

IELTS

Speaking Vocabulary Builder, Band 7 & 8



**Master Idioms, Phrasal Verbs,
Collocations, & Slang**

Jackie Bolen

IELTS Speaking Vocabulary Builder, Band 7 & 8:
Master Idioms, Phrasal Verbs, Collocations, &
Slang

Jackie Bolen

www.eslspeaking.org

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You might also be interested in these books (by Jackie Bolen):

- Advanced English Conversation Dialogues
- The Big Book of Phrasal Verbs in Use
- Short Stories in English for Intermediate Learners

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE IELTS SPEAKING TEST

The IELTS speaking test is the same, whether you choose the general or academic version of the test. It's face-to-face with a real person, as opposed to some other English proficiency tests where you speak into a voice recorder. However, each IELTS speaking test is recorded to ensure quality control.

The test takes 11-14 minutes and consists of 3 parts:

- 1. Part 1:** The first set consists of general questions about where you work, study or live. There will be two other question sets after that on personal topics such as clothing, holidays, food, etc. It takes 4-5 minutes and will consist of approximately 12 questions in total.
- 2. Part 2:** Speaking for 1-2 minutes about a topic that will be given. You have 1 minute of preparation time. There may be one follow-up question.
- 3. Part 3:** A 4-5 minute discussion that goes into greater depth about the topic from part 2. The examiner has freedom to ask follow-up questions based on your answers. The discussion will be about general ideas and not personal ones (like in part 1).

The speaking and listening portions of the test are the same, whether you choose the general or academic version of it. It's the reading and writing that are different. Be sure to check closely which test is required for whatever purpose you're taking the test for. The general test is usually required for immigration purposes while the academic one is often required for college entrance.

HOW IS THE IELTS SPEAKING TEST GRADED?

You will be graded on four things:

- 1. Fluency and coherence:** How quickly you speak, without pauses or repeating yourself. Is the previous thought connected to the next one and how do you finish off what you're saying?
- 2. Lexical resources (vocabulary):** To score at the band 7 level, or above, you'll need to be able to speak about all the topics on the test with precision, as well as use things like collocations (words that occur together more often than by random chance), idioms, slang, and phrasal verbs. This book will focus on helping you with this!
- 3. Grammatical range and accuracy:** To score at the highest levels, you'll need to be able to form a variety of simple and complex sentences accurately. The keys are to use a variety of sentence types and to make few errors.
- 4. Pronunciation:** You'll need to be able to be understood very easily, without any effort on the part of the examiner. Plus, you'll have to put emphasize on the correct words within a sentence and also within a longer speaking turn.

TIPS FOR SCORING A BAND 7-8

For most proficient English speakers, getting a band 7 or 8 on the IELTS speaking test is a very achievable goal. Here are a few tips for getting there!

- One of the keys is striking a balance between giving enough detail in your answers to develop topics fully and not talking too much. The examiner has a prescribed set of questions that they need to get through within a strict time limit. Pause when you're done with your thought. The examiner will ask another question.
- Don't feel the need to keep talking, and talking, and talking, and talking. This is not how this test works and you will not get a higher score just because you are able to talk endlessly. This can actually hurt you if you begin to repeat yourself.
- Don't repeat yourself but do connect the things you say in an organized way with the use of discourse markers: as I previously mentioned, firstly, after that, finally, etc.
- Being able to paraphrase and summarize things is quite important for the test. Aim for a balance between giving some details and also giving a summary or overview of things.
- Do NOT attempt to memorize anything for this test. You will get penalized very heavily for this and it is a waste of time. There are so many questions each year that even if you were to find out some of them, it's impossible to memorize that many answers.
- Use idioms, phrasal verbs, slang (appropriate!), collocations, etc. Not using idiomatic language will make it difficult to score above a Band 6.
- Aim to use precise words to describe something, instead of words like “thing, stuff, like that.” This shows that you don't have a large

vocabulary, or can't access it when needed. Avoid filler words that don't have any meaning.

- It's easy to repeat words as a kind of filler (the author of this book says, “like” way too much!) when speaking. However, this should be avoided. Look on Google for some sample IELTS speaking test questions and then record yourself answering them to see if there are words that you use too often. Like is the most common one of these kinds of words but there are lots more.
- Use a mix of complex and simple sentences. Even if you use simple sentences perfectly, it will make it difficult to score above a Band 5.
- Finish off your thoughts in an appropriate way. Ending most sentences with: like that, that's why, that's it, or something similar will make it difficult to score above a band 6.
- Show your personality. Emphasize key things in what you're saying and don't be scared to show your opinion about something. The examiner is only grading you on your English ability, not on your opinions.

HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO SCORE BAND 9?

It's quite difficult (though not impossible) for non-native English speakers to achieve a band 9 on the IELTS speaking test. There are people who have been learning English as a second language (most Europeans for example) since they were a young child and they also have a first language that is similar to English. For these people, it may be achievable.

Or, there are some people who moved to an English speaking country when they were young who may be able to get this score. Or, those who did a large part of their education in English. However, being a native English speaker doesn't automatically mean that you'll be able to get a 9. It's really not that easy to do! To do that, you'll also need to do the following:

- Develop topics fully and at length.
- Connect thoughts, without repetition.
- Only have pauses that are related to forming an opinion about something, for example and not searching for a word.
- Use a large range of very precise language, including things like idioms.
- Speak fluently, essentially without grammatical errors.
- Be understood easily, without any effort on the part of the examiner.
- Avoid the use of filler words.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is designed to help you build a bigger vocabulary, especially idioms, phrasal verbs, slang and collocations. If you want to score higher than a band 6, it will be necessary to use this kind of language and your examiner will be specifically listening for it. This will allow you to score in the higher bands for the lexical resources section of the scoring.

To use this book, I recommend doing one lesson per day. There are 40 lessons: 5 each of a general dialogue, idioms, phrasal verbs, slang and collocations. Do the practice exercises and try not to cheat by looking at the answers!

Use a vocabulary notebook and be sure to write down any new words that you learn. Review them frequently and consider making some flashcards. Push yourself to use this new vocabulary when speaking and see if you can find them when watching English TV or movies, or reading.

Make sure you know how to pronounce any new word that you learn. Look on YouTube or Google, “How to say _____” to find out. If you have a large vocabulary, you'll score high on this section of the test but it won't help you that much if you can't pronounce them! You'll score lower on the fourth section, pronunciation.

DIALOGUE 1: WASTING TIME

Kim and Sally are talking about summer vacation plans.

