Idioms and Phrasal Verbs

Standard difficulty · 20 questions · 40 marks · Time: 36 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: ____ / 40

Write full answers in Sections B and C. Answers are on the last page — try every question first!

Section A — Choose the correct answer — 8 × 1 = 8 marks

1. What does the idiom “hit the books” mean?
   (a) to be upset about something that cannot be changed
   (b) to reveal a secret by mistake
   (c) someone uncomfortable in a new place
   (d) to start studying hard

2. What does the idiom “hit the nail on the head” mean?
   (a) to describe exactly what is wrong or right
   (b) to pretend not to notice
   (c) someone uncomfortable in a new place
   (d) in the same difficult situation

3. What does the idiom “a dime a dozen” mean?
   (a) very rarely
   (b) to pretend not to notice
   (c) very common and of little value
   (d) to be upset about something that cannot be changed

4. What does the idiom “back to square one” mean?
   (a) to take on more than one can manage
   (b) something that seems bad but turns out good
   (c) back to the start after a failure
   (d) a person someone loves very much

5. What does the phrasal verb “keep up with” mean in this sentence? It is hard to keep up with the latest phones.
   (a) to stay level with
   (b) to start or establish
   (c) to draw attention to
   (d) to experience something difficult; to examine

6. What does the phrasal verb “back out” mean in this sentence? He backed out of the deal at the last minute.
   (a) to withdraw from a promise or deal
   (b) to start or establish
   (c) to tolerate
   (d) to investigate

7. What does the phrasal verb “look into” mean in this sentence? The committee will look into the complaint.

(a) to investigate

(b) to raise a child; to mention a subject

(c) to experience something difficult; to examine

(d) to improve a skill one has not used for a while

8. What does the phrasal verb “live up to” mean in this sentence? The film did not live up to the hype.

(a) to postpone

(b) to have no more of something

(c) to be as good as expected

(d) to think one is better than someone

Section B — Short answer — 8 × 2 = 16 marks

9. Explain the idiom in each sentence: (a) We are all in the same boat with this tough homework. (b) The match is lost; there is no use crying over spilt milk.

10. Explain the idiom in each sentence: (a) Come on, spill the beans: who won the prize? (b) The youngest grandson is the apple of his grandmother's eye.

11. Explain the idiom in each sentence: (a) He will clean his room when pigs fly. (b) Stop beating around the bush and tell me what happened.

12. Explain the idiom in each sentence: (a) Before the board exams, she burnt the midnight oil every day. (b) Please keep an eye on my bag while I buy the tickets.

13. Replace the phrasal verb in each sentence with a word or phrase of the same meaning: (a) I need to brush up on my French before the trip. (b) Hold on, I will get my keys.

14. Replace the phrasal verb in each sentence with a word or phrase of the same meaning: (a) It took her weeks to get over the flu. (b) The students carried out the experiment carefully.

15. Replace the phrasal verb in each sentence with a word or phrase of the same meaning: (a) He decided to give up sugar for a month. (b) We ran out of milk this morning.

16. Replace the phrasal verb in each sentence with a word or phrase of the same meaning: (a) The farmers went through a hard year. (b) The teacher pointed out the errors in my essay.

Section C — Longer answers — 4 × 4 = 16 marks

17. Use each idiom in a sentence of your own: “add fuel to the fire”, “get cold feet”, “see eye to eye”.

18. Use each idiom in a sentence of your own: “bite off more than one can chew”, “a piece of cake”, “call it a day”.

19. Match each phrasal verb with its meaning: write i, ii, iii or iv for each.
(a) make up for (b) brush up on (c) go through (d) stand by
(i) to experience something difficult; to examine
(ii) to improve a skill one has not used for a while
(iii) to support; to be ready
(iv) to compensate for

20. Match each phrasal verb with its meaning: write i, ii, iii or iv for each.
(a) come up with (b) put off (c) live up to (d) set up
(i) to postpone
(ii) to think of an idea or plan
(iii) to start or establish
(iv) to be as good as expected

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Answer key

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Q	Answer	Working
1	(d) to start studying hard	—
2	(a) to describe exactly what is wrong or right	—
3	(c) very common and of little value	—
4	(c) back to the start after a failure	—
5	(a) to stay level with	—
6	(a) to withdraw from a promise or deal	—
7	(a) to investigate	—
8	(c) to be as good as expected	—
9	(a) in the same boat: in the same difficult situation (b) cry over spilt milk: to be upset about something that cannot be changed	—
10	(a) spill the beans: to tell people a secret (b) the apple of one's eye: a person someone loves very much	—
11	(a) when pigs fly: never (b) beat around the bush: to avoid saying something directly	—
12	(a) burn the midnight oil: to work or study late into the night (b) keep an eye on: to watch carefully	—
13	(a) brush up on: to improve a skill one has not used for a while (b) hold on: to wait	—
14	(a) get over: to recover from (b) carry out: to do or complete a task	—
15	(a) give up: to stop trying or stop a habit (b) run out of: to have no more of something	—
16	(a) go through: to experience something difficult; to examine (b) point out: to draw attention to	—
17	Sample: His rude reply only added fuel to the fire. He got cold feet just before the stage performance. The two brothers do not see eye to eye on cricket.	Any sentence that uses the idiom with its correct meaning.

Q	Answer	Working
18	**Sample: By joining four clubs, she bit off more than she could chew. The spelling test was a piece of cake for Asha. After ten hours of practice, the band decided to call it a day.**	Any sentence that uses the idiom with its correct meaning.
19	**(a) iv (b) ii (c) i (d) iii**	—
20	**(a) ii (b) i (c) iv (d) iii**	—