sentence should show that you understand the meaning of the expression.

CONVERSATION

1. If one actually tried to **walk on eggshells**, what would happen?
2. From the idiom above, in your experience, why do people **walk on eggshells**?
3. Have you ever been in a situation in which you felt like you were **walking on eggshells**? What were you afraid was going to happen?

Other choices: Instead of saying **walking on eggshells**, you might say **treating somebody with kid gloves**, which means being extra gentle with someone who gets easily upset. Kid gloves are made from very soft leather.

“I know that when I was a full-blown, practicing alcoholic, everyone used to walk around me on eggshells.”

Eric Clapton (1945–), guitar legend, singer, and songwriter

PIE IN THE SKY

— 12 —

USAGE

His goal of being an NBA basketball star was **pie in the sky**.

MEANING

If an idea is **pie in the sky**, it is unrealistic. It is a fantasy. If a girl who can't sing believes she will one day sing in a Broadway show, it is **pie in the sky**. If a boy who can't play basketball thinks he will someday play in the NBA, it is **pie in the sky**.

STORY

Matt was in his final year of high school. His grades were below average. Matt had rarely done his school assignments. He rarely studied for his examinations. His mother worked very hard as a house cleaner and supported him and her three younger children. When Matt's school counselor asked him what he was going to do after he graduated, Matt said, "I am going to get a scholarship and go to a private university."

The counselor said, "Matt, who will give you a scholarship? You have poor grades. You have not shown that you can do the work. You need a realistic, practical plan. Your idea is **pie in the sky**."

VOCABULARY

goal – an aim; a plan for the future.

- *Paolo's goal is to get a job in an advertising agency.*

unrealistic – not realistic; not likely to happen; not practical.

- *Without a steady job or savings, it is unrealistic for Jake to expect that the bank will give him a home loan.*

average – the usual kind or quality; a typical amount or rate.

- *Paul was happy that his grades were above average.*

assignments – lessons or tasks that a teacher or boss expects someone to complete.

- *My mother said I could watch TV after I finished my homework assignments.*

counselor – a person whose job is to give advice or guidance.

- *The school counselor helped Leslie apply for a scholarship.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blank in each of the following sentences with the vocabulary word that best completes the sentence.

The students cheered when the teacher said, “There are no homework _____ for this weekend.”

The school _____ talked with Sue about her grades.

It is _____ to expect that Juan’s first novel will become a bestseller.

2. List five different kinds of pie.

CONVERSATION

1. What is your favorite type of pie? Do you bake it? Do you buy it? Does someone else in your family bake it for you?
2. Have you ever had a dream that others said was unrealistic? Did you take practical steps to make your dream come true? Were you successful? Are you working toward a dream or goal now?
3. Sometimes unlikely things do happen. For the first two years in high school, Michael Jordan did not make his school's basketball team. Yet he went on to become an NBA superstar. Do you know other stories about unlikely dreams becoming true?

“You’ll get pie in the sky when you die.”

Joe Hill (1879–1915), American songwriter and labor union organizer

MORE FOOD PHRASES

Apple of His Eye

USAGE

His daughter is the **apple of his eye**.

MEANING

If she is **the apple of his eye**, he centers his life on her. He loves her dearly.

The Big Cheese

USAGE

Paul thinks he is **the big cheese**.

MEANING

If he thinks he is **the big cheese**, he thinks he is the most important person. He thinks he is the boss. He sees himself as the star.

A Bad Egg

USAGE

I think Mike is **a bad egg**.

MEANING

A **bad egg** is someone who cannot be trusted. A **bad egg** is a person who often gets into trouble.

The Cream of the Crop

USAGE

This racehorse is **the cream of the crop**.

MEANING

If something is **the cream of the crop**, it is the best. The cream that floats or rises to the top in unprocessed milk is considered the most valuable portion.

Sell Like Hot Cakes

USAGE

Take it from me. These new dresses will **sell like hot cakes**.

MEANING

If something **sells like hot cakes**, it will be very popular. It will quickly be bought by many people. Hot cakes are also called pancakes.

Take That with a Grain of Salt

USAGE

She is predicting that shares of Tesla Motors stock will rise 50% within one year. I think you should **take that with a grain of salt**.

MEANING

If you take a statement **with a grain of salt**, you do not completely trust it. You doubt that it is true.

In a Nutshell

USAGE

In a nutshell, if you remodel your house, it will be worth more when you sell it.

MEANING

In a nutshell means to say the most important part as simply as possible.

Breadwinner

USAGE

In a traditional family, the father is the main **breadwinner**.

MEANING

The **breadwinner** is the person who earns money for food, housing, and other daily needs of a family.

Spice Up

USAGE

Wear a red scarf to **spice up** your outfit.

MEANING

Spice up means to make something more exciting.

Souped Up

USAGE

John **souped up** his car with a new fuel injection system.

MEANING

To **soup up** means to make something faster or more powerful. **Soup up** usually applies to cars and trucks.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

REVIEW OF UNIT TWO

Match the sentence on the left with the appropriate idiom on the right. See example #1.

1. Susan was careful not to make any trouble. / E. She was **walking on eggshells**.

1. Susan was careful not to make any trouble.	A. This is a piece of cake .
2. Sam was in trouble.	B. You are a couch potato .
3. That plan has no chance.	C. He was in a pickle .
4. You watch too much TV.	D. That is pie in the sky .
5. This is so easy.	E. She was walking on eggshells .

6. Grace needed to apologize for what she had said.	F. She had to eat her words .

UNIT THREE

BODY LANGUAGE

We live in our bodies. Each body part has a name. Sometimes we also use the names of body parts to express other ideas. At times the connection is clear. We may refer to **the leg of a chair** or **the eye of a needle**. If we know the meaning of the words leg and eye, we can probably guess the correct meanings for **leg of a chair** and **eye of a needle**.



The farm intern is learning about farming. He's wet behind the ears.

Sometimes, though, the meaning is not so clear. What does it mean if we say someone **is thin-skinned**? Or what does it mean if a person says, "He's **wet behind the ears**"? The lessons in this unit introduce American expressions in which common body parts are used in uncommon ways.

A PAIN IN THE NECK

— 13 —

USAGE

My new neighbor plays loud music all the time; he is **a pain in the neck**.

MEANING

If someone is **a pain in the neck**, he is annoying. He is a pest. Perhaps he is a neighbor who is always asking to borrow things. Perhaps he is someone at work who is always complaining. Perhaps he is a boss who is too strict. Someone who is **a pain in the neck** is as irritating as a real pain in your neck would be.

STORY

Celeste's sister-in-law called her every day. She asked about Celeste's plans, and she asked what Celeste was cooking for dinner. She asked which dress Celeste was going to wear. Often she criticized Celeste. She tried to boss her around and tell her what to do. She simply would not leave Celeste alone. Celeste's sister-in-law was **a pain in the neck**.

VOCABULARY

neighbor – a person who lives nearby

- *My next-door neighbor and I often help each other.*

annoy – to cause bad feelings; to create distress; bother someone.

- *Getting stuck in traffic annoys me – especially when I'm running late.*

pest – an unwanted creature, such as an insect or a rat; a person who is annoying.

- *Sophia's little brother pokes her and acts like a pest when she is trying to talk to her boyfriend on the phone.*

strict – enforcing the rules; demanding that all details be correct.

- *We have a strict school policy against chewing gum in class.*

sister-in-law – the person who married one's brother; one's spouse's sister; one's brother-in-law's wife.

- *Tanya's sister-in-law shared her recipe for stuffed cabbage with Tanya.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blank in each of the following sentences with the vocabulary word that best completes the sentence.

Juan and his next-door _____ play tennis every Saturday.

Chris' father was very _____ with him.

The big spider in my garden is a _____.

2. Your in-laws are people to whom you are related by marriage. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

Example: Your wife's mother is your mother-in-law.

Your wife's father is your _____.

Your wife's brother is your _____.

Your brother's wife is your _____.

Your son's wife is your _____.

Your daughter's husband is your _____.

CONVERSATION

1. Do you know someone who is a **pain in the neck**? What does this person do? How do you respond?
2. In the story, Celeste does not argue with her sister-in-law. What do you think she should do? How would you handle this situation?
3. What are some things that a boss who is a **pain in the neck** might do at work?

PULLING MY LEG

— 14 —

USAGE

That cannot be true. Are you **pulling my leg**?

MEANING

If a person is **pulling your leg**, he is teasing you. The person may be saying something that is not true. The person may be exaggerating about something he saw or did. He may be trying to fool you. If you say, “You are **pulling my leg**,” it means you understand what is happening. You get the joke. Maybe you will laugh with him about it. If someone is **pulling your leg**, it is all in fun.

STORY

Rafi and Jimmie were good friends. They enjoyed playing tricks on each other. One day Rafi called Jimmie on his phone. Rafi tried to sound as if he were someone else. He tried to sound serious and adult. He said to Jimmie, “Congratulations Mr. Smith, you have won the lottery. You have won forty million dollars.”

For a second, Jimmie was fooled. Then he said, “Wait! Rafi, is that you? Are you **pulling my leg**?” Then they laughed together.

VOCABULARY

exaggerating – making something seem bigger or better than it actually is.

- *Morris was exaggerating when he said he caught an eighty-pound sea bass on his fishing trip. It only weighed half that much.*

tricks – actions done to fool people; pranks; practical jokes.

- *The children were delighted with the clown's magic tricks.*

serious – not joking; important; severe.

- *Was the car accident serious? Did anyone get injured?*

adult – fully grown person; mature individual.

- *You must be an adult to attend this movie.*

lottery – a game of chance used by governments to raise money.

- *How would you spend the money if you won the lottery?*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each of the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate vocabulary word from your list.

You must buy a _____ ticket in order to win.

My brother Roy can do _____ on his skateboard.

The judge said, "This is a very _____ charge."

2. Make a list of five parts of the human body.

CONVERSATION

1. Do you like to tease other people? What is the most enjoyable trick you ever played on someone else? What is the most enjoyable trick someone else played on you?

2. If a man catches an eight-pound fish and tells people he caught an eighty-pound fish, he is exaggerating. If a person is on a diet and loses five pounds, but tells other people he lost twenty pounds, he is exaggerating. Why do people sometimes exaggerate? Can you think of other examples of exaggeration? Have you ever exaggerated?

URNS A BLIND EYE

— 15 —

USAGE

My mother usually **turns a blind eye** when my brothers fight.

MEANING

If someone **turns a blind eye**, the person acts like he does not see or care about what is happening. If someone **turns a blind eye**, the person pretends not to know what is going on. A politician might **turn a blind eye** to bribery and corruption. A worker might **turn a blind eye** to his manager's cheating. A wife might **turn a blind eye** to her husband's faults. If you **turn a blind eye**, you have decided to act as if you know nothing.

STORY

Stacy has been working at the jewelry store for three years. She knows the real worth of each diamond ring in the store. Stacy overheard the store manager tell a customer that one of the rings was worth much more than it really was. The customer did not know anything about diamonds. What could Stacy do? If she said something to the customer, she might get fired. She did not want the customer to get cheated, but she certainly did not want to lose her job. Stacy decided to **turn a blind eye** to the manager's misleading words.

VOCABULARY

blind – not able to see.

- *The blind man crossed the street with the help of a service dog.*

pretends – acts as if something is real or true when it is not.

- *Pierre pretends that his business is doing better than it really is.*

bribe – money given so someone or some action is favored; an illegal gift to an official.

- *Bribes can cause people to lose trust in their elected officials.*

corruption – wrongdoing; illegal or immoral acts; dishonest proceedings.

- *The reporter uncovered corruption in the sheriff's department.*

diamond – a clear, hard, precious gemstone which is often cut and polished to make jewelry.

- *Jim gave Yuni a lovely diamond engagement ring.*

PRACTICE

1. Use words from your vocabulary list to correctly fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

A _____ is one of the most valuable gems.

The artist Paul Gauguin became _____ when he was older.

A dishonest police officer takes _____, lets criminals escape justice, and **turns a blind eye to crime**.

2. Read about each of the following situations and decide if you think the person who is described is **turning a blind eye**.

Pierre saw a man put a package of meat in his coat pocket at the grocery store. The man walked out without paying. Pierre did not tell anyone what he saw.

Did Pierre **turn a blind eye**?

Carol and Suzanne sat next to each other in class. Carol saw Suzanne cheating on the final exam. Carol did not tell the teacher.

Did Carol **turn a blind eye**?

Alice saw a speeding car crash into a parked car, seriously dent it, and then drive away. Alice noted the license plate number of the speeding car and left the paper on the windshield of the dented car.