Kim: What are you up to **this summer vacation**?

Sally: Oh, every summer, we head to our cabin at Lake Minnewanka.

Kim: Wow! I didn't know you had a cabin there.

Sally: Yeah, we bought it **5 years ago** and **since then**, have spent **as much time as possible** there. It's the perfect place for **wasting time**, doing nothing.

Kim: Well, you need to make time to relax, right? That sounds **idyllic**.

Sally: Definitely.

Kim: When are you heading out?

Sally: Actually, the **day after tomorrow**. I'm **under the gun** for packing!

Kim: Okay, have an awesome trip! Don't forget about your old friends **slaving away** at work.

Vocabulary

this summer vacation: Usually refers to time off that people have from school or work during July or August (in North America).

5 years ago: Now is 2021. 5 years ago = 2016.

since then: After a certain point in the past.

as much time as possible: The maximum amount, taking into account restrictions like school or work.

wasting time: Not doing much.

idyllic: Tranquil; peaceful.

day after tomorrow: In 2 days. For example, today is Monday. Day after tomorrow = Wednesday.

under the gun: Feeling pressure, usually due to a time constraint.

slaving away: Working hard.

Practice

1. _____, I've been doing way better.
2. I'm going to Japan the _____.
3. I've been _____ on this project for months now.
4. I graduated from high school _____.
5. _____ is what summer vacation is all about!
6. Let's find somewhere _____ to go to for vacation.
7. Can you stay late tonight? We're kind of _____ here.
8. _____, I'd love to finally read those books that have been sitting on my nightstand for months!
9. I try to spend _____ outside. It's great for my mental health.

Answers

1. since then
2. day after tomorrow
3. slaving away
4. 5 years ago
5. wasting time
6. idyllic
7. under the gun
8. this summer vacation
9. as much time as possible

IDIOMS 1

About Face

Meaning: A complete change of direction, either physically or in strategy.

Origin: From a long-standing military command and manoeuvre that's thought to have originated in the British Army.

“We'll need to do an *about face* here. There's no way we can keep going with our current plan.”

Above Board

Meaning: A plan or business agreement that is honest and/or legitimate.

Origin: Thought to have originated from times in which pirates ran the seas. “Under board” was when pirates hid underneath the deck to trick victim ships. Above board is the opposite of that.

“We need to do this whole thing strictly *above board*. Revenue Canada is watching our every move.”

Ace in the Hole

Meaning: An advantage that is hidden until an opportune time to reveal it.

Origin: A poker term referring to a hidden ace.

“Tim is my *ace in the hole*. Nobody knows how good he is except for me.”

Across the Pond

Meaning: Refers to the Atlantic Ocean. North Americans refer to people from the UK as from “across the pond” and vice versa.

Origin: Centuries ago, a pond could refer to any body of water. This was later adopted into an American/British idiom and used to refer to the Atlantic Ocean.

“What's going on *across the pond* these days?”

Actions Speak Louder than Words

Meaning: Action is more important than saying you will do it. It refers to following through on a promise.

Origin: Unclear, but it's thought to be three centuries old.

“I'm so tired of him doing nothing. *Actions speak louder than words* and he is all talk and no action!”

Act of War

Meaning: The literal meaning is a violent act that is large enough to elicit a war response. The idiom is to conduct an action that elicits a response to start a conflict. For example, a business hiring workers from a rival.

Origin: The legal definition is a country acting to provoke a war or conflict. For example, amassing troops near a disputed border.

“In my mind, what he's doing is *an act of war*. I'm done playing nice with him.”

Add Fuel to the Fire

Meaning: Making a bad situation worse by increasing anger or hostility.

Origin: It dates back to the Roman empire and was adapted in English literature over time.

“Stop *adding fuel to the fire*! You should just stop bugging your brother when he starts to get angry.”

A Day Late and a Dollar Short

Meaning: A missed opportunity due to lateness, lack of effort, disorganization or carelessness.

Origin: Unclear but might be tied to the Great Depression (1930's).

“I appreciate the effort but it's *a day late and a dollar short*.”

PHRASAL VERBS 1: BLEW ME AWAY

Ted and Gary are talking about a new guy at work.

Ted: I'm so happy that we **brought Tommy over** here when that other branch **closed down**.

Gary: Yeah, he **blew me away** on that last project. He's a guy we can **count on**.

Ted: I wasn't sure he was **cut out** for the work culture here but he's **fit in** well.

Gary: You're right. Everyone **looks up** to him.

Ted: Definitely! The chance we took on him **paid off**.

Vocabulary

brought Tommy over: Invited someone (Tommy) to join.

closed down: Shut.

blew me away: Impressed.

count on: Depend on.

cut out: Fit for something.

fit in: Get along well in a certain position or place.

looks up to: Respects someone.

paid off: Yielded some good results.

Practice

1. I'm so happy that we _____ from that other company. He's been invaluable.
2. The Yankees _____ with their come-from-behind win in the 9th inning.
3. Jerry _____ his boss.
4. You can always _____ me for anything you need.
5. I'm not sure that I'm _____ for this role. I don't have the right training.
6. All of our hard work _____. We got an A+ on the project!
7. Many restaurants _____ because of Covid-19.
8. I hope that Jenny can _____ with her new classmates.

Answers

1. brought Tommy over
2. blew me away
3. looks up to
4. count on
5. cut out
6. paid off
7. closed down
8. fit in

SLANG 1: CHILL OUT

Keith is telling Sam that he's going to leave.

Keith: Hey, I think I'm going to **bail**.

Sam: **Chill out!** You just got here. Why are you leaving?

Keith: I'm tired of playing **third wheel** with you **couch potatoes**.

Sam: Come on, stay. We'll watch **a flick** or something.

Keith: Nah, I'm going to **roll**. I want to **catch some rays** at the beach.

Sam: You're such **a pain in the neck!** Why don't we come with you though? I'm tired of sitting around too.

Vocabulary

bail: Leave; depart.

chill out: Relax.

third wheel: Describes someone who is spending time with a couple.

couch potatoes: People who aren't that active, instead preferring to sit on the couch and watch TV or play video games.

a flick: A movie.

roll: Go somewhere.

catch some rays: Go outside in the sun.

a pain in the neck: Describes someone who is annoying or bothersome.

