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 “cut corners” mean?
   (a) at the last possible moment
   (b) to join something because it is popular
   (c) to accept the results of one's actions
   (d) to do something badly to save time or money

2. What does the idiom “a red herring” mean?
   (a) something that misleads or distracts
   (b) to lose one's temper suddenly
   (c) to accept the results of one's actions
   (d) to take on a risky task for the group

3. What does the idiom “to rest on one's laurels” mean?
   (a) to have an advantage
   (b) to lose one's temper suddenly
   (c) to stop trying after an early success
   (d) to be in a risky situation

4. What does the idiom “to sit on the fence” mean?
   (a) to try every possible way
   (b) to feel bitter about past unfair treatment
   (c) to avoid choosing a side
   (d) something with both good and bad effects

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) Who will bell the cat and complain to the manager? (b) With home support, our team had the upper hand.

10. Explain the idiom in each sentence: (a) He applied too late and missed the boat. (b) Social media is a double-edged sword.

11. Explain the idiom in each sentence: (a) Winning the state quiz was a feather in her cap. (b) The council only paid lip service to clean streets.

12. Explain the idiom in each sentence: (a) The boxer threw in the towel in the fifth round. (b) After two warnings, he was on thin ice with the principal.

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: “to make ends meet”, “to steal the show”, “to take with a pinch of salt”.

18. Use each idiom in a sentence of your own: “to leave no stone unturned”, “a wild goose chase”, “the last straw”.

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

Want another sheet on this chapter? In the Ambiful Worksheets app every sheet is new, with its answer key, and your child never gets the same question twice.
Scan the code to get the free app, or open **worksheets.ambiful.com/get**

Answer key

Idioms and Phrasal Verbs · AW-12E-IDM-2026-V1 · For parents — fold back or tear off before handing the sheet to your child.

Q	Answer	Working
1	(d) to do something badly to save time or money	—
2	(a) something that misleads or distracts	—
3	(c) to stop trying after an early success	—
4	(c) to avoid choosing a side	—
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) to bell the cat: to take on a risky task for the group (b) to have the upper hand: to have an advantage	—
10	(a) miss the boat: to lose a chance by being too late (b) a double-edged sword: something with both good and bad effects	—
11	(a) a feather in one's cap: an achievement to be proud of (b) to pay lip service: to say you support something without acting on it	—
12	(a) to throw in the towel: to give up (b) to be on thin ice: to be in a risky situation	—
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	—

Q	Answer	Working
17	**Sample: Many families struggle to make ends meet. The youngest dancer stole the show. Take online rumours with a pinch of salt.**	Any sentence that uses the idiom with its correct meaning.
18	**Sample: The police left no stone unturned to find the child. Looking for the old shop turned out to be a wild goose chase. The power cut during the exam was the last straw.**	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**	—