

## 5.6 VOCABULARY

### IDIOMS

An idiom is an expression whose meaning is different from the meaning of its constituent words. Knowledge of idioms is an important part of comprehension of the English language. Below is a list of some commonly used idioms in English with their meanings and usage.

1. A.B.C. (basic principles): I do not know the A.B.C. of music.
2. Acid Test (hard test): Appearance before the Joint Parliamentary committee, will be an acid test for the Prime Minister.
3. Between the devil and the deep sea (between two dangers or difficult situations): He is between the devil and the deep sea as to whether he should accept his invitation or not.
4. To bury the hatchet (to step hostilities): Let us bury the hatchet and live in peace.
5. To call in question (to doubt): Even Gandhiji's staunchest enemies could not call his honesty in question.
6. To eat a humble pie (to face a humiliating defeat) He had to eat a humble pie when he found his adversary extra powerful.
7. To cut a sorry figure (to be humiliated): He had to cut a sorry figure at the time of cross examination.
8. To eat one's words (to retract one's statement: One may have to eat one's words if one does not speak cautiously.
9. To receive with open arms (to give a warm welcome): The Prime Minister was received with open arms by the people.
10. To give a red-carpet reception (to give a warm reception): He got a red-carpet reception when he reached the town.
11. To turn a new leaf (to change the course of life): She has turned a new leaf in her life.
12. To take a leaf out of one's book (to learn some lesson): We should take a leaf out of the lives of great men.
13. A hard nut to crack (a baffling problem): The problem of Ram temple and Babri Masjid at Ayodhya is a hard nut to crack.
14. To turn a deaf ear to (to disregard): He turned a deaf ear to my advice.

15. To take to task (to rebuke): I took him to task for his mischief.
16. On the spur of the moment (suddenly): This idea struck me on the spur of the moment.
17. To let the sleeping dogs, lie (not to disturb): Let the sleeping dogs lie.
18. To play fast and loose (to say contradictory things): He is not a reliable person as he plays fast or by crook.
19. By hook or by crook (by means fair or foul): Most of the people try to achieve their object by hook or by crook.
20. Once in a blue moon (seldom): He visits this place once in a blue moon.
21. To all intents and purposes (virtually): Their marriage has broken to all intents and purposes.
22. In flesh and blood (in human form): The coming generations will wonder whether Gandhi ever lived in flesh and blood.
23. To make one's mark (to distinguish oneself): He has made his mark in the field of mathematics
24. Hall-mark (important characteristic): It is the hall-mark of a gentleman to be polite.
25. At one's wit's end (to be puzzled): He is at his wit's end and he does not know what to do in the matter.
26. To dance to one's tune (to follow): He always dances to his wife's tune.
27. To dance attendance upon (to play a subservient role): He dances attendance upon his wife in all matters.
28. To play second fiddle to (to play a subservient role): He plays second fiddle to what his wife says.
29. To steer clear of (to get rid of by evading): He has steered clear of all his difficulties.
30. Off and on (occasionally): He comes to this place off and on.
31. To put one's foot down (to take a firm stand): I never retrace my steps when once I put my foot down.
32. At one's fingers' ends (to remember thoroughly): all the poems in this book are at his fingers' ends.
33. To put a spoke in one's wheel (to check one's progress): He tried to put a spoke in my wheel but failed.

34. A man of parts (a learned man): G. K. Gokhale was a man of parts.
35. From hand to mouth (without any saving): The poor man is living from hand to mouth.
36. Milk of human kindness (mercy): Socrates was full of milk of human kindness for the common people.
37. To hold water (to stand the test of veracity): Your argument does not hold water.
38. Every inch (thoroughly): He is every inch a gentleman
39. To die by inches (to die a slow, painful death): The poor paralytic patient died by inches.
40. Hand and glove (very intimately): They are hand and glove in love with each other.
41. To burn the candle at both ends (to overtax one's energies): It is foolish to burn the candle at both ends.
42. By fits and starts (irregularly): He studies only by fits and starts.
43. Overhead and ears (completely): He is over head and ears in debt (or love).
44. To see red (to be angry): He saw red when he found his daughter in the company of Raghunath.
45. At issue (in dispute): First we should try to settle the point at issue.
46. Through and through (thoroughly): I shall stand by you through thick and thin.
47. In weal and woe (in joy and sorrow): The mother stands by her children in weal and woe.
48. A wet blanket (a discouraging factor): He is a wet blanket to all progressive schemes.
49. To throw cold water on (to discourage): He threw cold water on our scheme.
50. A snake in the grass (a hidden enemy): Beware of him; he is a snake in the grass.
51. All in all (everything; having full authority): He is all in all in this office.
52. To sit on the fence (to take a hesitant posture): He is sitting on the fence as regards the quarrel between the two neighbors.
53. To burn one's boats (to take a hesitant posture): He is sitting on the fence as regards the quarrel between the two neighbors.
54. To burn one's fingers (to get oneself in trouble): He has burnt his fingers by attacking a constable.
55. To hit the nail on the head (to say or do the right thing): I hit the nail on the head by telling his awful mistake.
56. To grease the palm of (to bribe): He got the loan sanctioned by greasing the palm of the

officer concerned.