Practice

1. My youngest is such _____.
2. Let's _____. There are some weird people here.
3. I don't mind being the _____, depending on the couple.
4. Let's _____. We need to be there in 15 minutes.
5. I want to _____ this weekend for sure.
6. Hey, _____. We don't have to be there for another hour.
7. Do you want to catch _____ this weekend?
8. My kids are basically _____ and never want to go outside.

Answers

1. a pain in the neck
2. bail
3. third wheel
4. roll
5. catch some rays
6. chill out
7. a flick
8. couch potatoes

COLLOCATIONS 1: WINDOW SEAT

Liz and Amy are talking about a bad experience with flying.

Liz: How was your trip?

Amy: It got off to a slow start but was better at the end.

Liz: Oh no! What happened?

Amy: Well, I hate the **window seat** so requested an **aisle seat** when **booking my flight**. But, I guess the **travel agent** didn't pass the message along. That wasn't the worst of it. The airline **lost my luggage**! Thankfully, I had **travel insurance** though.

Liz: Wow! That's bad news.

Amy: Nah, it was fine after I **checked into the hotel**. Then, I could relax.

Vocabulary

window seat: On an airplane, train or bus. The seat next to the window.

aisle seat: On an airplane, train or bus. The seat next to the aisle.

booking my flight: Reserving a plane ticket.

travel agent: Someone who books vacations or travel.

lost my luggage: When suitcases or other personal belongings don't show up when flying.

travel insurance: Insurance that travellers purchase to cover things like lost luggage, flight delays, etc.

checked into the hotel: Got the room key and information you need when staying at a hotel.

Practice

1. Would you like a _____ or an _____?

2. The airline _____ but thankfully I had my important medication with me.
3. Should we use a _____ or book it ourselves?
4. Don't forget _____. Medical costs are very high in the USA.
5. My secret is to use an incognito browser window when _____. You can get cheaper flights that way.
6. Let's grab dinner after you get _____.

Answers

1. window seat, aisle seat
2. lost my luggage
3. travel agent
4. travel insurance
5. booking my flight
6. checked into the hotel

DIALOGUE 2: NOISE POLLUTION

Kathleen and Kenny are talking about living in Busan.

Kathleen: Kenny! You lived in Busan, South Korea? I've always wanted to go there. What's it like? I've heard that it's a beautiful **coastal city**.

Kenny: Well, there's a lot of **noise pollution** and **light pollution**. It's the second biggest city in Korea. And **traffic jams** too during **rush hour**.

Kathleen: It sounds terrible.

Kenny: Oh no, it's amazing! I love Nampo-Dong, which has lots of **street food** and **street vendors** plus **trendy cafes**. It's perfect for a date.

Kathleen: What else?

Kenny: Well, there's no real **downtown core** or **main square** but there are six beaches within **city limits**. Most people just hang out there, especially in the summertime.

Vocabulary

coastal city: A city next to the ocean.

noise pollution: Ambient noise in a city. For example, cars honking.

light pollution: Light from signs and cars that you can see inside your house at night.

traffic jams: Lots of cars on the road which makes progress slower than normal.

rush hour: The busiest times to drive, usually because of people going to work and coming home from work.

street food: Food from an outside stall.

street vendors: People selling things at an outside stall.

trendy cafes: Coffee shops that are fashionable and hip.

downtown core: The area in a city with lots of tall buildings; an important place of business.

main square: The most important public courtyard in a city.

city limits: The outer edge of the city, including suburbs. Not just the downtown core.

Practice

1. I love to buy Christmas presents from _____. There are lots of interesting things.
2. Vancouver is the best _____ in Canada.
3. Within the _____, you can find three beaches and countless parks.
4. Go after 9:30 am to avoid _____.
5. Where's the _____? I'd love to spend some time there and people watch.
6. The best _____ in Korea? Honestly, I can't choose. There are many delicious things.
7. The _____ in Edmonton is famous for being boring at night.
8. _____ makes it difficult for me to sleep at night even though I have curtains.
9. My boyfriend loves to spend time at _____ on weekends. I think they're expensive!

Answers

1. street vendors
2. coastal city
3. city limits
4. traffic jams
5. main square
6. street food
7. downtown core
8. light pollution
9. trendy cafes

IDIOMS 2

An Accident Waiting to Happen

Meaning: Can refer to someone or something that is/are in a dangerous situation where an accident is likely to occur.

Origin: Unclear; first use is from the early 1900s.

“Your steps are *an accident waiting to happen*.”

An Arm and a Leg

Meaning: Something that is extremely expensive and possibly too expensive.

Origin: Possibly refers to 20th century wartime, where a soldier could lose an arm and/or a leg in battle.

“Houses cost *an arm and a leg* in Vancouver.”

A Penny for your Thoughts

Meaning: A way of asking someone what they are thinking.

Origin: Unclear.

“*A penny for your thoughts?*”

A Penny Saved is a Penny Earned

Meaning: Means that saving money is as important as earning money.

Origin: Benjamin Franklin created the term in his book, “Poor Richard’s Almanac.”

“It’s not all about income but about living frugally as well. *A penny saved is a penny earned*.”

A Pretty Penny

Meaning: Refers to something that costs a lot of money.

Origin: Unclear, but first seen in 1800s literature.

“His new car must have cost *a pretty penny*.”

A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats

Meaning: Improvements in the whole economy will benefit all participants in it.

Origin: Thought to have originated on the east coast of the USA. However, it was popularized by John F. Kennedy (then a Senator) to refer to economic growth.

“We need to focus on improving Canada's GDP post-Covid. *A rising tide lifts all boats* and the average Canadian will be more prosperous.”

As Far as I Can Tell

Meaning: To the best of my understanding.

Origin: Unknown.

“*As far as I can tell*, it's just going to be the three of us for dinner tonight.”

A Short Fuse

Meaning: Describes someone who is quick to anger or has a short temper.

Origin: An explosive device that will explode quickly because the fuse is short.

“Keith has such *a short fuse*. He's always getting in fights with people when playing basketball.”

A Stone's Throw

Meaning: A short distance.

Origin: Unclear, but first mentioned in early English versions of the Bible as “a stone's cast.”

“The bakery? It's just *a stone's throw* away. Just walk around the corner and you'll see it.”

At the Drop of a Hat

Meaning: To do something without delay or hesitation.

Origin: From the 19th century where dropping a hat signified the start of a race or fight.

“Call Ted next time! He'll play tennis *at the drop of a hat*.”

PHRASAL VERBS 2: BREAK UP

Keith is talking to Carrie about breaking up with her boyfriend.

Carrie: Did you **break up** with Chris yet?