Did Alice **turn a blind eye**?

When Isaac looked out his window, he saw two young men who were his neighbors hitting an older man. Then they took the older man's wallet and wristwatch. Later, when a police officer asked if Isaac had seen anything, he said no.

Did Isaac **turn a blind eye**?

CONVERSATION

1. In what kinds of situations do you **turn a blind eye**?
2. When might people have gotten in trouble because they **turned a blind eye**? Why?
3. Why not **turn a blind eye**?

WET BEHIND THE EARS

— 16 —

USAGE

Do not expect too much from Alvin — he is still **wet behind the ears**.

MEANING

Someone who is **wet behind the ears** is young and inexperienced.

STORY

David is a sixteen-year-old boy who has always lived in the suburbs of Chicago. He needs to get a summer job to save money for college. He wants to get work experience. David's Uncle Ned is a farmer in Iowa who usually hires extra workers for the summer to help with the chores. Uncle Ned agreed to hire David for minimum wage to work on his farm. David did not know how to milk a cow. He did not know how to drive a tractor. He even fell off a horse. When the other farm hands laughed at David, Uncle Ned said, "Give him time. He's still **wet behind the ears**. He'll learn."

VOCABULARY

inexperienced – not having skills or knowledge; without practice.

- *The first-time father was inexperienced at changing a baby's diaper.*

suburbs – areas where people live, just outside of a city.

- *The suburbs around Chicago grew rapidly after World War II.*

chores – everyday work tasks in a home or on a farm.

- *Feeding the horses was one of David's daily chores.*

minimum – the smallest amount of something.

- *Working at the fast-food restaurant, Sheena was earning minimum wage.*

wages – money earned for work done; payment.

- *Willard always gave 10% of his wages to his church.*

PRACTICE

1. Study the vocabulary words. Then fill in each of the blanks in the following sentences with the most apt vocabulary word.

The government takes out taxes from my _____.

When she moved to the _____, Alice planted a garden with vegetables and beautiful flowers.

“The _____ passing grade is 70%,” the teacher said.

2. Use the idiom **wet behind the ears** in a sentence.

CONVERSATION

1. What are some jobs that a farm worker does? Have you ever done any of these jobs? If you worked on a farm, what chores would you like to do? What chores would you not want to do?

2. Can you think of other expressions in English that mention parts of the human body? Can you guess what it means to be **strong-hearted**? Can you guess what it means if something **costs an arm and a leg**? Can you figure out what it means when you cannot **stomach** a person or thing?

Other choices: To say someone is **green** at his job is the same as to say he is **wet behind the ears**. Both **green** and **wet behind the ears** mean new to the job and inexperienced.

THIN-SKINNED

— 17 —

USAGE

He is difficult to work with, because he is so **thin-skinned**.

MEANING

If a person is **thin-skinned**, it means his feelings are easily hurt. He gets upset at the slightest correction or rejection. He might even imagine a criticism or rejection when none is meant. If others do not wish to upset him, they have to be very careful around him, because he is so **thin-skinned**.

STORY

Steve is a lawyer at a big company. The secretary he had for twenty years retired, and he hired Helen as his new secretary. Helen was young, had excellent grades, and seemed very qualified for the job. After a few weeks, though, Steve realized that Helen was difficult to work with. She was too **thin-skinned**. Every time Steve tried to explain something to Helen, she got upset.

Steve told another lawyer, “I cannot relax around Helen. She gets upset so easily. Whenever I want to show her how I want something done, she acts as if I’m saying she is dumb. She is too **thin-skinned**. How can we continue to work with her?”

VOCABULARY

correction – a change to make something better or more accurate.

- *Ned made some corrections to the draft of a speech he was working on.*

rejection – when something is not accepted; a refusal.

- *A writer may get many rejections before she is published.*

retired – finished with one's work or career, usually because of age.

- *After thirty winning seasons, Coach Pat Riley retired from the NBA.*

lawyer – a person who is qualified to practice law; an attorney.

- *A good lawyer always protects his client's interests.*

relax – be at ease; be comfortable.

- *On Sundays I usually relax with my family.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the most apt words from your vocabulary list.

A _____ should always be respectful toward the jury.

These shoes will help make a _____ in your posture.

When Anna _____, she traveled to many different countries.

2. Read each of the following sentences. If you think the sentence describes someone who is **thin-skinned**, choose *Yes*. If the sentence describes someone who is not **thin-skinned**, choose *No*.

When Amy did not get a role in the play, she started crying.

Yes / No

Mrs. Adams was a tough teacher, but I learned a lot from her.

Yes / No

The two boys teased each other and laughed.

Yes / No

John said, "Criticism only makes me stronger."

Yes / No

The girl quit the volleyball team after the coach yelled at her once.

Yes / No

CONVERSATION

1. Since **thin-skinned** means someone who is easily upset by correction or rejection, what do you think **thick-skinned** means?
2. When might it be helpful to be **thick-skinned**? Can you think of jobs that might require you to be **thick-skinned** in order to be successful?
3. When a person is learning to play guitar, he may soak his fingertips in vinegar to toughen the skin on the end of his fingers. Soft fingertips may get cut and bleed easily when he is learning to play the guitar. With tough fingertips, a person can practice without getting cut. With tough fingertips, a person can learn to play beautiful music. If someone is emotionally **thin-skinned**, what can he do to toughen himself? What suggestions do you have for someone who is **thin-skinned**?

Other choices: See **walk on eggshells**. If one does not want to upset a person who is **thin-skinned**, one may have to **walk on eggshells** around him.

OUT OF YOUR MIND

— 18 —

USAGE

If you think I'm going to wear that swimsuit, you're **out of your mind**.

MEANING

The expression **out of your mind** means the suggestion is not realistic. The suggestion is crazy. The suggestion is ridiculous. The suggestion is outrageous. The suggestion is unthinkable.

STORY

Jacques was bored. He felt like doing something different. He called his friend Ian and asked if he'd like to go to the movies. "We'll see a new movie," said Jacques. "Let's drive to the movie theater at the shopping mall and look at the choices."

"Okay," said Ian. "Let's go." When they got to the theater, a sign in the ticket window said ticket prices had gone up. The price was now \$15 for each ticket. Ian said to Jacques, "If you think I'm paying \$15 for a movie ticket, you're **out of your mind**. That's ridiculous."

VOCABULARY

outrageous – shocking; past the limit of what is tolerable; a situation that makes one angry.

- *It is outrageous that in Pakistan some six-year-old children have been forced to make jewelry and sew soccer balls.*

bored – not interested; how one feels at a dull, tedious event; feeling "blah."

- *Sandra was bored, while she listened to the long lecture.*

mall – a collection of stores, restaurants, and theaters, often under one roof.

- *Roberta shops at the mall because it is close and convenient.*

price – cost; the amount of money needed to purchase an item.

- *The sale price is lower than the regular price.*

ridiculous – absurd; laughable; something a person may make fun of.

- *The bulldog wearing a pink dress seemed ridiculous to me.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate words from the vocabulary list.

There are two Thai restaurants at that _____.

The _____ of organic fruits and vegetables is higher than regular produce.

If a person enjoys reading, she is rarely _____.

2. List three things that you think have very high prices.

CONVERSATION

1. If a person's hat is ridiculous, we might smile. If a person is treated unfairly, we might become angry. What about American culture today seems ridiculous or outrageous to you? What things bother you?

2. When you feel bored, what do you do to change your mood? Does taking a walk change how you are feeling? Does phoning a friend change how you are feeling? Does cooking a good meal help? Does watching a television show help you feel better? Do you have any other suggestions to reduce boredom?

MORE BODY LANGUAGE

There are many more examples of words for body parts used in common expressions. Here are some that are easy to understand and use.

Broad Shoulders

USAGE

I have got **broad shoulders**.

MEANING

I am strong enough to handle troubles and/or criticism.

A Leg to Stand on

USAGE

You don't have **a leg to stand on**.

MEANING

There is no support or evidence for what you are saying.

Sticks Her Nose

USAGE

Greta **sticks her nose** in other people's business.

MEANING

Greta is pushy about asking people too many personal questions.

Play it by Ear

USAGE

Stephen likes to **play it by ear**.

MEANING

Stephen doesn't like to make plans; he prefers to see how situations develop.

Finger in a Lot of Pies

USAGE

John has his **finger in a lot of pies**.

MEANING

John has started many tasks, but there are too many for him to do them all well.

His Foot in His Mouth

USAGE

Franco put **his foot in his mouth** when he met Jane's parents.

MEANING

Franco said something he should not have said.

Elbow Room

USAGE

Give me some **elbow room**.

MEANING

You are too close for my comfort.

An Arm and a Leg

USAGE

My new car cost **an arm and a leg**.

MEANING

My new car was very expensive.

Eyes on the Prize

USAGE

Kristin keeps her **eyes on the prize**.

MEANING

Kristin stays focused on achieving her goal.

Cold Shoulder

USAGE

Why is Lee giving me the **cold shoulder**?

MEANING

Lee is ignoring me or being unfriendly for some reason.

Turned a Deaf Ear

USAGE

Sam **turned a deaf ear** to my requests.

MEANING

Sam pretended he didn't hear what I asked him. He ignored me.

BODY BUILDING

REVIEW OF UNIT THREE

Match each expression with the sentence that best shows its meaning. You may look at the lessons to find your answers. See #1 as an example.

1. Jim teasingly said I won the lottery. / E. He was **pulling my leg**.

1. Jim teasingly said I won the lottery.	A. She is thin-skinned .
2. This dress was very expensive.	B. He is wet behind the ears .
3. Brian is a new sales clerk here.	C. He turned a deaf ear .
4. Joan gets upset about everything.	D. She is a pain in the neck .
5. Sally did not even say hello to me.	E. He was pulling my leg .

6. I begged Bob for help, but he pretended he did not hear me.		F. She sticks her nose in my business.
7. My sister is a pest.		G. It cost an arm and a leg .
8. Laura wants to know everything about my personal life.		H. She gave me the cold shoulder .
9. Mary said something unwise to her boss.		I. She put her foot in her mouth.

UNIT FOUR

ANIMAL WISDOM

We live with animals in our world. Many of us have pets. We know all about dogs and cats. We know something about cows, pigs, and chickens. Even if we have never seen lions, elephants, deer, or camels, we know what they look like.



Many idioms come from our special relationships with animals.

We teach young children the names of animals around the same time we teach them numbers and colors. Knowing about animals is part of the basic knowledge we share as human beings. Thus, we often use animal words and phrases in our daily language to help describe our feelings and ideas.

What does it mean if a friend tells you, “**I let the cat out of the bag**”? What does it mean when someone complains, “That teacher **gets my goat**”? The following lessons will help you understand some common American expressions that use animal words and phrases to talk about people and our world.

LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG

— 19 —

USAGE

Please, whatever you do, don't **let the cat out of the bag!**

MEANING

Don't **let the cat out of the bag** means do not tell this secret to anyone else.

STORY

Kathy was planning a party for Jack's 30th birthday, but she wanted to make it a surprise. She told all their friends, "Keep this quiet. I want Jack to be surprised. Don't **let the cat out of the bag!**"

The day before the surprise party, Jack's boss Edie told Jack that she wouldn't be able to come to the birthday party. Then Edie said, "Oh no, I **let the cat out of the bag!**"

VOCABULARY

bag – an open container made of cloth, paper, or plastic; a sack.

- *The grocery clerk asked, "Do you want a paper bag or a plastic bag?"*

secret – information that is not shared or is kept hidden from other people.

- *Lauren wrote all her secrets in a private notebook.*

birthday – the anniversary of one's birth.

- *Roy's birthday is September 1st.*

boss – supervisor; a person in charge of workers.

- *Sven's boss expects him to work overtime every Friday.*

surprise – something unexpected.

- *It was a surprise when the baby said his first word, "Juice!"*

PRACTICE

1. Choose the vocabulary word that best completes each of the following sentences.

I want theater tickets for my 30th _____.

Santa Claus is shown with a _____ full of toys on his back.

The _____ said that December had been a good month for sales.

2. The cat family includes many different types of cats, tame and wild. List five types of cats.

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever **let the cat out of the bag**? What happened? Were others angry with you?
2. Benjamin Franklin wrote, "Three can keep a secret, if two of them are dead." What does this mean? Do you agree?

Other choices: Other expressions similar to **let the cat out of the bag** are **spill the beans** or **give something away**. If you **spilled the beans** or **gave something away**, you told someone information that you were not supposed to tell anyone.