57. To bid fair (to be promising): He bids fair to be a doctor.

58. To give oneself airs (to behave haughtily): It is foolish to give oneself airs.

59. In vogue (fashion): Loose clothes are in vogue these days.

60. The order of the day (prevailing fashion): Corruption has become the order of the day.

61. The gift of the gab (a talent for speaking impressively): Khrushchev was known for his gift of the gab.

62. In the good books of (to be having favour with): She is in the good books of her teachers.

63. To spread like wild fire (spread fast): Bad news spreads like wild fire.

64. To have one's own axe to grind (to have vested interest): He has his own axe to grind in this room.

66. At sixes and sevens (scattered, in disorder): His books were lying at sixes and sevens in the matter.

67. To get rid of (to have riddance): Try to get rid of him; he is a cheat.

68. To hit upon a plan (an idea): She hit upon a clever plan to dupe others.

69. Not worth his salt (worthless): If he fails even in his present attempt, he is not worth his salt.

70. Not worth the candle (of no value): this is toy of yours is not worth the candle.

**Choose the correct meaning of idiom from the following sentences.**

1. Students must be ----- when the teacher is teaching in class.

A) all ears B) all heart C) all arms

2. Govind----- his mother to buy him a new mobile phone.

A) done deal B) badgered C) add fuel to the flame

3. The movie "Indian" was a-----movie.

A) blockbuster B) block bust C) blocked

4. Janifer's parents were proud of her because she got-----in her IIT exam.

A) flying start B) fly colour C) flying colours

5.Chandran -----selling properties last year.

A) make a kill B) made a kill C) made a killing

6. Manikandan is now rich and successful. Hers is a ----- kind of story.

- A) rags to riches B) riches to rags C) rag to rich

7. Youngsters nowadays give up easily rather than to-----

- A) weathered the storm B) weather the storm C) weathering the storm

8. My----- always drives me crazy, she just can't keep quiet.

- A) backseat driver B) backseat person C) backseat girl

9. Parents must make sure their children do not mix with any ----- at school.

- A) good egg B) bad eggs C) bad egg

10. The party last night was great. Everyone had-----

- A) ball B) a ball C) a bowl

11. My mother has to ----- when my father is angry.

- A) bear the brunt B) bear the anger C) bear the cool

12. We must----- that living in a city is costlier than living in a village.

- A) mind B) bear in mind C) bore in mind

13. His brother is ----- for stealing motorbikes.

- A) behind bar B) behind house C) behind bars

14. Honest people will tell the truth but deceivers will try to-----

- A) bend the truth B) break the truth C) bending the truth

15. Javed has been ----- with grief since his wife passed away last week.

- A) beside oneself B) beside himself C) besides himself

16. The SPM English exam was a-----

- A) piece of pie B) piece of meat C) piece of cake

17. My mother's fruit cakes always sell like-----

- A) hot cake B) hot cakes C) hot books

18. Many young professionals are----- due to poor financial management.

A) saddled with debt B) sad with debt C) saddled with money

19. You can leave your son with my aunt, don't worry, he'll be in-----

A) safe hands B) safe house C) save hands

20. Some outsiders----- into our fruit party last night.

A) gate crash B) gate crashed C) gate painted

21. Two senior staff of the company ----- due to restructuring of the company.

A) get the axe B) got the axe C) get the hammer

22. Javid needs to ----- else he's going to lose the contract.

A) get his hat together B) get his money together C) get his act together

23. Vaishnavi is very annoying, she likes to-----

A) get in people's hair B) get in her hair C) getting in people's hair

24. My grandfather is 92 but he is still-----

A) active and hale B) heart and hale C) hale and hearty

25. Mrs. Fathima kept ----- on her toddler while preparing milk for him in the kitchen.

A) full a eye B) half an eye C) half an eyelid

26. Mr. Hari never fails to ----- the importance of studying hard on his children.

A) hammer home B) hammering C) hammered

27. Every night, our neighbors go ----- They argue non-stop every night.

A) hammer and tongs B) pots and pans C) hammer and tin

28. Poverty and crime go ----- in big cities all over the world.

A) hand in hand B) hand and foot C) hand on hand

29. Students nowadays----- teachers a ----- time with their undisciplined and rude behavior

A) gave...hard B) giving...hard C) give hard

30. Couch potatoes like to spend time in front of the -----

A) tv box B) color box C) idiot box

31. -----My husband is but master of none.

A) jack of all trades B) one jaws drop C) join the club

32. Some students ----- when they have to do public speaking.

A) juggle act B) get the jitters C) juggle frogs

33. Vincent-----when he passed his driving test.

A) jumped to conclusion B) jumped the light C) jumped for joy

34. "We must not----- before we get all the facts," said the lawyer to his client.