Keith: I was hoping you wouldn't ask me that question! I can't **go through with** it. I'm worried that he's going to be **pissed off** at me.

Carrie: You can **let him off** easily though, right? Be super kind. I know that you don't like **hanging around** with him.

Keith: It's true, yes. I need to **shake things up** and finally end it. Let me go do it right now before I **talk myself out of** it.

Vocabulary

break up: End a romantic relationship.

go through with: Do something that you have planned in advance.

pissed off: Be angry at someone or about something.

let him off: Release.

hanging around: Spending time with.

shake things up: Make a change.

talk myself out of: Convince yourself not to do something.

Practice

1. I think you should _____ with Tony. He's not a good guy!
2. Jay is _____ because I made him clean his room.
3. I have to not _____ asking women out. I just get so nervous
4. Sid and Jen are _____ together a lot these days. Maybe they'll start dating?
5. I'm not sure I can _____ the tattoo. It seems so painful.
6. We need to _____ a bit. Maybe we need to fire one of the low-performers?
7. I'm not sure you should _____ so easily. He needs some punishment for what he did. You don't always need to be the good guy.

Answers

1. break up
2. pissed off
3. talk myself out of
4. hanging around
5. go through with
6. shake things up
7. let him off

SLANG 2: MY BAD

Owen is apologizing for cancelling a plan with Nate.

Nate: Hey, so what happened last night? We were supposed to **hang out**.

Owen: My bad. I **pulled an all-nighter** the night before and **crashed** hard. I didn't even see your messages until this morning.

Nate: Okay. **No worries**. It was a **bummer** though! I wanted to see you. I did **hit the books** though for that test next week so **not all was lost**.

Owen: Are you free this weekend? Let me buy you dinner to make up for it.

Nate: **I'm down**. Friday night?

Owen: Perfect.

Vocabulary

hang out: Spend time with someone.

pulled an all-nighter: Stayed up the entire night to study or work.

crashed: Suddenly had no energy.

no worries: It's okay.

bummer: Too bad.

hit the books: Studied.

not all was lost: There was something positive in a bad situation.

I'm down: An expression that shows you want to do the thing that the other person is suggesting. Same as, "I'm in."

Practice

1. _____ with whatever. What are you thinking?
2. Oh, _____. I don't even care about that.
3. I _____ last week and I'm still tired from it.
4. Bobby, you need to _____. Isn't your test tomorrow?
5. Do you want to _____ this weekend?
6. It was annoying but _____. We were able to recover the data.
7. I _____ so hard last night after 10 hours at the beach.
8. That's a _____ about your car not starting.

Answers

1. I'm down
2. no worries
3. pulled an all-nighter
4. hit the books
5. hang out
6. not all was lost
7. crashed
8. bummer

COLLOCATIONS 2: ONLINE DATING

Jen and Tina are talking about online dating.

Jen: Hey, so what's new with you **these days**?

Tina: Oh, not much. But I did start doing online dating.

Jen: Nice! How's that going?

Tina: It's like finding a **needle in a haystack**. I mean, they don't have to look like **movie stars** but I'm so tired of guys with **facial hair**—**shaggy beards** and **bushy eyebrows**. Gross.

Jen: So what are you looking for?

Tina: Nothing complicated. Someone with an **athletic build**, **outgoing personality**, and a **good sense of humour**. Shouldn't be too difficult, right?

Vocabulary

these days: Lately; recently.

needle in a haystack: Describes something that is difficult to find.

movie stars: Famous actors or actresses.

facial hair: Beard or mustache.

shaggy beards: Beards that are not well-groomed.

bushy eyebrows: Big eyebrows that are not well-groomed.

athletic build: Describes someone in good shape who exercises a lot.

outgoing personality: Describes someone who likes being around people.

good sense of humour: Describes someone who likes to laugh and tell jokes.

Practice

1. What have you been up to _____?

2. How did he get such an _____? He must be working out a lot.
3. Guys with _____ are all the rage lately.
4. Finding my keys in the morning is like finding a _____.
5. I love that my co-worker has such a _____. I'm always laughing.
6. Who are your favourite _____?
7. I'm thinking about growing out my _____. What do you think?
8. I hate my _____. It's so much work to keep them trimmed.
9. I'm looking for someone with an _____ because I'm kind of shy.

Answers

1. these days
2. athletic build
3. shaggy beards
4. needle in a haystack
5. good sense of humour
6. movie stars
7. facial hair
8. bushy eyebrows
9. outgoing personality

DIALOGUE 3: HIGHLY EFFECTIVE

Jim and John are talking about managing money.

Jim: Hey John. I'm wondering how you and Tina manage your money? It's a **key issue** for Jen and I and we need to come up with a better system.

John: We've been **married for 20 years** now and have a **joint account**. What works for us is that we're **brutally honest** about what we spend our money on. We don't **keep secrets**.

Jim: You're married to a keeper. That's for sure. Jen is **between jobs** and I'm **worried sick** about it. We may have to **borrow money** from the bank to **pay the mortgage**.

John: Sorry to hear that. When **money was tight** for us, we found a **highly effective** budgeting system. It could work for you.

Vocabulary

key issue: The most important thing.

married for _____ years: Number of years after a wedding that two people are together.

joint account: A bank account that two or more people hold together.

brutally honest: Holding nothing back from each other; no secrets.

keep secrets: Not telling important information.

between jobs: Describes someone who lost a job but is looking for another one.

worried sick: Anxious or stressed out to the extreme.

borrow money: Get a loan.

money was tight: Not enough money.

highly effective: Describes something that works very well.

Practice

1. Tony and I have been _____.
2. Can I be _____ with you? This partnership just isn't working out for us.
3. I don't want to _____ from each other anymore. It makes our relationship difficult.
4. Tim always seems to be _____. I wonder what's up with him?
5. _____ when I was going to medical school.
6. I know that you're _____ about it but get some sleep.
7. I've heard that it's a _____ system for losing weight.
8. Why don't we open up a _____? It would make things easier.
9. Let's try to _____ to make it through these next few weeks.

Answers

1. married for 10 years
2. brutally honest
3. keep secrets
4. between jobs
5. money was tight
6. worried sick
7. highly effective
8. joint account
9. borrow money

IDIOMS 3

Bang for the Buck

Meaning: Something that offers good value for the money you paid for it.

Origin: Bang = excitement and buck = money. Could be a play on Pepsi's advertising campaign from the 1950s, "More bounce to the ounce."