“Lettin’ the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier ‘n than puttin’ it back in.”

Will Rogers (1879–1935), American cowboy, actor, and comedian

GETS MY GOAT

— 20 —

USAGE

When I cannot find a place to park my car, it **gets my goat**.

MEANING

If something **gets my goat**, it irritates me. If something **gets my goat**, it angers me.

STORY

Bill owns a grocery store in a small town. He knows everyone in town. He is always friendly with his customers. Bill makes free home deliveries for older customers. He always stays pleasant, even with difficult people. One morning when Bill opened his store, he noticed that the front window had been smashed with a brick. Inside, the store was a big mess. Shelves had been pushed over. Cartons of milk had been spilled on the floor, and eggs had been thrown at the walls. “This is terrible,” Bill told the police. “It makes no sense. Who would do such a thing? It really **gets my goat**.”

VOCABULARY

goat – a farm animal that is used to produce milk and cheese.

- *Goats have curved horns on their heads, and the males have beards.*

customer – a person buying a product or using a service.

- *A good salesman is always polite to his customers.*

town – a place where people live that is larger than a village and smaller than a city.

- *Even though it is a small town, my hometown has a public library, a firehouse, and a police station.*

deliveries – moving goods from a store or warehouse to a customer.

- *The United States Post Office doesn't make deliveries on Sundays.*

shelves – horizontal supports that hold items like books or dishes.

- *We made sturdy bookshelves from bricks and wooden boards.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each of the blanks in the following sentences with the most apt vocabulary word.

Li doesn't eat cheese made from cow's milk, but he does eat _____ cheese.

There is an American saying that “The _____ is always right.”

Stan drove through rain and snow to make pizza _____.

2. List three advantages to living in a small town rather than in a big city.

3. List three advantages to living in a big city rather than in a small town.

CONVERSATION

1. Would you rather live in a town or a city? What are the main reasons for your choice? Do you think life is easier in a town or in a city?

2. Is there someone or something that **gets your goat**? Who or what is it? How do you act?
What do you say?

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

— 21 —

USAGE

It seems to me that **the elephant in the room** is Stan's broken engagement.

MEANING

The elephant in the room is a circumstance that everyone is aware of, but no one wants to talk about. No one wants to talk about **the elephant in the room** because the subject is embarrassing. If there is an **elephant in the room**, people are uncomfortable and feel they cannot discuss something openly.

STORY

Nancy invited ten friends to dinner. When she described what was on her menu, everyone was excited. It sounded delicious. When they arrived, though, there was a burned smell in the air. When they ate the meat, it was clear to everyone that it had been overcooked. It was dry and stringy. No one said anything about the meat, though. No one wanted to hurt Nancy's feelings. The dry meat was the **elephant in the room**.

VOCABULARY

elephant – a very large animal with a thick skin, a long trunk, and two tusks.

- *The elephant is the largest four-legged animal in the world today.*

embarrassing – feeling uncomfortable in a situation; a moment when attention is not wanted.

- *It was embarrassing when the best man at the wedding lost the rings.*

burned – damaged by fire or high heat; charred.

- *Mary burned the letter in the fireplace.*

delicious – pleasant to smell; pleasant to taste.

- *The chocolate cake was delicious.*

stringy – made up of fibers or tough strands.

- *Stringy meat is hard to chew.*

PRACTICE

1. Use the vocabulary words to fill in the blanks in the following sentences. Hint: For regular past tense verbs, remember to use the ending, “-ed.”

It was _____ when Ann forgot her lines during the play.

Did you see an _____ at the zoo?

Our wedding photos were destroyed when our house _____ down.

2. An adjective is a word that describes a noun. For example, in the phrase “*pretty* girl,” *pretty* is the adjective. List five adjectives that could be used to describe an elephant.

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever seen an elephant up close? Where? What did you think about the elephant?
2. Have you ever been in a situation in which everyone knew what was wrong, but no one mentioned it?

DARK HORSE

— 22 —

USAGE

At first, Abraham Lincoln was not well-known, outside of Illinois, his home state. Lincoln was seen as a **dark horse** candidate, running for president of the United States in 1860. It surprised people when Lincoln was chosen as the Republican nominee over better-known men. Lincoln won the election. When a **dark horse** candidate wins, it is very dramatic.

MEANING

A **dark horse** is a competitor who seems to come out of nowhere. A **dark horse** most often refers to a political candidate who is not very well-known at the start, and therefore is not expected to win the election. A **dark horse** may refer to an athlete who has not yet won a major victory. A **dark horse** might be a less well-known movie that is competing for an award. In each case, the **dark horse** surprises people with how competitive it becomes. If a **dark horse** wins, it is an upset victory.

STORY

Early in 2008, Senator Barak H. Obama was considered to be a **dark horse** candidate for president of the United States. He was not well-known outside of his home state, Illinois. Surprising many political experts, the attractive young Senator Obama won his party's nomination at the Democratic National Convention, and then went on to win the general election. Obama took the oath of office as the 44th U.S. president on January 20, 2009.

VOCABULARY

upset victory – a win that was not expected; a win against the odds.

- *The 1938 horse race in which Seabiscuit defeated War Admiral was an upset victory, since War Admiral had previously won the Triple Crown.*

candidate – a person competing for a political office; a person being considered for a job.

- *Political candidates give many speeches.*

competitor – one who competes; a person who tries hard to win a contest.

- *Jesse Owens was a strong competitor in the 1936 Olympics.*

plot – the storyline; the summary of action; a secret plan to commit a crime.

- *The teacher asked us to summarize the plot of Hamlet.*

champion – the top competitor; the one who beats all others; a leader in a great cause.

- *Muhammad Ali was a heavyweight boxing champion.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the vocabulary words that best complete the sentences.

A gold medal in an Olympic event goes to the _____.

There were many twists and surprises in the book's _____.

The _____ for the School Board was a retired teacher.

2. A common American term that is similar to **dark horse** is **underdog**. When two dogs fight, the dog that is on top is expected to win. The dog on the bottom (under the other dog) is not expected to win. The term **underdog** is often used to describe a team that is not favored to win.

Use the term **dark horse** in a sentence about politics.

Use the term **underdog** in a sentence about sports.

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever been a **dark horse** and surprised people with your success? What happened?
How did you feel?
2. Have you ever voted for a **dark horse** in a political election in which the **dark horse** won?
What happened? How did you feel?
3. Have you ever cheered for an **underdog** in a sporting event in which the **underdog** lost?
What happened? How did you feel?
4. Since people often choose the most popular person, why would anyone support a **dark horse**?
5. What are the possible risks of being the one who is expected to win a contest?

LIKE A FISH OUT OF WATER

— 23 —

USAGE

Bob was the only male student in the class, and he felt **like a fish out of water**.

MEANING

If a person feels **like a fish out of water**, she is in a situation that makes her feel out of place and awkward. When a fish is out of water, it flops around. Sometimes a person, too, feels upset when she is not in a familiar setting. The person feels **like a fish out of water**.

STORY

When Ken took Susie to meet his parents at their house she felt uncomfortable. Their house was huge, and they had servants. Such riches felt strange to her. She felt awkward and uneasy. She said to Ken, “I feel **like a fish out of water**.”

He said, “They will love you, honey. Don’t worry.”

VOCABULARY

uncomfortable – not at ease; feeling discomfort.

- *Anne felt uncomfortable in large crowds.*

flop – drop or turn suddenly; fall down clumsily.

- *Toddlers often flop on the floor.*

situation – a place; one's circumstances or surroundings; where a person lives or works.

- *The situation is tense in the final minutes of a close basketball game.*

familiar – known; usual; comfortable.

- *Anne thought the newcomer looked familiar, but she couldn't remember his name.*

huge – very large.

- *It was a huge mistake for Chris to party all night before the final exam.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each blank in the following sentences with the most appropriate vocabulary word.

Henry found himself in an unusual ____: everyone at the party was speaking Italian.

When I wear my thick, itchy sweater, I feel ____.

My brother ate a ____ piece of cherry pie for dessert.

2. Describe a situation in which a person feels **like a fish out of water**. Use the idiom **like a fish out of water** in your example.

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever felt **like a fish out of water**? Did you later feel at ease in that situation? What changed?
2. Do you have any suggestions to help people feel more at ease when they are nervous? Does taking a few deep breaths help you relax? Does imagining yourself near a mountain stream help you? Does picturing other people wearing pajamas help?

3. Have you ever visited an aquarium or marine mammal park such as Sea World? What kinds of animals did you see? Did you have a favorite?

Other choices: Another expression that means a person is out of place in his surroundings is **like a bull in a china shop**. Can you imagine a bull in a china shop? He would break many delicate things.

“That song is just about feeling like a fish out of water.”

Jon Crosby (1976–), American musician

LET’S TALK TURKEY

— 24 —

USAGE

The President said to Congress, “**Let’s talk turkey.**”

MEANING

Let’s talk turkey means let’s talk realistically. Let’s talk seriously. Let’s talk truthfully. Let’s be straightforward and try to work out an agreement together.

STORY

Rose needed a car, but she couldn’t afford to buy a brand new car. She wondered if she should buy a used car, or if she should lease a new car. Since Rose didn’t know what kind of car to get, she asked her Uncle Burt, an automobile mechanic, to advise her. “We’ll find you a good used car,” he said. “I’ll go with you.” When they got to the used car lot, a salesman named Cliff greeted them right away. As they wandered around looking at all the cars, Cliff gave them a sales pitch on each car. Finally, Uncle Burt said, “We may be interested in the white Ford sedan, but the price is a little high. Also, we would like to know what kind of financing you can offer.”

Cliff said, “Step into my office, and **let’s talk turkey.** I think we can make a deal.”

VOCABULARY

lease – to rent something for an agreed-upon period of time; the contract or written agreement by which one rents a home, a vehicle, or equipment.

- *Juan signed a contract to lease an apartment for one year.*

mechanic – a person qualified to repair an engine or machine.

- *The mechanic said that Ed's car needed a new transmission.*

advise – to speak with authority and give advice.

- *Ivan's career counselor advised him to improve his English skills.*

wandered – went from place to place without a clear pattern.

- *The little girl's father quietly followed as she wandered all over the toy store.*

sales pitch – information a salesperson tells a customer to sell a product or service.

- *Top salesmen always have a good sales pitch.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each of the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate word from the vocabulary list.

The lawyer said, "I _____ you to sign this contract."

Many businesses _____ office equipment and furniture.

The insurance salesman was pleasant, but I did not believe his _____.

2. List three situations in which the idiom **let's talk turkey** might be used.

CONVERSATION

1. Rose needed a car, but she didn't know very much about automobiles. People sometimes make decisions when they do not have enough information. What advice do you have for a person who needs to learn more about an item before buying it?
2. Have you ever been persuaded by a sales pitch and then realized you bought a product that did not work or broke soon after you got it home? What did you do? What could someone do in that situation?

MORE ON ANIMAL WISDOM

Since we all know something about animals, we often use descriptions of animals to describe people. Read aloud the following common expressions. What do they mean? Can you add to this list?

She is as soft as a kitten.

She is as sweet as a honey bee.

He is as strong as an ox.

He is as strong as a bull.

She is as mad as a wet hen.

He is as sly as a fox.

He is as tricky as a coyote.

She is as messy as a pig.

He eats like a pig.

She is as fat as a pig.

She is as timid as a mouse.

He is as wise as an owl.

He can swim like a fish.

She eats like a bird.

She sings like a bird.

Below are more expressions and their meanings in the United States. Can you add to this list?

He is a rat.

This means he is untrustworthy.

She is a turkey.

This means she is foolish or not smart.

She is a cow.

This means she is fat and slow.

He is a pig.

This means he is dirty, messy, and vulgar.

He is a tiger.

He is a brave, fierce person.

She is a fox.

This means she is pretty and sexy.

She is a snake.

This means she is untrustworthy and sly.

He is a chicken.

This means he is afraid to take action.

PRACTICE

1. Choose three of the above animal phrases that you would like people to use when describing you.
2. Choose three of the expressions listed above that you hope no one will ever use to describe you.

CONVERSATION

1. If you could be any animal, which animal would you want to be? Why? What qualities do you associate with this animal?
2. Do you have a pet? What kind? If you don't have a pet now, what kind of pet would you like to have someday?
3. Have you ever been to a zoo? Which animals most interested you? If you have never been to a zoo, which animals would you like to see when you go there?
4. Have you ever seen animals do tricks? What did they do?
5. Is there a movie or TV series you have seen that featured an animal as a major character? Describe the movie or TV show. What did you like about it? What didn't you like about it?