A) jump to conclusions B) jump the light C) Jump for joy

35. Several people-----at the post office due to slow service and the long queue.

A) on their knees B) kicked up a fuss C) knew the score

36. Julie managed to-----everyone with her impeccable presentation.

A) knock the socks off B) know the score C) knuckle down

37. The economy crisis brought the country -----

A) to its knees B) to its head C) to its stop

38 If you want to do well in your exam then you will have to ----- to do some serious revision.

A) knuckle up B) knuckle on C) knuckle down

39. Most people give a ----- for not coming to work on time.

A) lame excused B) lame duck C) lame excuse

40.The annoyed teacher -----at her students for being noisy.

A) lashed on B) lashed out C) latched out

41.I might be broke but killing myself is the ----- right now.

A) last thing on my mind B) lashed out C) lame excuse

42. If Damodaran can't get any loan from the bank then he'll have to sell his car as a-----

A) lame duck B) last resort C) last word

43. Karthiga wore a funny looking hat to school and became the -----of her friends.

A) laugh up her sleeve B) laughing stock C) laughed it off

44. Children nowadays are stressed with school work; they need to play some games to-----

A) let off steam B) let up steam C) lie in

45. My uncle and aunty still fight like ----- although they have been married for 30 years.

A) a broken record B) cat and dog C) a scalded cat

46. I tried to explain to him about the mistake but it was like talking to a-----

A) brick wall B) live wire C) lame duck

47. Most poor families in the third world countries live from-----

A) hand to hand B) hand to mouth C) mouth to mouth

48. Vinoth's job requires him to travel a lot that he lives-----most of the time.

A) like thief in the night B) out of the suitcase C) a lie

49. Many families living in cities find it hard to -----

A) make cold calls B) make a go C) make ends meet

50. Fresh graduates have forgotten the importance of the minding their----- during job interviews.

A) P's and Q's B) two minds C) mind over matter

**B. Some idioms are given below together with their meanings. Choose the correct meaning.**

**If there is no correct meaning given, 'None of these' will be the answer.**

**1. To cry wolf**

A. To listen eagerly of idiom,

B. To give false alarm

C. To turn pale

D. To keep off starvation

E. None of these



**2. To make clean breast of**

- A. To gain prominence
- B. To praise oneself
- C. To confess without of reserve
- D. To destroy before it blooms
- E. None of these

**3. To end in smoke**

- A. To make completely understand
- B. To ruin oneself
- C. To excite great applause
- D. To overcome someone
- E. None of these

**4. To keeps one's temper**

- a. To become hungry
- b. To be in good mood
- c. To preserve one's energy
- d. To be aloof from
- e. None of these

**5. To be above board**

- A. To have a good height
- B. To be honest in any business deal
- C. They have no debts
- D. To try to be beautiful
- E. None of these

**6. To catch a tartar**

- A. To catch a dangerous person
- B. To meet with disaster
- C. To deal with a person who is more than one's match
- D. To trap wanted criminal with great difficulty
- E. None of these

**7. To put one's hand to plough**

- A. To take up agricultural farming
- B. To take a difficult task
- C. To get entangled into unnecessary things
- D. Take interest in technical work
- E. None of these

**8. To drive home**

- A. To find one's roots
- B. To return to place of rest
- C. Back to original position
- D. To emphasise
- E. None of these

**9. To pick holes**

- A. To find some reason to quarrel
- B. To destroy something
- C. To criticise someone
- D. To cut some part of an item
- E. None of these

**10 To have an axe to grind**

- A. A private end to serve
- B. To fail to arouse interest
- C. To work for both sides
- D. To have no results
- E. None of these

**11. To leave someone in the lurch**

- A. To come to compromise with someone
- B. Constant source of annoyance to someone
- C. To put someone at ease
- D. To desert someone in his difficulties

E. None of these

**12. To play second fiddle**

- A. To be happy, cheerful, and healthy
- B. To reduce importance of one's senior
- C. To support the role and view of another person
- D. To do back seat driving
- E. None of these

**13. To be the question**

- A. To refer to
- B. To take for granted
- C. To raise objections
- D. To be discussed
- E. None of these

**14. A black sheep**

- A. An unlucky
- B. A lucky person
- C. An ugly person
- D. A partner who takes no share of the profits
- E. None of these

**15. A man of straw**

- A. A man of no substance
- B. A very active person
- C. A worthy fellow
- D. An unreasonable person
- E. None of these

**16. To smell a rat**

- A. To see signs of plague epidemic
- B. To get bad smell of a bad dead rat
- C. To suspect foul dealings

D. To be in a bad mood

E. None of these

**17. To hit the nail right on the head**

A. To do the right thing

B. To destroy one's reputation

C. To announce one's fixed views

D. To teach someone a lesson

E. None of these

**18. To set one's face against**

A. To oppose with determination

B. To judge by appearance

C. To get out of difficulty

D. To look at one steadily

E. None of these