"We need to get more *bang for our buck*. Mason just isn't worth what we're paying him."

Barking up the Wrong Tree

Meaning: To accuse someone of causing a problem that they didn't cause. Or, to pursue a misguided course of action.

Origin: From the early 1800s when dogs were used on hunts. Some intelligent animals would trick dogs into believing they were in a certain tree but they were actually in another one. This is why dogs would bark while standing under the wrong tree.

"Talk to Lindsey. You're *barking up the wrong tree* for this project. I'm not in charge."

Be all Ears

Meaning: To tell someone that they have your undivided attention.

Origin: Unclear.

"Go ahead. *I'm all ears*."

Be at a Crossroads

Meaning: To be at a point where an important decision must be made.

Origin: Where two roads intersect. If you take one road, you can't take the other one.

“*I'm at a crossroads* in life since getting fired. I'm not sure if I should find another job or go back to school.”

Beat the Odds

Meaning: To win or succeed when it is not probable to do so or when the chances are low.

Origin: Most often used as a gambling term. It's often used with reference to horse racing or sports betting.

“He *beat the odds* and is now cancer-free.”

Be on Solid Ground

Meaning: Your decision or conclusion is solid, secure; a good decision that isn't considered to be risky.

Origin: From physical combat or war—to defend at a line to prevent invasion beyond the line.

“*She's not on solid ground* with that latest decision. I'm worried about what her boss is going to think.”

Bite Off More than you can Chew

Meaning: Taking on more tasks than you are capable of completing.

Origin: Originated in the late 19th century in the United States. It refers to when someone is offered a bite of something, to just take a small bite. It's a reminder to the recipient to not be greedy.

“Don't you think Ted maybe *bit off more than he can chew*? I can't believe he volunteered to do more overtime.”

Blow Smoke

Meaning: To exaggerate or say things that aren't true, to make oneself seem better.

Origin: From the 1900s. It's possibly connected to magicians using smoke to hide a trick.

“That guy is *blowing* so much *smoke* right now! Let's go. I can't listen to it any more.”

Call the Shots

Meaning: The leader of a group who makes decisions.

Origin: Appears to originate from the early 1900s, regarding military marksmanship. An excellent marksman makes good shots and “calls” them too (says where they will go).

“Please talk to Tina. I don't *call the shots* around here.”

PHRASAL VERBS 3: COME APART

Kent is talking to Bob about how busy he is.

Bob: Hey, how are you doing these days? Didn't you just have your third child?

Kent: I sometimes feel like I **can't go on**. I'm starting to **come apart** at the seams. I have to work all the time to **pay for** everything and my wife just **went back** to work too. We have no time to do anything fun.

Bob: That sounds tough. I remember when you used to **come out** for beers with the boys! Those days are done for a while I guess.

Kent: I'd love to **get back to** that one day. Maybe not for a while though.

Bob: **Hang in there** my friend! **Cheer up!**

Vocabulary

can't go on: Too tired to continue.

come apart: Break down.

pay for: Spend money on something or someone.

went back: Returned.

come out: Leave the house to do something with people.

get back to: Return to doing something.

hang in there: Don't give up.

cheer up: Be happy!

Practice

1. I _____ with that job anymore. I hate it so much.
2. Having a drink with the boys is so fun until someone has to _____ it!
3. I _____ to school in my thirties to become a lawyer.
4. _____ with studying for your test. It's coming up soon.
5. Why don't you _____ with us tonight? We're going to grab a few drinks.
6. _____! It could have certainly been worse.
7. Let's _____ work.
8. The lining in your suit jacket is starting to _____. Why don't you replace it?

Answers

1. can't go on
2. pay for
3. went back
4. hang in there
5. come out
6. cheer up
7. get back to
8. come apart

SLANG 3: PIT STOP

Ted and Ryan are on a road trip.

Ted: Hey buddy, can we make a **pit stop**? I need to **drain the lizard**.

Ryan: **Gross. TMI.** Can you make it to a gas station without having a **meltdown**?

Ted: Ummm...maybe not. Just **pull over**, okay? Or you might have to do **damage control**.

Ryan: Okay! Hurry up though. I'm getting **hangry** and want to get something to eat.

Ted: Okay. I will! I know how grumpy you get when you don't eat breakfast.

Vocabulary

pit stop: Stopping to get snacks or go to the bathroom on a road trip.

drain the lizard: Go to the bathroom.

gross: Disgusting.

TMI: Too much information. Used to express displeasure when someone tells you something that you think should be kept private.

meltdown: Temper tantrum.

pull over: Stop the car on the side of the road.

damage control: Trying to contain a bad situation.

hangry: Hungry + angry combined

Practice

1. I always get so _____ when I skip breakfast.
2. I need to _____ before we leave.
3. My son had a huge _____ this morning about what to wear to school.
4. We'll need to do _____ on this one. The report has already leaked out.
5. Stop right there! It's already _____.
6. Can we make a _____, please? I'd love to get another coffee.
7. Please _____ right now. I'm feeling carsick.
8. So _____. Did you see that guy pick his nose?

Answers

1. hangry
2. drain the lizard
3. meltdown
4. damage control
5. TMI
6. pit stop
7. pull over
8. gross

COLLOCATIONS 3: TENNIS MATCH

Kay is talking to Sid about his tennis injury.

Kay: So what did you get up to this weekend Sid? Wait...what happened to your face? That looks like it hurts.

Sid: I had a **tennis match** and I got hit in the face with the ball. It's just a **minor injury** but I had to go to the **emergency room** to **get stitches**.

Kay: Good thing you didn't sustain **serious injuries**. It could have been bad if you'd gotten hit in the eye.

Sid: Yeah, nothing serious as long as I **take antibiotics** to **prevent infection**. The worst thing was that we lost the match because I had to leave to go to the hospital.

Vocabulary

tennis match: Tennis game that consists of 3 or 5 sets.

minor injury: Not a serious injury.

emergency room: Place to get immediate medical treatment.

get stitches: Using a needle and thread to close a cut in the skin.

serious injuries: A big medical problem.

take antibiotics: Taking pills to stop the spread of infection.

prevent infection: Taking antibiotics or cleaning a wound to prevent bacteria.

Practice

1. Clean the wound first to help _____.
2. Did you have to _____ for that cut?
3. It looks worse than it is. It's just a _____.
4. Did you see the _____ between Nadal and Federer?
5. You'll have to _____ for that but please finish them all.
6. Please call 911 for _____.
7. I think I need to go to the _____. My arm is probably broken.