ANIMAL INSTINCT

REVIEW OF UNIT FOUR

Match each expression with the appropriate sample sentence. You may look back at the lessons to help you choose the best answers.

1. Elephant in the room	A. No one could believe Anna won the race.
2. Like a fish out of water	B. The fancy hotel made Joe feel uncomfortable.
3. Gets my goat	C. Cheating on tests really irritated Rose.
4. Dark horse	D. It was too embarrassing to talk about.
5. Let the cat out of the bag	E. Carlos told his classmates that he had been selected for the All Star team even though it was supposed to have been kept secret until the official announcement.

UNIT FIVE

COLORFUL LANGUAGE

Bright colors are everywhere in our world. We all react to the colors around us. We also use the words for colors to describe our feelings and experiences. Using color words can be fun and powerful. However, sometimes color expressions can be confusing.



This grandmother is feeling blue, because summer vacation is ending and her son and his family will soon be leaving.

What people think or feel about a color in one culture may not be the same as how people of a different culture think or feel about that same color. For example, the color red does not mean the same in the United States as it does in China. Chinese people associate the color red with happy occasions such as weddings. In the U.S., red is associated with passion, blood, and fire.

In the United States, a color can sometimes have more than one meaning. For instance, yellow is often a symbol of happiness and sunshine; however, yellow can also mean cowardly. If you call a person yellow, you are saying he is afraid to fight.

Another example is the color green. If you say a person is green, it could mean that he is concerned about nature. However, green can also mean that someone is inexperienced.

This section is about American idioms that use color words. These expressions show what different colors can mean in the United States. There is also a summary list of color clues. I hope you are **tickled pink** with this colorful language. Have fun!

IN THE BLACK

— 25 —

USAGE

“Well,” said the boss to his staff, “We’re finally **in the black**.”

MEANING

If a business is **in the black**, it is making money. If a business is losing money, it is **in the red**.

STORY

Opening a new business is often difficult and risky. John knew this, but he decided to take a chance and buy a hardware store. He wanted to help people who needed tools and supplies to make home repairs. John had worked in a hardware store while he was in college, and he believed his experience would help him succeed in that business. He printed flyers and delivered them to every house in the neighborhood. He ran an ad in the local newspaper. He planned a grand opening event to attract customers. He hired a helpful staff. Within three months, his business was **in the black**. John told his wife, “It is a relief to no longer be **in the red**. I’m so glad our business is finally **in the black**.”

VOCABULARY

staff – the people who work for a business or organization.

- *We invited our staff to a company picnic on the Fourth of July.*

finally – after a long period of waiting.

- *Gail finally saved enough money to buy herself a new car.*

risky – dangerous; possibility of a failure or loss.

- *It was risky driving in the snow at night.*

hardware – tools and other supplies used for repairs and maintenance.

- *Bob bought nails, paint, and new locks at the hardware store.*

ads – short form of advertisements; public notices to persuade customers to buy products.

- *The Sunday newspaper is full of ads for everything from toasters to toilet brushes.*

PRACTICE

1. Write the vocabulary word that best completes each of the following sentences.

The teaching _____ was at the school's front gate to greet the parents.

The basketball star Kobe Bryant appears in many television _____.

Lee asked the clerk in the _____ store which power drill was the best.

2. List three ideas that would help a new business be **in the black**.
3. List three reasons why a new business might be **in the red**.

CONVERSATION

1. Would you like to start your own business? Why or why not? If yes, what kind of business would you like to start?

2. Would you rather own a business or work for someone else? What are the advantages of owning a business? What are the advantages of working for someone else?
3. What suggestions would you have for a new boss with a small staff? How should the boss treat his staff? If you were the boss, how would you treat your employees?

FEELING BLUE

— 26 —

USAGE

When it rains for several days, I **feel blue**.

MEANING

If someone is **feeling blue**, she is feeling sad. The jazz music that expresses sadness and loss is called **the blues**.

STORY

Cindy and Paul had dated for about six months. She felt they had a close relationship. Cindy had hoped they would get married. Now, though, Paul hasn't called Cindy for three weeks. He does not reply to her text messages. It is Valentine's Day, and she feels sad and lonely. Cindy has stayed at home all day **feeling blue**. Maybe she will listen to her favorite music and phone her friend. That may help her feel a little better.

VOCABULARY

sad – a feeling of unhappiness; sorrowful; mournful.

- *Pablo was sad when his best friend moved to another city.*

expresses – says; symbolizes; means; tells about a feeling or idea.

- *On Valentine's Day, giving someone red roses or chocolate hearts expresses love.*

dated – went out together as a couple with the possibility of romance.

- *When Joe and Megan dated, they usually went out to dinner and saw a movie.*

hoped – wished for; wanted.

- *Tomas and Bobby hoped it would snow so they could go sledding.*

Valentine's Day – a holiday celebrated on February 14th, often by giving greeting cards and gifts to loved ones.

• *When Elizabeth's class had a Valentine's Day party, she gave pretty cards to all her classmates and to her teacher.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate vocabulary words.

It is hard to find a greeting card that really _____ feelings of love.

My nephew was _____ when his dog died.

I _____ Sunday would be a sunny day for our picnic in the park.

2. Do you sleep more when you **feel blue**? Do you eat more when you **feel blue**? Do you exercise? Do you meditate? Do you watch TV? What helps you the most? Write three sentences about what you do when you **feel blue**.

CONVERSATION

1. How does Valentine's Day help some people feel good? How does Valentine's Day make some people feel sad?

2. If you were a fourth grade teacher with boys and girls around nine years old, how would you plan a class Valentine's Day party? Would you have them make cards? Would you share stories? Would you talk about the history of the holiday?

Note: Flowers, candy, and greeting cards with red hearts are all traditional Valentine's Day gifts in the United States.

SEE RED

— 27 —

USAGE

When my big brother tries to bully me, I **see red**.

MEANING

When a person **sees red**, he gets very angry.

STORY

Mrs. Jones' first grade class was having fun on the playground at recess time. The playground had a swing set and a slide. Most of the children were playing nicely with each other. Mrs. Jones and the school principal were watching the children. When it was Stan's turn to go down the slide, Jon pushed Stan aside, and Jon went down the slide. Stan yelled at Jon, "That's not fair! You're a bully!"

Mrs. Jones said to the principal, "Stan is right. When Jon acts that way, I **see red**. I just want to grab him and make him behave."

The principal said to Mrs. Jones, "Be careful. Don't get too angry. I'll talk to Jon and have him sit on the bench."

VOCABULARY

bully – a person who is mean, cruel, or unfair to others who are smaller or weaker.

- *A bully does not care about the feelings of others.*

playground – part of a school or park, where children can play on swings, slides, and other equipment.

- *Sarah's grandmother took her to the playground every day.*

recess – a break in the school day, when children can play.

- *When the weather is good, the kids go outside for recess.*

principal – the person in charge of a public school.

- *A teacher may send a rude student to see the principal.*

behave – act politely; conduct oneself properly and appropriately.

- *Some children do not behave well in a restaurant.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate vocabulary words.

A school _____ should be a wise leader.

When students do not _____, the teacher cannot teach.

The _____ in the park had a large sandbox.

2. List three things that make you **see red**.

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever been so angry that you really saw the color red? Why were you so angry? Did you act foolishly because you were so angry? What happened?

2. In the United States, the color red is often used to mean stop. When traffic lights are red, it means you should stop. Stop signs at street corners are also red. What else does the color red make you think of?

GREEN WITH ENVY

— 28 —

USAGE

When Marta saw Tom's expensive new car, she became **green with envy**.

MEANING

Green is a color that can mean different things. In Marta's case, green means jealousy. **Green with envy** may be jealousy of another's possessions or jealousy of another's achievements. Green is the color of jealousy. Green is also the color of inexperience, as in, "I don't know if the interns can do the work. They're so green." Green is also used to describe groups that work to protect nature.

STORY

Elaine was a good person. She worked hard, did her best, and tried to be content with what she had. Sometimes, though, it made Elaine sad to see others who had wonderful new things. It especially bothered her when she did not have enough money to buy presents for her children. Elaine was **green with envy** when her neighbor Sally bought new bicycles for her three kids. Elaine wished she could give those treats to her children, too. "Someday," she said to herself. "Someday I will be able to buy all those nice things, too."

VOCABULARY

expensive – costing a lot of money; fancy.

- *Why did you buy such an expensive watch?*

content – a feeling of satisfaction.

- *Sue felt content watching her grandchildren play in the yard.*

envy – wanting what others have; jealousy.

• *Marta wanted to be happy that her friend Tom had a brand new car, but Marta felt envy instead.*

presents – gifts; items given or exchanged, especially on holidays and birthdays.

- *Anna loved to buy presents for her children.*

treats –special gifts; things given for someone to enjoy.

- *Children receive many treats at Halloween.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate vocabulary words.

Isaac received many _____ and _____ for his birthday.

Buddhist monks often feel _____ with their lives.

_____ can sometimes hurt a friendship or work relationship.

2. List five things that are green.

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever felt **green with envy**? Why? Do you still feel that way?

2. The classic Greek play *Oedipus the King* ends with the warning that no man should be considered fortunate until he is dead. Everyone had envy for Oedipus at first. Later they realized he was really very unfortunate. Have you ever envied someone only to realize later that your situation was better than the other person's? Explain.
3. Green is also the color used to describe people who work to protect nature. Are you in any **green** groups? Do you recycle? Do you do other **green** activities?

“It turned Brer Merlin green with envy and spite, which was a great satisfaction to me.”

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, by Mark Twain

OUT OF THE BLUE

— 29 —

USAGE

My promotion at work came **out of the blue**.

MEANING

Out of the blue means the event was not expected.

STORY

After my brother Josh graduated from college, he went to live in New York City. While our parents were still alive, he would write or call a few times each year. He came back to Ohio for a family reunion nine years ago, but I had not heard from Josh since then. I wrote a letter to him, but it came back unopened. I did not have a current address or phone number for him. Last Monday, completely **out of the blue**, he arrived at my house. He had a dozen yellow roses for me in his arms and a big smile on his face. I couldn't believe it. He really surprised me. I was so glad to see him. We talked for hours. I hope we never lose touch again.

VOCABULARY

graduated – met the requirements and received a high school diploma or college degree.

- *My parents were pleased when I graduated with honors.*

parents – mother and father; mom and dad; mom and mom; dad and dad; protectors or guardians of a child or children.

- *Shannon's parents paid for all her college expenses.*

unopened – not opened; closed; sealed shut.

- *The unopened envelope had no return address.*

dozen – twelve.

- *Bob buys a dozen eggs every week at the market.*

lose touch – fail to be in contact with someone important or special.

- *Many people lose touch with their childhood friends.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate words from the vocabulary list.

Anne's _____ told her to finish her homework before watching television.

There are at least a _____ reasons why you should stop smoking cigarettes.

On the last day of classes, Jan said to his college roommate, "Let's not _____."

2. Write a sentence about something that happened to you **out of the blue**.

CONVERSATION

1. Sometimes it is fun to try to figure out how expressions started. How do you think the expression **out of the blue** came about? Use your imagination. Make up a story. There is no wrong answer.

2. What is your favorite color? What feeling does this color give you? Do you have any special associations with this color? Which color do most people in your class prefer?

“One can’t impose unity out of the blue on a country that has 265 different kinds of cheese.”

Charles DeGaulle (1890–1970), General and President of the French Republic

TICKLED PINK

— 30 —

USAGE

Brenda was **tickled pink** with her new hair style.

MEANING

If someone is **tickled pink**, she is very happy and smiling.

STORY

Yuni graduated from college in June. She had worked hard for four years, and now she had a degree in elementary education. This summer, she plans to take a vacation. In the fall, Yuni will begin teaching first grade at a local school. With her new job, she will be able to move out of her parents' house into her own apartment. Everything is just great. She is **tickled pink** with her graduation and her plans for the future. Yuni's parents are also happy about her success.

VOCABULARY

tickled – amused; touched someone lightly to cause laughter.

- *It tickled Ben to see his baby sister try to walk.*

degree – a certificate of completion from a college or university.

- *John's Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy was no guarantee of a job.*

local – in the nearby area; in the surrounding neighborhood.

- *My local grocery store has very fresh tomatoes in the summer.*

apartment – a place to live that has one or more rooms for rent, often separate units in a large building.

- *The large, older house had been divided into three apartments.*

future – a time that has not yet come; later today, tomorrow, and everything after that.

- *No one can really know the future.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate words from the vocabulary list.

The _____ bus stops close to my house.

