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 “spill the beans” mean?
   (a) to describe exactly what is wrong or right
   (b) to tell people a secret
   (c) to watch carefully
   (d) to be very expensive

2. What does the idiom “in the same boat” mean?
   (a) an achievement to be proud of
   (b) to become nervous and back out
   (c) in the same difficult situation
   (d) to take on more than one can manage

3. What does the idiom “bury the hatchet” mean?
   (a) to wait and be patient
   (b) to stop quarrelling and make peace
   (c) something that misleads or distracts
   (d) to have just enough money to live on

4. What does the idiom “to sit on the fence” mean?
   (a) to give up
   (b) to make a bad situation worse
   (c) to avoid choosing a side
   (d) to get the most attention and praise

5. What does the phrasal verb “live up to” mean in this sentence? The film did not live up to the hype.
   (a) to look or behave like an older relative
   (b) to stay level with
   (c) to support; to be ready
   (d) to be as good as expected

6. What does the phrasal verb “look after” mean in this sentence? Who will look after the dog while we travel?
   (a) to take care of
   (b) to recover from
   (c) to draw attention to
   (d) to tolerate

7. 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 compensate for
   (c) to get rid of; to abolish
   (d) to have no more of something

8. What does the phrasal verb “get over” mean in this sentence? It took her weeks to get over the flu.
   (a) to experience something difficult; to examine
   (b) to get rid of; to abolish
   (c) to recover from
   (d) to fade gradually

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

9. Explain the idiom in each sentence: (a) Their quarrel over the seat was a storm in a teacup. (b) Priya let the cat out of the bag about the surprise party.

10. Explain the idiom in each sentence: (a) The two brothers do not see eye to eye on cricket. (b) In the debate club, I play devil's advocate to sharpen our points.

11. Explain the idiom in each sentence: (a) The power cut during the exam was the last straw. (b) Hold your horses; the results are not out yet.

12. Explain the idiom in each sentence: (a) In the big city, the village boy felt like a fish out of water. (b) Many brands jumped on the bandwagon of eco-friendly packaging.

13. Replace the phrasal verb in each sentence with a word or phrase of the same meaning: (a) The two friends fell out over a cricket bat. (b) The organisers called off the concert.

14. Replace the phrasal verb in each sentence with a word or phrase of the same meaning: (a) Hold on, I will get my keys. (b) The doctor ruled out a fracture.

15. Replace the phrasal verb in each sentence with a word or phrase of the same meaning: (a) She brought up the question of fees at the meeting. (b) Never look down on people who do manual work.

16. Replace the phrasal verb in each sentence with a word or phrase of the same meaning: (a) We ran out of milk this morning. (b) The committee will look into the complaint.

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

17. Use each idiom in a sentence of your own: “to bell the cat”, “to rest on one's laurels”, “at the eleventh hour”.

18. Use each idiom in a sentence of your own: “miss the boat”, “by the skin of one's teeth”, “get cold feet”.

19. Match each phrasal verb with its meaning: write i, ii, iii or iv for each.
(a) live up to (b) come across (c) point out (d) break down
(i) to draw attention to
(ii) to find by chance
(iii) to stop working; to lose control of one's feelings
(iv) to be as good as expected

20. Match each phrasal verb with its meaning: write i, ii, iii or iv for each.
(a) wear off (b) hold on (c) break down (d) look down on
(i) to think one is better than someone
(ii) to stop working; to lose control of one's feelings
(iii) to fade gradually
(iv) to wait

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Answer key

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Q	Answer	Working
1	(b) to tell people a secret	—
2	(c) in the same difficult situation	—
3	(b) to stop quarrelling and make peace	—
4	(c) to avoid choosing a side	—
5	(d) to be as good as expected	—
6	(a) to take care of	—
7	(a) to stay level with	—
8	(c) to recover from	—
9	(a) a storm in a teacup: a lot of anger about something unimportant (b) let the cat out of the bag: to reveal a secret by mistake	—
10	(a) see eye to eye: to agree with someone (b) play devil's advocate: to argue the other side to test an idea	—
11	(a) the last straw: the final problem that makes you lose patience (b) hold one's horses: to wait and be patient	—
12	(a) a fish out of water: someone uncomfortable in a new place (b) jump on the bandwagon: to join something because it is popular	—
13	(a) fall out: to quarrel (b) call off: to cancel	—
14	(a) hold on: to wait (b) rule out: to exclude as a possibility	—
15	(a) bring up: to raise a child; to mention a subject (b) look down on: to think one is better than someone	—
16	(a) run out of: to have no more of something (b) look into: to investigate	—
17	Sample: Who will bell the cat and complain to the manager? After winning once, the team cannot rest on its laurels. The deal was signed at the eleventh hour.	Any sentence that uses the idiom with its correct meaning.
18	Sample: He applied too late and missed the boat. He passed the exam	Any sentence that uses the idiom with its correct meaning.

Q	Answer	Working
	by the skin of his teeth. He got cold feet just before the stage performance.	
19	**(a) iv (b) ii (c) i (d) iii**	—
20	**(a) iii (b) iv (c) ii (d) i**	—