Answers

1. prevent infection
2. get stitches
3. minor injury
4. tennis match
5. take antibiotics
6. serious injuries
7. emergency room

DIALOGUE 4: MAKE WAVES

Jerry and Linda are talking about a decision at work.

Jerry: I don't want to **make waves** here, but I don't think Kim is making a good financial decision for our company.

Linda: Oh, I don't know. Maybe you just don't see **eye to eye**? I think she's done a lot of research and **knows what she's doing**. She's generally quite good at making decisions. It's why they pay her the big money.

Jerry: Well, I understand why you'd think that. You were **born with a silver spoon in your mouth**, just like Kim, and have never really been **short on cash**. Anyway, it's some **food for thought**!

Linda: To play the **Devil's advocate**, making big decisions is **second nature** to her. She's great at it!

Jerry: Hmmm...okay. Let's **agree to disagree**. We're never going to **settle** this I think.

Vocabulary

see eye to eye: Agree with someone.

born with a silver spoon in your mouth: Describes someone who comes from a wealthy family who doesn't have to work that hard in life.

food for thought: Something to think about.

make waves: To cause trouble.

Devil's advocate: Someone who takes the other side in an argument.

knows what she's doing: Sure of something or do something correctly.

agree to disagree: To stop talking about something controversial when you can't agree.

settle: Decide or agree to something.

second Nature: Something that someone does easily and well because they've done it often.

Practice

1. My mom and I had to finally _____ because there was no way we could understand each other's point of view.
2. I'm not trying to _____ but I just don't agree with what's going on at my company.
3. I'm thinking about changing jobs. My boss and I don't _____.
4. My cousin was _____ and has never had to work a day in his life.
5. My younger brother's most annoying habit is his need to always play the _____.
6. That newspaper article had some _____ in it.
7. I've learned so much from my teacher. I can see she _____.
8. I was hoping to not have to _____ for that job because the salary isn't great but it's tough to find a new job in this economy.
9. Skating is _____ to him. He's been doing it since he was three.

Answers

1. agree to disagree
2. make waves
3. see eye to eye
4. born with a silver spoon in his mouth
5. Devil's advocate
6. food for thought
7. knows what she's doing
8. settle
9. second nature

IDIOMS 4

Can't Judge a Book by Its Cover

Meaning: To not judge something or someone by their outward appearance alone.

Origin: First appeared in 1944 African journal, "*American Speech*" as "don't judge a book by its binding." It evolved to the current form in 1946. "I know he may not be the most handsome guy but you *can't* always *judge a book by its cover*. He does have a lot of good features, including a well-paying job."

Cash Cow

Meaning: Something that is a reliable source of income.

Origin: Refers to a female dairy cow that gives birth and produces milk afterwards. Then, she repeats the cycle again. It requires little effort or labour to produce milk. From the 1970s.

"We need to find a *cash cow*. Our current products just don't have enough profit margin."

Cat Got your Tongue

Meaning: A saying to someone who is unusually quiet.

Origin: Possibly from Egyptian times, when a person's tongue was cut off and fed to cats if the person had lied or been blasphemous.

"Has the *cat got your tongue*? Why are you so quiet?"

Chew it Over

Meaning: To take time to think about something before making a decision.

Origin: Uncertain.

“Can I *chew it over* for a week? I need to talk to my wife about it.”

Come Hell or High Water

Meaning: To be determined to accomplish something, no matter the circumstances.

Origin: Of American origin but it's not well understood where it came from. The first reference is from a newspaper in 1882.

“Come hell or high water, I'm going to get this project done on time.”

Come Rain or Shine

Meaning: Something completed or finished, no matter the circumstances (rain or shine). Can be used literally to talk about the weather, or figuratively.

Origin: Used regularly since the mid-1800s.

“*Come rain or shine*, the soccer game will still happen!”

Cry Wolf

Meaning: To call for help, ask for assistance or raise an alarm unnecessarily or when you don't need it.

Origin: from the Aesop fable named, “The Boy Who Cried Wolf.”

“Stop *crying wolf* if you don't mean it. Nobody is going to help you when you are in trouble.”

Cry Over Spilled Milk/Cry Over Spilt Milk

Meaning: To say that one should not be upset about something that has happened and cannot be changed.

Origin: Unclear

“Don't *cry over spilled milk*, okay? You have another chance tomorrow.”

Curiosity Killed the Cat

Meaning: Being unnecessarily inquisitive or curious about something can lead to a dangerous or unwanted situation.

Origin: Unclear, but vaguely refers to a cat's nine lives.

“You don't need to know about that! Remember that *curiosity killed the cat.*”

Cut to the Chase

Meaning: Telling someone to get to the point in their speaking.

Origin: From 1930 silent films in the US film industry. It's when the director requests to cut filming to the chase (the most exciting) scene.

“*Cut to the chase!* I only have another couple of minutes before I need to go to my meeting.”

PHRASAL VERBS 4: WORN OUT

Lucy is talking to Sarah about how tired she is.

Sarah: Hey Lucy, how was your day?

Lucy: Ohhh...I'm **beat up** and **worn out**! I had to **run around** all over town and then I was the last one at the office so I had to **lock up**. It took me so long to **get out of** there.

Sarah: That sounds terrible. Are you going to **turn in** early?

Lucy: Yeah. I'm going to **wash up** and **head towards** bed. Goodnight.

Vocabulary

beat up: Weary; tired.

worn out: Tired.

run around: Do lots of things in a short amount of time.

lock up: Secure something.

get out of: Leave; avoid something.

turn in: Go to bed.

wash up: Clean (dishes or body).

head towards: Go to.

Practice

1. I'm _____ from that soccer game. You don't look _____ though! How is that possible?
2. Can you _____ the dishes please?
3. Can you _____ at close? I need to leave a bit early tonight so I can't do it.
4. I know you want to _____ this but there's no way to avoid it.
5. Let's _____ home. I'm starting to get tired and hungry!
6. Why don't you _____ and have an early night?
7. I have to _____ after I drop the kids off at school and do a million things.

Answers

1. worn out/beat up
2. wash up
3. lock up
4. get out of
5. head towards
6. turn in
7. run around

SLANG 4: DUMPED

Alex got dumped by his girlfriend.

John: Hey **bro**, what's up? You don't look so good.

Alex: I just got **dumped** by Kendra. And just when we started talking about **getting hitched**.