Will people live on Mars in the _____?

A larger _____ will be more expensive, but I need the extra room.

2. Think about the word **tickled**. Has anyone ever **tickled** the soles of your feet? Are you very **ticklish**? Do you like to be **tickled** under your arms? Has anyone ever told a joke that **tickled** you? Have you ever seen something that **tickled** you? Write three sentences using either the word **tickled** or the expression **tickled pink**.

CONVERSATION

1. The expression **tickled pink** comes from the fact that some people blush or turn pink when they are laughing. Do you ever blush? Is it sometimes from laughter? The expression **life is rosy** may come from the fact that beautiful flowers make some people happy. When **life is rosy**,

things seem very good. Is your future **rosy** now? Are you **tickled pink** about your future? Why or why not?

2. What three things do you think will change in the future? Will people be happier when these changes happen?

3. In the United States, the color pink is associated with baby girls. If you see a baby wrapped in a pink blanket, it's probably a girl. Do you have other associations with the color pink?

“If I can put one touch of rosy sunset into the life of any man or woman, I shall feel that I have worked with God.”

G.K. Chesterton (1874 – 1936), English novelist, essay writer, and journalist

COLOR CLUES

Here is a guide to color meanings in the United States. Since colors may have a variety of meanings, you should always look at the context. For example, the color blue is associated with baby boys, but **feeling blue** (as seen in chapter 26) means feeling sad. The other words in the sentence will help you know which meaning is intended.

Blue is the traditional color for blankets, clothes, and other gifts for baby boys.

If a person is **feeling blue**, he is sad.

If a business is **in the red**, it is losing money.

Red on a traffic light or sign means stop.

If a person is **seeing red**, he is very angry.

If a person is **caught red-handed**, she has been caught doing something wrong.

If a person is called **yellow**, it is like saying that he is afraid to fight.

Yellow on a traffic light or sign means caution.

Green on a traffic light means go.

If a person is **green**, she is trying to protect nature.

If a person is called **green** at a job or activity, he has no experience.

If a person is **green with envy**, she is jealous.

If a person is **tickled pink**, she is very pleased.

Pink is the traditional color of clothes for baby girls.

Purple is the traditional color for European royalty.

White is the traditional color for a bride to wear at her wedding.

To wave a **white** flag means to surrender or give up.

If an issue is **black and white**, there are two very clear but opposite opinions.

Black is the traditional color to wear at funerals.

If a business is **in the black**, it is profitable and making money.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR COLORS?

Using the color clues in this unit, fill in the blank in each of the following sentences with the appropriate color. A color may be used more than once.

I bought a _____ blanket for my baby granddaughter.

John was happy because his business was finally in the _____.

When I saw the _____ traffic light, I knew I had to stop.

Ida wore a _____ suit to her mother's funeral as a sign of respect.

When Charles yelled at her for no reason, Kathy saw _____.

The queen wore a _____ robe with white fur trim.

The bride wore a traditional _____ gown with a veil and a long train.

I bought a _____ blanket for my baby grandson.

When my new car was delivered, I was tickled _____.

When my next-door neighbor saw my brand new barbecue grill, he became _____ with envy.

The _____ movement works to protect our oceans, lakes, and rivers.

COLORFUL COMMENTS

REVIEW OF UNIT FIVE

Match the correct expression with the meaning of the sentence.

1. John was pleased his business made a profit.	A. See red
2. Juana was sad her father moved to Phoenix.	B. Green with envy
3. Isabella got angry when Paolo forgot their anniversary.	C. In the black
4. Jose was jealous when he saw Carlos drive up in his new Ferrari.	D. Out of the blue
5. Joseph could not believe his aunt showed up from Kenya unannounced.	E. Tickled pink
6. Kim was overjoyed when Tuan asked her to marry him.	F. Feeling blue

UNIT SIX

HOW'S THE WEATHER?

Many common expressions use words that relate to weather or temperature. Since we all know about weather and temperature conditions, they are easy to talk about. Often the first thing strangers talk about is the weather. How many times have you started a conversation with, “Oh, isn’t this a beautiful day?” or “I wonder how much longer this rain will last!” Words that describe weather or temperature are part of our basic vocabulary. They express shared experiences.



A boy is enjoying a snowman on a cold wintry day.

Some expressions that use weather or temperature terms are easy to understand. If one knows the meaning of the word fog, it is easy to understand that **walking around in a fog** means being unaware of one’s surroundings or having no clue what one is doing.

If one knows that the word lukewarm means neither hot nor cold, it is easy to understand that if one is **lukewarm to an idea**, it means one is neither strongly for it nor strongly against it.

Sometimes, though, idioms that use weather or temperature words are not obvious. What does it mean to feel **under the weather**? What is a **fair-weather friend**? This section contains some common expressions that relate to the weather or temperature.

So relax. They're fun. It's a breeze!

UNDER THE WEATHER

— 31 —

USAGE

David said he's not coming in to work today, because he is **under the weather**.

MEANING

If a person is **under the weather**, he is not feeling well. Maybe he is tired. Maybe he has a cold. Maybe he drank too much alcohol the night before. He is not seriously ill or in a crisis. He is just **under the weather**.

STORY

My friend Sally is a kindergarten teacher. She is usually a cheerful, happy, healthy person. We laugh a lot when we are together. She tells me stories about the funny things the little children do and say in her classroom. When we met after work yesterday, though, she had a slight cough. I asked Sally if she was feeling okay. Was she getting ill?

Sally said, "Oh, no. I'm just a little **under the weather**."

VOCABULARY

weather – the condition of the atmosphere, including the temperature, clouds, rain, and wind.

- *Felix loves to go jogging in warm, sunny weather.*

crisis – a very stressful, tense situation; a breakdown; an emergency.

- *It is a crisis for children if their parents argue violently.*

kindergarten – the grade level of children who are starting school, usually around five years old.

- *Children in kindergarten do arts and crafts, learn the letters of the alphabet and numbers, listen to stories, and play outside.*

cheerful – full of cheer; joyful; happy; having a positive attitude.

- *Nick likes to play checkers with his cheerful uncle.*

yesterday – the day before today.

- *Yesterday I had a headache, but today I feel fine.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate vocabulary words.

I'm sorry for what I said to you _____.

Don stayed calm during the _____, while others panicked.

The TV host was always smiling and _____.

2. For each of the following questions about weather, circle *Yes* or *No*.

Do you like cold weather?

Yes / No

Do you like hot weather?

Yes / No

Do you like rainy weather?

Yes / No

Do you like snow?

Yes / No

CONVERSATION

1. When you feel **under the weather**, what do you do to feel better? Do you go for a walk? Do you call a friend? Do you eat or drink something special?
2. Did you go to kindergarten? How old were you? Did you like it? What activities did you do?
3. Which time of year do you like best? What do you do during your favorite season?

RAINING CATS AND DOGS

— 32 —

USAGE

It was **raining cats and dogs**, while we were driving to the airport.

MEANING

If it is **raining cats and dogs**, it is raining very heavily.

STORY

Felipe and Maria decided to go to the movies in New York City. They felt lucky when they found a free, legal parking spot three blocks from the theater. After the movie was over, though, it was **raining cats and dogs**. Felipe said, “Oh no! I forgot my umbrella. Why should both of us get wet? Maria, you wait here in the lobby while I get the car.” Felipe ran to the car and got soaked in the downpour. When Felipe drove back to the theater to pick her up, Maria knew she had a very thoughtful boyfriend.

VOCABULARY

free – at no cost.

- *Ever since Clara could remember, the beach was free and open to the public.*

legal – within the law; not against the law; allowed by law.

- *In California, the legal age to get a learner’s permit to drive is fifteen-and-a-half.*

soaked – completely wet; thoroughly wet; drenched in water or other liquid.

- *After a long day working at the counter, Gladys came home and soaked her feet in warm water.*

downpour – a very heavy rain.

- *Bill got soaked in the downpour.*

umbrella – handheld protection against rain.

- *Some people who live in rainy London carry an umbrella every day.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each of the blanks in the following sentences with the most apt vocabulary word.

The ____ speed limit on certain highways in Texas has been raised to 85 miles per hour.

When Karen's old umbrella broke, she got ____ in the downpour.

The ad said, “Buy one can of peaches, get one ____.”

2. The word *downpour* is a compound word. A compound word is made by joining two words. In this case, the word *down* and the word *pour* have been joined to form the word *downpour*. Look at the following words and circle the compound words.

thing • somewhere • grocery • smartphone

something • chocolate • eyeglasses • underground

hand • basketball • childbirth

handbag • pancake • computer • commonsense

rain • snowball • earring • washrag

raining • surprise • fingernail • racehorse

raincoat • dollhouse • lawyer • eyeball

CONVERSATION

- 1: What do you wear in a rainstorm?
- 2: Have you ever been in a rainstorm that felt like it was “raining cats and dogs”? Describe what happened? Where were you?
3. Who are your favorite movie stars? Why?
4. Would you like to be a movie star? Why or why not?

FAIR-WEATHER FRIEND

— 33 —

USAGE

Alice said Janice was a **fair-weather friend**. Janice disappeared whenever Alice had trouble.

MEANING

A **fair-weather friend** is one who is a friend only when life is easy. A **fair-weather friend** does not offer help when life is difficult.

STORY

Alice and Janice went to the same high school. They enjoyed chatting with each other. They shared the same taste in music and movies. They laughed a lot when they were together.

Then, Alice failed her biology test. Alice needed help from someone who understood science. She called Janice, but Janice didn't answer the phone. Alice sent Janice a text message, but Janice did not reply. At school, Janice seemed to be avoiding Alice. Alice felt confused and betrayed. She thought, "Janice is not a true friend of mine. Janice is just a **fair-weather friend**."

VOCABULARY

chatting – talking easily back and forth; having a casual conversation.

- *The two young mothers were sitting on a park bench, chatting about their babies.*

taste – an appreciation for a certain style; one's likes and dislikes.

- *Leah does not share Gil's practical taste in clothes.*

failed – did not succeed at something; got a very low score on a test; did not pass a class.

- *Sally was upset after she failed her driver education course.*

confused – a feeling of uncertainty; an unsure feeling; did not understand something.

- *The signs on the highway confused me.*

betrayed – a feeling that one has been treated unfairly and cruelly by a friend, a family member, or a fellow worker.

- *Julius Caesar felt betrayed when Brutus stabbed him.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate vocabulary words.

The girl at the bus stop was _____ loudly on her cell phone.

Joe _____ his driving test twice.

When you told my secret to Anna, you _____ me.

2. Use the expression **fair-weather friend** in a sentence.

CONVERSATION

1. Chat with others about your taste in music. What do you like? What don't you like?
2. Chat with others about your taste in clothes. Are you a fashionable person?

3. Chat with others about your taste in movies. What are your favorite movies? Do you like to see movies from other countries? Do you like to see movies in other languages?

During the American Revolution, Thomas Paine wrote about “the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot.” Paine was describing those who fought when the weather was good, but quit fighting when the weather was cold and food supplies were low. Paine was telling the soldiers not to be **fair-weather friends**.

CHILL OUT / BE COOL

— 34 —

USAGE

Teenagers often **chill out** at the local mall.

“**Chill out**, Sue! We’ll get there on time.”

MEANING

Chill out means to relax and be at ease with friends. **Chill out** means to have no particular plan in mind. **Chill out** or **be cool** can also be used to tell people to relax and stay calm.

STORY

On Saturday afternoons, Ian usually goes to the mall to be with his friends. Lots of teenagers meet there each week. They are **chilling out**, teasing each other and chatting. James works most Saturdays, so he usually isn’t able to join them. One Saturday, though, his work shift ended at 2 p.m., so he went to the mall to see his friends. When James got there, he saw Ian standing close to James’ girlfriend, May. James became furious and shoved Ian. Ian said, “**Chill out**. We were just talking. I know she’s your girlfriend. **Be cool**.”

VOCABULARY

relax – not to be tense; to be at ease; to be free of stress.

- *In order to relax after work, Janine took a nice, hot bath.*

chill – a feeling of coldness; lack of warmth.

- *It was only the first day of winter, but Wayne felt a chill in the air.*

shift (at work) – a person's scheduled period of work, such as 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., 4 p.m. – 12 midnight, or 12 midnight – 8 a.m.

- *12 midnight – 8 a.m. is called the graveyard shift.*

furious – very angry.

- *When Sue lied about me to our friends, I was furious.*

shoved – pushed forcefully.

- *Gwen shoved her suitcase into the back of her car.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the appropriate words from the vocabulary list.