John: Sorry to hear that. Wasn't she super **flakey** though, always cancelling at the last minute?

Alex: Yeah, and I **straight up** caught her lying to me more than a few times.

John: Better off without her. Let's get **ripped** this weekend. It'll take your mind off of it.

Alex: Yeah, I want to **blow off some steam**. Just don't post about it on social media. I don't want to get **busted** by my boss. He just **added me** as a friend on Facebook.

Vocabulary

bro: A way to greet a close male friend (if you're also a guy).

dumped: Broken up with.

getting hitched: Getting married.

flakey: Describes someone who doesn't follow through with what they say or always cancels plans.

straight up: Speaking honestly.

ripped: Drunk.

blow off some steam: Relax; let loose.

added me: Becoming friends with someone on social media.

Practice

1. What do you like to do to _____?
2. I'll never work on another project with her if I can avoid it. She's so _____.
3. I got _____ last night at the work Christmas party. I hope that I didn't do anything too embarrassing.
4. Did you hear that Ted _____ Lindsay?
5. My grandma just _____ on Instagram. It's so cute!
6. I _____ never want to talk to that guy again.
7. Tom and I are _____ next month.
8. Hey _____, how are you doing these days?

Answers

1. blow off some steam
2. flakey
3. ripped
4. dumped
5. added me
6. straight up
7. getting hitched
8. bro

COLLOCATIONS 4: TORRENTIAL RAIN

Karen and Bill are talking about the weather forecast.

Karen: It **looks like rain** out there with all those **dark clouds**.

Bill: Definitely. I checked the **weather forecast** and it's calling for **torrential rain** and **high winds**.

Karen: Oh no. I hope we can get home **after work**.

Bill: I think it'll be fine. But **keep in touch** and **let me know** when you make it.

Karen: Sure thing. **Stay safe**.

Vocabulary

looks like rain: Lots of dark clouds that signal rain is coming.

dark clouds: Clouds that are grey or black.

weather forecast: Weather prediction for the next hours or days.

torrential rain: Extremely heavy rain.

high winds: Very strong winds.

after work: When you're done working.

keep in touch: Stay connected via phone or email.

let me know: Tell the outcome of something.

stay safe: Take caution to not get into trouble or danger.

Practice

1. It really _____. Do you think we'll be able to have our picnic?
2. What's the _____ say for this weekend?
3. Please _____ and limit your contacts with other people.
4. Do you want to grab a beer _____?
5. It's really difficult driving in _____.
6. Hey, will you please _____ if you can come over next week?
7. You can usually see _____ before a tornado forms.
8. _____, okay? I want to know how it turns out.

Answers

1. looks like rain
2. weather forecast
3. stay safe
4. after work
5. torrential rain
6. let me know
7. dark clouds
8. keep in touch

DIALOGUE 5: GOOFING AROUND

Andy and Matt are talking about their kids.

Andy: How's it going these days?

Matt: Oh, I'm feeling like I might **snap** at any moment. My kids alternate between **goofing around** and **beating each other up**. I wish they'd **cut it out** and act normally.

Andy: That sounds tough. They'll **grow up** before you know it though! Enjoy it while they're young.

Matt: I know that but they **wear me down**. I hate **dealing with** their battles.

Andy: **Lighten up** a little! Let them **battle it out**. I know it's bad but I let my kids **get away with** murder! It helps me stay sane.

Vocabulary

snap: Get suddenly angry.

goofing around: Being silly or joking with someone.

beating each other up: Hitting or being physically violent towards each other.

cut it out: Stop doing something.

grow up: Get bigger or older.

wear me down: Make me feel tired and weary.

dealing with: Handling.

lighten up: Relax; not take things so seriously.

battle it out: Fight until there's a winner.

get away with: To do something bad but not receive punishment for it.

Practice

1. I'm not sure you should get in between them. Why not let them _____?
2. My kids _____! I need to take a walk every day to get a break.
3. Hey, stop _____. We need to get some things done.
4. You should _____. It'll be better for your mental health.
5. Kids _____ so quickly.
6. I'm going to _____ if you don't stop that.
7. The pen tapping annoys me. Please _____.
8. I know you're _____ a lot right now. Can I help by watching your kids tonight?
9. Do you think we can _____ it? I'm worried that we won't.

Answers

1. battle it out
2. wear me down
3. goofing around
4. lighten up
5. grow up
6. snap
7. cut it out
8. dealing with
9. get away with

IDIOM 5

Cut (Someone) Some Slack

Meaning: To give someone a chance or time to change behaviour to meet a desired outcome.

Origin: Refers to boats with sails. Means to stop pulling on the rope to allow the other person some space/rope to fix a problem.

“Please *cut me some slack* with this report. I was in the hospital last week.”

Double Down

Meaning: To double or increase a risk of a commitment because you are confident that it's going to succeed.

Origin: Refers to doubling your bet for a blackjack hand if you are confident that you're going to beat the dealer.

“Do you think we should *double down* on Pfizer stock? They're going to make a ton of money from their Covid-19 vaccine.”

Drive (Someone) Up the Wall

Meaning: To annoy or frustrate a person to the point the person is extremely irritated or angry.

Origin: Possibly centuries old, but the origin is unclear. It could be referring to someone in prison trying to escape over the wall. Or, to a prisoner who is stopped at the wall.

“My son is *driving my husband up the wall*. I can't wait for summer vacation to be over.”

Eat Your Words

Meaning: To be forced to admit you were wrong about something.

Origin: Uncertain but traced back to the 1500s.

“You're going to have to *eat your words* and apologize to your dad I think.”

Fly Off the Handle

Meaning: To lose control in a situation

Origin: Implies the uncontrolled way in which a loose axe head flies off from its handle. It's an American saying that was first found in print in Thomas C. Haliburton's *The Attaché* in the late 1800s.

“My math teacher always *flies off the handle* for the smallest things—like a cellphone ringing in class.”

Follow in (Someone's) Footsteps

Meaning: To do the same thing that another person has done before. Often refers to children who choose the same job as one of their parents.

Origin: Unclear but first seen in the 1500s.

“Are you going to *follow in your dad's footsteps*? He's such a great doctor.”

Get a Grip

Meaning: To understand how to deal with something, to control emotions, or to understand a topic.

Origin: From the 1500s in the military, meaning to put effort into what one is doing; also college jargon to pay attention.

“You need to *get a grip* here! You're going to fail the course.”

Get Away with Something

Meaning: To avoid the consequences of a wrong action.

Origin: Unclear.