On the weekend, I try to _____ and forget work.

Jan was _____ with Marcus when he forgot their date.

Some people prefer the night _____ because it is quieter.

2. Some people count to ten when they need to **chill out**. Some people just walk away from trouble when they need to **chill out**. Write a sentence about what you do to calm yourself down.

CONVERSATION

1. What do you and your friends do to **chill out**? Where do you go?

2. What kinds of activities do teenage boys and girls do together? Do they go to parties together, or do they meet at a mall?

“Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool ... under all circumstances.”

Thomas Jefferson (1743 – 1826), Founding Father and 3rd President of the United States

IN HOT WATER

— 35 —

USAGE

Tom forgot his wedding anniversary, and now he is **in hot water** with his wife.

MEANING

If a person is **in hot water**, he is in trouble. He has made problems for himself and others. His own actions have gotten him into trouble. Someone is angry with him. Perhaps he missed a deadline at work and is now **in hot water** with his boss. Perhaps he forgot his wedding anniversary and is now **in hot water** with his wife. Perhaps he did not pay his taxes, and now he is **in hot water** with the government. If a person is **in hot water**, he is in trouble.

STORY

Jane bought two theater tickets to a special play. Good seats cost more than she thought they would, but she bought them anyway. Jane really wanted to see this play. She asked her boyfriend Mark if he would like to go with her on Saturday. He said, “Sure. That would be great!” On Saturday, Mark was playing football in the park with his buddies. Then the guys went to a bar to have a few beers. An exciting football game was on the bar’s big screen television. The friends sat around cheering and drinking. Mark completely forgot about his plans with Jane. When he did not come to her house on time, Jane tried to call him, but the bar was so noisy, he did not hear his phone ring. Mark forgot their date. Jane did not see the play. Now, each time he calls, she does not want to talk to him. Mark is **in hot water**.

VOCABULARY

play – drama; a live show with actors and scenery.

- *The play was about a son who had problems with his parents.*

theater – the space in which a play is performed.

- *Anton prefers a small theater for serious plays.*

anniversary – the date on which something special happened, especially a wedding.

- *Tim and Josie's wedding anniversary was June 19th.*

buddies – pals; friends with whom one spends a lot of time.

- *John and Paul had been best buddies since first grade.*

noisy – full of noise; loud.

- *The subway was so noisy that Isabella could not hear her phone ring.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the most appropriate vocabulary words.

Hamlet is a famous _____ by Shakespeare.

The boys were so _____ that they gave their mom a headache.

My _____ and I decided to drive all the way to Florida.

2. Write a sentence using the idiom **in hot water**.

CONVERSATION

1. In the story, why was Jane so angry? How would you feel if you were in her situation? Would you ever forgive Mark? Are you still angry about something that happened years ago? What happened? Will your feelings ever change?
2. Have you ever seen a play? Where? Were you ever in a play? Did you enjoy the experience? Is there a play you would recommend to others?

Other choices: Another idiom that means the same as **in hot water** is **in the doghouse**. One could say Mark is **in hot water** or one could say Mark is **in the doghouse**.

“Women are like teabags. We don’t know our true strength until we are in hot water.”

Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962), Humanitarian and First Lady of the United States

HOT TIME

The most common meaning of the word **hot** is having a high temperature. The word **hot** also has many other meanings in informal English. This list shows several informal or slang meanings of the word **hot**.

Hot = spicy.

*Indian restaurants can prepare their food **hot** or mild.*

Hot = currently popular.

*In 1996, Tickle Me Elmo was a **hot new** toy.*

Hot = sexy

*Many movie fans think Angelina Jolie is **hot**.*

Hot under the collar = angry.

*The boss was **hot under the collar** when his secretary lost an important file.*

Hot streak = a series of wins in sports.

*The Chicago Bears football team was on a **hot streak**.*

Hot potato = an uncomfortable topic; something one wants to give to someone else quickly.

*The topic of religion is a **hot potato** in my family.*

Hot hand = the ability to score many points in a game.

*Chris Paul had a **hot hand** during the basketball play-offs.*

Hotshot = someone who displays his skills in order to attract a lot of attention.

*A **hotshot** is seldom a good team player.*

WEATHER REPORT

REVIEW OF UNIT SIX

Match the expression with the meaning. You may look at the lessons.

1. The team had won twenty games in a row.	A. She felt under the weather .
2. Richard was very angry.	B. It was raining cats and dogs .
3. Susie was not feeling as well as usual.	C. He said to be cool .
4. The friends often met at the mall.	D. She is a fair-weather friend .
5. Sam told Bob to relax.	E. They liked to chill out together.
6. Carla was never there when I needed her.	F. They were on a hot streak .
7. There was a heavy downpour.	G. He was hot under the collar .

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UNIT SEVEN

WHERE ARE YOU?

Where are you? When we ask this question, we may want to know where you are located. The answer to that question is easy. You may be at home. You may be at school. You may be at a store. Answering with a physical location is easy.



You can't move if you're stuck between a rock and a hard place.

But what if the question means: What are you thinking about? What if the question means: What are you feeling? What if the question means: What is your opinion about something? Then the question may be more difficult to answer.

That is when the idioms in this unit are useful. By referring to physical locations, these idioms describe a person's thoughts or feelings. For example, if one is undecided, we say that the person is **sitting on the fence**. This is a physical location that makes the situation clear. This person cannot decide whether she wants to be on this side or that side. She is **sitting on the fence**.

Another example is **down in the dumps**. This is a physical or mental location that describes a feeling of sadness. This unit contains many more examples. The idea may be difficult to explain, but the idioms are easy to understand. That is their job. They make communicating easier. They make it a breeze!

SITTING ON THE FENCE

— 36 —

USAGE

Although the election is next week, Mary is still **sitting on the fence**. Who would make the best governor?

MEANING

If someone is **sitting on the fence**, she hasn't decided which way to go. She is not committed, meaning she hasn't jumped down from the fence to one side or the other. She is still **sitting on the fence**.

STORY

The presidential election was only one week away. Mary's mother was going to vote for the Democratic candidate, but her father was going to vote for the Republican candidate. Mary's husband was planning to vote for an independent candidate. Whenever her parents and her husband got together, they argued about the upcoming election. Mary listened to each person, but she couldn't decide for whom to vote. Mary was still **sitting on the fence**.

VOCABULARY

fence – a barrier, usually made of wood or metal, used to separate properties.

- *The dog was able to dig under the fence and get into the neighbor's yard.*

decide – choose; make a decision.

- *I can't decide if I want cheesecake or carrot cake for dessert.*

committed – strongly supporting.

- *I am committed to losing ten pounds before my birthday.*

election – the selection of a person or persons for office by vote; the process by which the candidate who gets the most votes wins the position.

- *Elections for government offices in the United States are held the first Tuesday in November.*

independent – not a member of a major political party; not influenced by the thought or action of others.

- *In the United States, independent candidates seldom win elections.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each blank with the vocabulary word that best completes each sentence.

We built a tall _____ in our back yard.

I am _____ to my husband and my children.

It is unusual when an independent candidate wins the _____.

2. Write a sentence that uses the expression **sitting on the fence**.

CONVERSATION

1. Describe a situation in which you were **sitting on the fence**. Did you decide correctly?
2. Have you ever built a fence? What was it made of? Why did you build it?

3. Robert Frost, a great American poet, said, “Good fences make good neighbors.” What does this mean? Do you agree? Do you disagree? Why?

OUT ON A LIMB

— 37 —

USAGE

The basketball coach went **out on a limb** and said that his team would definitely win the play-offs.

MEANING

When a person goes **out on a limb**, he is saying or doing something risky. A person who climbs out on the end of a tree limb is risking his safety. The limb might break. He might fall. If he is not careful, he might get hurt. A person taking a risk could be hurt or embarrassed. It is risky to go **out on a limb**.

STORY

The professional basketball season was almost over. Only two teams were left in the competition: the Miami Heat and the Los Angeles Lakers. Miami's coach was very confident that his team would win. He told reporters, "I guarantee that we will be the champions."

One reporter said, "You're **going out on a limb**. The Lakers have won more games this season than the Heat. The Lakers have a better record."

The coach replied, "I am **going out on a limb**, but I know we will win this series, and we will win the championship."

VOCABULARY

limb – a large branch of a tree; a person's arm or leg.

- *An oak tree limb fell in the storm last night.*

risk – a chance of injury or loss; a bet, wager, or gamble.

- *He took a risk when he invested his savings in stocks.*

coach – a person who trains an athlete or a sports team; one who teaches skills to athletes.

- *Los Angeles Clippers fans agree that Doc Rivers is an experienced coach.*

guarantee – to promise that something will be of a certain quality or work a certain way.

- *Victor and I guarantee that you will like this new restaurant.*

record – the number of games won and lost in an individual or team sport; a list of actions or achievements.

- *The mayor said, “I’m proud of the job I’ve done so far. Look at my record.”*

PRACTICE

1. Write a sentence using **out on a limb**. Your sentence should show your correct understanding of the idiom.
2. Use the vocabulary words to correctly fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

For many years, basketball star Reggie Miller held the _____ for the most three-point baskets.

One _____ of the tree was dead, but all the others were healthy.

The car salesman said, “Buying a Subaru is not a _____, but rather a wise investment for years to come.

CONVERSATION

1. Can you think of an example when someone went **out on a limb** and was successful?
2. Can you think of an example when someone went **out on a limb** and was not successful?
3. How does it make you feel when you believe someone's words, but what he had promised doesn't happen?

UP IN THE AIR

— 38 —

USAGE

Their wedding plans were **up in the air**.

MEANING

If a plan is **up in the air**, it is undecided. It is unclear. It is vague. It is not grounded in reality. When something is **up in the air**, one is not certain where it will land. Who knows what will happen?

STORY

Joyce and Mike are engaged to be married. They are very much in love, but they have two very different visions for the wedding. Joyce wants a large church wedding with all their family and friends there. Mike wants to get married at the courthouse without inviting people or having a party. When Joyce's mother asked about the wedding plans, Joyce said, "I have no idea. Nothing is decided. It's **up in the air**."

VOCABULARY

vague – not clear; when details cannot be seen; not certain.

- *I have a vague idea how airplanes fly.*

engaged – promised to be married.

- *Alicia and Scott were engaged for two years before they got married.*

wedding – when two people get married.

- *Elisa invited all her coworkers to her wedding.*

grounded – practical; realistic; sensible.

- *The best writing is grounded in a specific location.*

vision – an image or view of something; a specific idea about a future event or plan.

- *Her vision for their future included having four children.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each of the blanks in the following sentences with the most appropriate vocabulary word.

Jane has a practical, _____ plan for improving sales.

On the other hand, John's ideas are _____ and unclear.

The start of a new year is a good time to review your _____ for the future.

2. Write a sentence showing the correct use of the idiom **up in the air**.
3. List other words in the lesson that are new to you. Can you guess the meaning of those words? Use a dictionary to find the meanings. Were your guesses close to the correct meanings?

CONVERSATION

1. Do you think a couple should get married if their parents do not approve?
2. Who do you think should plan a wedding?

3. Who do you think should pay for a wedding? Would the ages of the individuals getting married affect your answer?

DOWN IN THE DUMPS

— 39 —

USAGE

When Fred cancelled his plans to visit her, Angela felt **down in the dumps**.

MEANING

If one is **down in the dumps**, one is sad. If one is **down in the dumps**, one is feeling low.

Feeling **down in the dumps** lasts for some time; it is not just for a moment.

STORY

Angela was excited that her brother Fred was coming home for a visit. She wanted to show him the new sports stadium. She wanted to introduce him to her friends. Angela wanted to talk with Fred in person, rather than on the phone. Then, just three days before he had planned to come home, he fell off a bicycle and broke his leg. He called Angela from the hospital and said, “Sorry, Angie, I just can’t make it. I promise I’ll come home in a few months.” Angela understood that it was not convenient for Fred to fly in an airplane at this time. She tried to sound cheerful on the phone, but she felt very disappointed. Her plans were ruined. Angela was really **down in the dumps**.

VOCABULARY

cancel – to decide or announce that a planned event will not take place.

- *The outdoor concert was cancelled because of heavy rain.*

stadium – a large facility used for sporting events or concerts.

- *Several Olympic events, including rugby, will be in the new stadium.*

introduce – to present one person to another, so they can meet for the first time; to share a new idea.

- *Bill asked Marie, “Will you introduce me to your family?”*

hospital – a large healthcare facility with doctors, nurses, and medical equipment.

- *If you get very sick in a small town, it could take hours to reach a hospital.*

ruined – no longer usable; destroyed; a complete loss.

- *When Jo spilled coffee on Frank, Frank’s white jacket was ruined.*

PRACTICE

1. Review the vocabulary words. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the word that best fits the sentence.

Betty took her dog to the animal _____ when it got sick.

The angry teenage girl said to her mother, “You have _____ my life.”

We bought season tickets when the new football _____ was completed.

2. Answer each of the following questions:

Have you ever felt **down in the dumps**?

How long did your sadness last?

What did you do to help yourself feel better?

CONVERSATION

1. What should someone who feels **down in the dumps** do to help himself or herself feel better? Does exercise help when you are **down in the dumps**? Is there a special food that you eat to feel better when you are **down in the dumps**?

2. Do you have brothers or sisters? How close are you in age? What do you enjoy doing together? Do you live in a different place from any of your brothers or sisters? Has this changed your relationship? Do you get together for holidays? Do you have family reunions?

Other choices: See the expression **feeling blue from chapter 26**. **Feeling blue** is like being **down in the dumps**. They are both expressions that mean feeling sad.

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

— 40 —

USAGE

Jonah was in a difficult situation. If he told the truth to the reporter, Jonah might lose customers. He was between a **rock and a hard place**.

MEANING

If one is **between a rock and a hard place**, one is trapped between two bad choices. In other words, there is no good option.

STORY

Karl believed it was his duty as a citizen to vote in the upcoming election. He read all about both candidates. He watched them debate on television. The problem was that he did not like either one of them. One candidate made many promises, but seemed to be dishonest. The other candidate seemed honest, but appeared to be uninformed about important issues. Which candidate should he vote for? Karl felt trapped **between a rock and a hard place**.

VOCABULARY

option – choice; selection.

- *You have the option of driving downtown or taking a bus.*

citizen – a person born in a particular place or accepted there with full rights and responsibilities; someone with legal status in a city, state, or country.

- *Leo finally became a U.S. citizen on July 4th, 2014.*

trapped – caught in a trap; cornered; having no way out.

- *The robber was trapped in the alley by the police.*

dishonest – not honest; someone who tells lies; untrustworthy.

- *The dishonest businessman tried to give money to get favors from the mayor.*

uninformed – unaware; not knowing the facts.

- *If people are uninformed, they can be misled.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blank with the vocabulary word that best completes the sentence.

A person can vote for president if he is a _____ of the United States.

In football, the quarterback has the _____ of running with the ball or passing it to another player on his team.

Firefighters must save people who are _____ in burning buildings.

2. List five objects that are hard, not including rocks.

CONVERSATION

1. What are the qualities that you look for in a candidate? Why?
2. Have you ever felt trapped between **a rock and a hard place**? Explain the situation. What happened? Would you make the same decision, if you had the chance to do it over again?

OUT OF THE LOOP

— 41 —

USAGE

Why am I **out of the loop**?

MEANING

When someone is **out of the loop**, he or she is no longer being included in a group. If one is **out of the loop**, one is no longer receiving information or invitations from people in the group. A person can be **out of the loop** at work or **out of the loop** with a social group.

STORY

Andrew had been an assistant manager in the advertising division for three years. When the advertising manager retired, Andrew expected that he would get that job. Then one day he noticed that everyone else in the advertising division was meeting in the executive boardroom. He said to his secretary, “Did I get a memo about a meeting? What’s happening? Why am I **out of the loop**?”

VOCABULARY

loop – a length of string or material folded upon itself, so that an opening is in the middle; something that has the shape of a loop.

- *The people on the ground were excited to see the small airplane make loops in the air.*

assistant – acting as a helper; serving in a secondary or lower-level position.

- *Robert has been the assistant bank manager for two years.*

division – part of a large company, usually based on a specific function, such as sales or advertising.

- *Nate works in the accounting division of NBC Universal.*

executive – describing the high-level management of an organization.

- *Marissa Mayer was hired as the chief executive officer of Yahoo.*

memo – short form of memorandum; an informal message, used as a reminder or to give information to someone within the same organization.

• *The principal sent all the teachers a memo, which reminded them about a meeting in the school library.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the words from your vocabulary list.

As soon as Carl received the _____, he called his boss.

People in the sales _____ usually make more money than those in shipping.

The company president was given a \$1,000,000 bonus by the _____ board.

2. The word *memo* is used in daily speech. It is the short form of memorandum. Each of the following words has a shorter form that is used in daily speech. Write the less formal, short form next to the longer word. See the example below.

memorandum: **memo**

gymnasium:

telephone:

television:

automobile:

bicycle:

CONVERSATION

1. Have you ever felt that you were **out of the loop**? How did you feel after you were left out or excluded by a group of friends? What happened? Did you ever feel that you were **out of the loop** at school? What happened? Did you ever feel **out of the loop** at a job? Why did you feel that way?
2. Have you ever decided to “drop” someone from your group of friends? Why did you decide not to include that person? Did you tell the person? Did you just stop talking to the person? What happened?
3. Do you use social media, such as Facebook or Twitter? How many Facebook friends or Twitter followers do you have? What is the difference between the way you communicate with your Facebook friends and the way you talk with your close friends in person?

FLYING UNDER THE RADAR

— 42 —

USAGE

I am **flying under the radar** at work, in order to finish a big project.

MEANING

If one is **flying under the radar**, one is trying to avoid attention. If one is **flying under the radar**, one is hoping no one will notice.

STORY

Aimee got a small part in the school play. She was so busy with her homework and her job that she had not learned her lines before the first rehearsal. She said to her friend Tony, “I hope the director doesn’t rehearse my scene tonight. I’ll just keep quiet tonight, and I will learn my lines by tomorrow night. I hope that tonight I can **fly under the radar**.”

VOCABULARY

radar – special equipment that can find a moving object’s location or speed, using radio waves.

- *The police officer's handheld radar showed that I was driving 79 miles per hour.*

attention – close, careful notice; awareness; looking at and listening to someone or something.

- *Han waved his hand and shouted across the street to get Lee's attention.*

rehearsal – practice to get ready for a performance.

- *The director scheduled a rehearsal at 7 p.m. for the new musical.*

director – the person in charge of preparing a show for the stage or the screen.

- *George Clooney is a motion picture actor and director.*

scene – part of an act in a play, movie, or TV show; the view in one place at a certain time.

- *The actors practiced the fight scene again and again until it looked real enough to film.*

PRACTICE

1. Fill in each of the blanks in the following sentences with the most apt vocabulary word.

Bob was trained to use _____ when he was in the Navy.

Filmmaker Ang Lee has won the Academy Award for Best _____ twice.

The stage play completely captured the audience's _____.

2. The word radar is a palindrome. A palindrome is a word, phrase, or sentence that reads the same backward and forward. The word civic is also a palindrome. Can you list four more English words that are palindromes?

CONVERSATION

1. Can you think of any tips or suggestions to help someone who wants to **fly under the radar**? For example, if one is trying to **fly under the radar**, how should one dress? How should one sit? Should one make eye contact?
2. Have you ever tried to **fly under the radar** in the classroom? Why? Were you successful? What happened?

3. Have you ever **flown under the radar at home** with your parents? Why? Were you successful? What happened?

Note: The word radar was formed from the bold letters in the phrase that describes what radar is: **radio detecting and ranging**.

WHERE ARE YOU?
REVIEW OF UNIT SEVEN

Match each idiom with the sentence that shows its meaning.

1. Meagan was hoping the teacher would not call on her, because she had not prepared for class.	A. He was between a rock and a hard place .
2. Cindy had no idea where she would go for her vacation.	B. She was sitting on the fence .
3. I am betting all my money on an unknown horse in the third race.	C. I am going out on a limb .
4. Gigi couldn't decide which candidate to support.	D. He was out of the loop .
5. Alex was surprised that he had not been invited to the party.	E. She was flying under the radar .
6. Max had to accept a much lower salary or quit his job.	F. She was down in the dumps .
7. Sarah felt sad all day.	G. Her plans were up in the air .

DO YOU REALLY KNOW YOUR IDIOMS?

Match each idiom with the sentence that shows its meaning.

Sal thought the final exam was <i>so</i> easy.	A. Raining cats and dogs
2. Roberto loved to play jokes on Carlos.	B. Piece of cake
3. Nobody expected <i>Little Miss Sunshine</i> to win two Academy Awards.	C. Toot your own horn
4. Jose watches at least five hours of television every day.	D. Couch potato
5. When Clara came home at 2:00 a.m., she knew she'd be in trouble with her father.	E. Pulling my leg
6. One day before the election, John still hadn't decided whom to vote for.	F. Dark horse
7. Joe and Pete went to anger management classes together.	G. In hot water

8. Olga showed Bob everything he needed to know to manage the store.	H. Sitting on the fence
Susan had a slight headache and really wasn't feeling well.	I. Chill out
Joyce thought the two masked men running down the alley were criminals.	J. Learn the ropes
11. The two young men did not call the police when they saw the old man being robbed.	K. Under the weather
Sam didn't know if he would get the job.	L. Something is fishy
13. Athletes and politicians enjoy talking about their accomplishments.	M. Turn a blind eye
14. Janice got all wet in the tropical storm.	N. Up in the air

INDEX OF IDIOMS AND EXPRESSIONS

(Expressions in bold are featured in this book)

A

Apple of his eye – the center of his affections.

B

Bad egg – a bad person; a person who brings trouble.

Be cool – relax; take it easy; do not be angry.

Between a rock and a hard place – having to pick one of two bad choices.

Big cheese – the most important person.

Black sheep of the family – a person whom others in the family disapprove of.

Breadwinner – the main money earner in a family.

Brings home the bacon – earns money to support a family.

Broad shoulders – the ability to assume responsibility.

Brush someone off – ignore someone; drop someone's acquaintance.

Bucket list – a list of actions one wants to do someday.

Bump up – make more interesting.

C

Chicken – a person who is afraid to fight or take action.

Chill out – be cool; relax with friends; lose one's anger.

Cold shoulder – ignore someone.

Cost an arm and a leg – is very expensive.

Couch potato – an inactive person who watches television for many hours.

Cow – a person who is fat and slow.

Cream of the crop – the best of the best.

D

Dark horse – a little-known person or thing that emerges to prominence.

Down in the dumps – feeling sad; depressed.

E

Easy as pie – very simple.

Eat his words – admit he was wrong about something he said.

Elbow room – enough space to feel comfortable.

Elephant in the room – an embarrassing topic that everyone is aware of, and no one wants to talk about.

Eyes on the prize – focused on a goal.

F

Fair-weather friend – a person who is there only when the situation is easy.

Feeling blue – feeling sad for a period of time.

Finger in a lot of pies – has too many activities, jobs, or projects.

Flying under the radar – trying not to be noticed.

Foot in his mouth – saying something that should not have been said.

Fox – a person who is sly or sneaky.

Fox – a person who is attractive and sexy.

G

Gets my goat – irritates me; bothers me.

Green – without experience; untested.

Green – interested in protecting nature.

Green with envy – jealous of another's possessions or achievements.

H

Having the inside track – having information or connections that are not generally known.

Hot – spicy.

Hot – popular; selling well.

Hot – sexy.

Hot hand – on a hot streak; making a large number of baskets in a row in basketball.

Hot potato – a subject so upsetting that people try to avoid talking about it.

Hot streak – on a roll; scoring a number of points in a row.

Hot under the collar – upset; angry.

Hotshot – a person who thinks he's great and shows off.

I

I smell a rat – I feel something is wrong; I am suspicious.

In a jam – in trouble.

In a nutshell – the main points briefly stated.

In a pickle – in trouble.

In hot water – in trouble.

In the black – making a profit in business.

In the doghouse – in trouble.

In the red – losing money in business.

It was a walk in the park – it was easy.

It's a breeze – it's easy.

J

Just deserts – when someone gets the reward or punishment that he or she deserves.

K

Kick the bucket – die.

L

Learn the ropes – learn important information or job skills.

Let the cat out of the bag – told something that was supposed to have been kept secret.

Let's talk turkey – talk realistically; make a deal.

Like a bull in a china shop – awkward; likely to break something; destructive.

Like a fish out of water – feeling uncomfortable in a situation.

M

Monkey around – to mess around; to waste time.

N

No leg to stand on – no facts in support of one's statement.

O

Out of the blue – a surprising occurrence.

Out of the loop – uninformed; not included.

Out of your mind – crazy; foolish; outrageous.

Out on a limb – taking a chance or risk; making a hazardous prediction.

P

Pain in the neck – a bother; a pest.

Peach – a wonderful person.

Pie in the sky – unrealistic; not practical; not likely to happen.

Piece of cake – easy.

Pig – a person who is dirty, messy, disgusting.

Play it by ear – decide at the time what to do; not pre-planned; spontaneous.

Pulling my leg – teasing me.

Q

Quick and dirty – a job done very fast, but not done with high-quality workmanship.

R

Raining cats and dogs – a downpour; very heavy rain.

Rat – a person who is untrustworthy; one who betrays friends or coworkers.

S

See red – be angry.

Sell like hot cakes – popular; selling a large number of items very quickly.

Sitting on the fence – undecided.

Smells fishy – is suspicious; seems wrong.

Snake – a person who is sneaky and untrustworthy.

Snow job – flattery in the hope of gaining something; when someone praises another person to trick or cheat them.

Something is fishy – feels wrong; seems suspicious.

Soup up – make something more powerful.

Spice up – make something more interesting or exciting.

Spill the beans – tell something you should not tell anyone.

Stick in the mud – a person who is unavailable for fun activities.

Sticks her nose in – gets in other people's personal business.

Straight from the horse's mouth – heard directly from a well-informed person.

Swallow your words – admit to others that what you said was wrong.

Swallow your pride – admit to others that you were wrong.

T

Take with a grain of salt – be wary; don't believe all of what was said.

Thick-skinned – not bothered by criticism.

Thin-skinned – too sensitive to correction or criticism.

Tickled pink – very pleased.

Tiger – a real fighter; tough.

Toot your own horn – brag about yourself.

Treating with kid gloves – being very careful with someone.

Turkey – a foolish person.

Turns a blind eye – ignores; pretends not to see.

Turns a deaf ear – ignores; pretends not to hear.

U

Under the weather – not feeling as well as usual.

Underdog – a competitor who is not expected to win.

Up in the air – undecided.

Up the creek – in a hard situation; having problems.

Up the creek without a paddle – in a very difficult situation.

V

Vicious circle – a series of events that keeps getting worse and worse.

W

Walking on eggshells – being very careful around someone.

Wet behind the ears – inexperienced.

X

X marks the spot – this is the exact spot.

Y

Yellow – Someone who is cowardly; afraid to fight.

Z

Zero in on – to aim or focus directly on someone or something.

ANSWER KEY

UNIT ONE: LET'S GET STARTED

Lesson 1: It's a Breeze

Practice 1: cashier, scan, breeze

Lesson 2: Learn the Ropes

Practice 1: tip, restaurant, salary

Lesson 3: Toot Your Own Horn

Practice 2: boxer, uncomfortable, toot

Lesson 4: Bucket List

Practice 1: Statue of Liberty, bucket, dream

UNIT TWO: FOOD IDIOMS

Lesson 5: A Piece of Cake

Practice 1: prepare, upcoming, interview

Lesson 6: In a Pickle

Practice 1: traveling salesman, angry, pickle

Practice 2: yes, no, no, yes

Lesson 7: A Peach

Practice 1: rare, wonderful, pets

Lesson 8: Eat His Words

Practice 1: bonus, final, compete

Lesson 9: Something Is Fishy

Practice 1: contract, suspicious, economy

Practice 2: yes, yes, yes

Lesson 10: Couch Potato

Practice 1: glued, sluggish, couch

Lesson 11: Walking on Eggshells

Practice 1: tense, unpleasantness, tease

Lesson 12: Pie in the Sky

Practice 1: assignments, counselor, unrealistic

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: REVIEW OF UNIT TWO

Matching: 1E, 2C, 3D, 4B, 5A, 6F

UNIT THREE: BODY LANGUAGE

Lesson 13: A Pain in the Neck

Practice 1: neighbor, strict, pest

Practice 2: father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law.

Lesson 14: Pulling My Leg

Practice 1: lottery, tricks, serious

Lesson 15: Turns a Blind Eye

Practice 1: diamond, blind, bribes

Practice 2: yes, yes, no, yes

Lesson 16: Wet Behind the Ears

Practice 1: wages, suburbs, minimum

Lesson 17: Thin-Skinned

Practice 1: lawyer, correction, retired

Practice 2: yes, no, no, no, yes

Lesson 18: Out of Your Mind

Practice 1: mall, price, bored

BODY BUILDING: REVIEW OF UNIT THREE

Matching: 1E, 2G, 3B, 4A, 5H, 6C, 7D, 8F, 9I

UNIT FOUR: ANIMAL WISDOM

Lesson 19: Let the Cat out of the Bag

Practice 1: birthday, bag, boss

Lesson 20: Gets My Goat

Practice 1: goat, customer, deliveries

Lesson 21: Elephant in the Room

Practice 1: embarrassing, elephant, burned

Lesson 22: Dark Horse

Practice 1: champion, plot, candidate

Lesson 23: Like a Fish out of Water

Practice 1: situation, uncomfortable, huge

Lesson 24: Let's Talk Turkey

Practice 1: advise, lease, sales pitch

ANIMAL WISDOM: REVIEW OF UNIT FOUR

Matching: 1D, 2B, 3C, 4A, 5E

UNIT FIVE: COLORFUL LANGUAGE

Lesson 25: In the Black

Practice 1: staff, ads, hardware

Lesson 26: Feeling Blue

Practice 1: expresses, sad, hoped

Lesson 27: See Red

Practice 1: principal, behave, playground

Lesson 28: Green with Envy

Practice 1: treats and presents, content, envy

Lesson 29: Out of the Blue

Practice 1: parents, dozen, lose touch

Lesson 30: Tickled Pink

Practice 1: local, future, apartment

DO YOU KNOW YOUR COLORS?

pink, black, red, black, red, purple, white, blue, pink, green, green

COLORFUL COMMENTS: REVIEW OF UNIT FIVE

Matching: 1C, 2F, 3A, 4B, 5D, 6E

UNIT SIX: HOW'S THE WEATHER?

Lesson 31: Under the Weather

Practice 1: yesterday, crisis, cheerful

Lesson 32: Raining Cats and Dogs

Practice 1: legal, soaked, free

Practice 2: somewhere, smartphone, something, handbag, raincoat, underground, basketball, pancake, snowball, dollhouse, eyeglasses, washrag, earring, fingernail, childbirth, bookstore, racehorse, eyeball

Lesson 33: Fair-Weather Friend

Practice 1: chatting, fatal, betrayed

Lesson 34: Chill Out/Be Cool

Practice 1: relax, furious, shift

Lesson 35: In Hot Water

Practice 1: play, noisy, buddies

WEATHER REPORT: REVIEW OF UNIT SIX

Matching: 1F, 2G, 3A, 4E, 5C, 6D, 7B

UNIT SEVEN: WHERE ARE YOU?

Lesson 36: Sitting on the Fence

Practice 1: fence, committed, election

Lesson 37: Out on a Limb

Practice 2: record, limb, risk

Lesson 38: Up in the Air

Practice 1: grounded, vague, vision

Lesson 39: Down in the Dumps

Practice 1: hospital, ruined, stadium

Lesson 40: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Practice 1: citizen, option, trapped

Lesson 41: Out of the Loop

Practice 1: memo, division, executive

Practice 2: gym, phone, TV, auto, bike

Lesson 42: Flying Under the Radar

Practice 1: radar, director, attention

HERE YOU ARE: REVIEW OF UNIT SEVEN

Matching: 1E, 2G, 3C, 4B, 5D, 6A, 7F

FINAL REVIEW: DO YOU REALLY KNOW YOUR IDIOMS?

Matching: 1B, 2E, 3F, 4D, 5G, 6H, 7I, 8J, 9K, 10L, 11M, 12N, 13C, 14A

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

TONI ABERSON has written educational books since retiring from teaching English to high school and college students and supervising high school English teachers for 35 years. Aberson (M.A., English; M.A., Psychology and Religion) believes that a lively classroom is the optimal learning environment.

“If people are thinking, sharing, and laughing, then they’re learning,” notes Aberson, a co-author of *Compelling American Conversations: Questions and Quotations for Intermediate English Language Learners*. “The mere fact that students are in an English classroom attests to their courage and their determination to learn.”

“Both high school and adult English students bring a wealth of interesting experiences with them,” continues Aberson. “They bring the world into the classroom. The challenge for English teachers is to put students at ease and encourage them to practice English. What better way than to ask students about their lives? I love teaching English.”

Aberson has co-authored three Chimayo Press books for adult English language learners. Her first book, *Compelling Conversations: Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics*, a fluency-focused advanced English as Second Language (ESL) textbook, has been used by English learners, teachers, and tutors in over 50 countries. This book, *It’s A Breeze: 42 Lively English Lessons on American Idioms*, reflects her focus on real-life expressions and situations – and the importance of authentic communication for teenagers, college students, and working adults.

“The key in a classroom is engagement,” notes Aberson, a member of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). “People become interested and excited when they’re learning about the daily stuff of life. When students are thinking and writing and talking about their real lives – food, jobs, family, homes, sports, movies – that’s when students learn the language.”

“Learning English is not easy,” continues Aberson. “It can be a real challenge, but it can also be fun and stimulating. That’s what I’m aiming for – the real life and the fun that stimulates ESL students so they want to learn more and share their experiences. Everybody wants to jump in, and learning English becomes a breeze.”

Aberson lives in Southern California, where she loves to garden and spend as much time as possible on the beach.

ERIC H. ROTH (editor) teaches international students the pleasures of writing and speaking English at the University of Southern California. For the last twenty years, he has taught English to high school, community college, and university students. Roth co-authored the *Compelling Conversations* series of fluency-focused ESL textbooks with Aberson and has taught in France, Spain, and Vietnam. He has also given CATESOL and TESOL presentations on effective, communicative teaching methods. *It's a Breeze* is his fourth Chimayo Press publication.

HAL BOGOTCH (co-editor) teaches English as a Second Language at Nestlé in Glendale, California. He is a proud graduate of U.C. Berkeley. Since 1996, Bogotch has taught ESL to adult immigrants and international high school students. He also works as a Los Angeles tour guide with Another Side Tours.

[Bogotch](#) is pleased to have co-written and edited, *Compelling American Conversations*, the first widely published book to carry his name. As a poet, Bogotch has contributed to periodicals such as Rattle, Campus Circle, and the Free Venice Beachhead.

[Bogotch](#) is married to award-winning children’s book author/illustrator, [Laura Lacámara](#). Laura and Hal live in southern California with their daughter and a terrier mix.

ABOUT THIS BOOK AND CHIMAYO PRESS

It's a Breeze: 42 Lively English Lessons on American Idioms explicitly emphasizes American phrases in short, self-contained lessons.

The primary audience is newcomers to the United States as well as recent and not-so-recent immigrants, who may be studying at an American high school, adult school, community college, or university. Speaking English remains the passport to a better life, and understanding and using American idioms remain essential to clearly communicating with native speakers. Unfortunately, idioms are often confusing and are usually only taught at the most advanced levels. Many lower-level English language learners often find idioms particularly difficult. This volume clearly introduces common American idioms in a comfortable manner with short reading, writing, and speaking exercises.

Intended as a supplemental textbook for beginning high or intermediate low English language learners, *It's a Breeze* can add a vital linguistic element to traditional life skills curricula for high school, adult, and community college classes. English teachers and private tutors can also use the book as a textbook for an occasional idioms class. Literacy programs and Intensive English programs can use it as a high/low text for their students.

All immigrants deserve a quality education that allows them to express themselves, develop their English language skills, and deepen their critical thinking skills. Classrooms can also provide sanctuary for students who feel isolated and stressed. This book provides students the words and phrases to share their experiences in vivid English. It also attempts to fill in common gaps between student interests and the sometimes narrow focus of standardized tests.

The founders of Chimayo Press, an independent publishing company, believe that many language programs too often emphasize listening skills over speaking skills. Too often language programs underestimate the academic, social, and professional abilities of many American immigrants.

Therefore, we deliberately chose to emphasize speaking skills and fluency in all of our books for English language learners. Our first book, *Compelling Conversations: Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics*, has been used in English classrooms in over 50 countries. Since 2007, Chimayo Press has created high-quality niche books. The series continued with *Compelling American Conversations: Questions and Quotations for Intermediate American English Language Learners* in 2012. *It's a Breeze* is our fourth title.

Please visit www.ChimayoPress.com to learn more and find our latest books for English language learners.

All Chimayo Press titles include both practical topics and philosophical questions, because American immigrants deserve the same level of sophisticated materials that international English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students enjoy in the stronger international schools. We hope American English language learners begin asking more questions, speak more in their workplaces, and create their own compelling conversations – across the globe.

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