“Don't worry. She's not going to *get away with it*.”

Get to the Bottom of Something

Meaning: To discover the true reason or cause of something.

Origin: Alludes to discovering architectural artifacts from other eras to find out more about that era. The literal meaning is the requirement to dig to get to the bottom.

“We need to *get to the bottom of* why the latest ad campaign didn't work.”

PHRASAL VERBS 5: BRING BACK

Christina and Jerry are talking about planning a work Christmas party.

Christina: Hey Jerry. Why don't we **bring back** the office Christmas party?

Jerry: **Shut up!** I love that idea. I can **get behind** that. I'll help you **figure it out**.

Christina: Well, let's **check with** Ted and **nail down** a date and time.

Jerry: Awesome, let's **hand out** invitations next week.

Christina: Sounds great. Maybe if we have enough free drinks, we can finally see Tim and Carrie **make out**.

Vocabulary

bring back: Resume something that has stopped.

shut up: Be quiet. Can be funny, or rude.

get behind: Support.

figure it out: Solve a problem.

check with: Talk to.

nail down: Decide on a definite plan.

hand out: Distribute.

make out: Kiss.

Practice

1. Let's _____ weekly beer nights, okay?
2. Don't worry too much about it. I'll help you _____.
3. Can you please _____ these papers to your classmates?
4. Which candidate are you going to _____ for the next election?
5. Let me _____ Mary to see what time works for her.
6. I want to _____ our vacation time before it's too late.
7. The rumour on the street is that you want to _____ with Ted.
8. I wish he would _____. I can't listen to him talk anymore.

Answers

1. bring back
2. figure it out
3. hand out
4. get behind
5. check with
6. nail down
7. make out
8. shut up

SLANG 5: HOOKED ON

Kerry and Sabrina are talking about snowboarding.

Kerry: Hey Sabrina, you're looking good these days! What's up?

Sabrina: I'm **hooked** on snowboarding. I have a few **epic fails** but no broken bones yet. I've been going every weekend.

Kerry: **Sick!** Where do you go?

Sabrina: Whistler usually. I have a season's pass.

Kerry: Did you pick up some **wheels**? How do you get there?

Sabrina: Yeah, I just bought a used car!

Kerry: That sounds awesome.

Sabrina: Do you board? We can go together.

Kerry: **I'm game.** I haven't gone in years but it's **a piece of cake**, right?

Sabrina: Yeah, it's just **like riding a bike**. Seriously, let's go next weekend.

Vocabulary

hooked: Addicted.

epic fails: Major problems.

sick: Awesome; great.

wheels: A car.

I'm game: I want to do it.

a piece of cake: Describes something that's easy to do.

like riding a bike: Describes something that you can easily do after many years of not doing it.

Practice

1. Don't worry about that test. I wrote it last year and it was _____.
2. _____! I loved that new video you just posted.
3. You'll be fine. It's just _____.
4. _____ for whatever. Just let me know the plan.
5. I'm so _____ on The Queen's Gambit.
6. Once you get some _____, you'll never want to go back to taking the bus.
7. We had a few _____ at the beginning of the project but things are running smoothly now.

Answers

1. a piece of cake
2. sick
3. like riding a bike
4. I'm game
5. hooked
6. wheels
7. epic fails

COLLOCATIONS 5: GO TO GREAT LENGTHS

Tim is talking to Ken about a first aid course he's going to take this weekend.

Ken: So what are you doing this weekend?

Tim: Oh, I'm taking a **first aid** course. You never know when I might have to **save someone's life**.

Ken: Wow! You go to **great lengths** to **do good** in this world.

Tim: Oh, I just like to **do the right thing**. Plus, I like to **stay busy** and fill up my **free time** with interesting things.

Ken: Well, **break a leg**. I hope it goes well.

Vocabulary

first aid: Basic medical help from someone who is not a medical professional.

save someone's life: Prevent someone from dying by an action you took.

great lengths: Above and beyond what is necessary.

do good: Do helpful things for others, animals, the environment, etc.

do the right thing: Make good choices.

stay busy: Have lots of things going on.

free time: Not working or studying.

break a leg: Wishing someone, "good luck."

Practice

1. Do you want to take a _____ course with me next month?
2. He went to _____ to get into medical school. I'm so happy now that he's a doctor.
3. My philosophy of life is to _____ in this world.
4. Now that I have kids, I don't have any _____.
5. Bob is such a good guy. You can always count on him to _____.
6. Who knows. Maybe you can _____ one day.
7. Hey, _____ tonight. You'll be great!
8. I like to _____ at night so I don't sit on my couch, watch TV, and eat junk food!

Answers

1. first aid
2. great lengths
3. do good
4. free time
5. do the right thing.
6. save someone's life
7. break a leg
8. stay busy

DIALOGUE 6: BITTER DIVORCE

Sierra and Brian are talking about their friends getting divorced.

Sierra: Did you **hear the news**? Jeremy and Katie are going through a **bitter divorce**.

Brian: Really? What about the kids? Are they doing **joint custody** or **sole custody**?

Sierra: Joint custody. Jeremy will have them on weekends.

Brian: Poor kids. That was a pretty **dysfunctional family** and they've already had a **troubled childhood**.

Sierra: A **broken home** might be better than all that conflict though. It's too bad that Jeremy and Katie aren't **on good terms**.

Vocabulary

hear the news: Catch the latest gossip.

bitter divorce: A divorce that is hostile.

joint custody: When divorced parents each spend some time taking care of their children.

sole custody: When a divorced parent is responsible 100% for the children.

dysfunctional family: A family with many problems.

troubled childhood: Growing up in a family or situation with a lot of problems.

broken home: A home where the parents are divorced.

on good terms: Friendly and get along well.

Practice

1. Thankfully my former boss and I are _____. I need him for a reference.
2. I grew up in a _____ but have worked hard to overcome this.
3. Alex and Jen seem to be doing well with their _____ agreement.
4. Did you _____ ? Jeremy cheated on his wife.
5. He's had a _____ so far. I'm surprised that he still does well at school.
6. I want to get _____ of the kids. Tom is a terrible father.
7. I grew up in a _____ and have tried my best to make things better for my kids.
8. I had such a _____ but I'm happy that I don't have to see him anymore.

Answers

1. on good terms
2. broken home
3. joint custody
4. hear the news
5. troubled childhood
6. sole custody
7. dysfunctional family
8. bitter divorce

IDIOMS 6

Get Your Feet Wet

Meaning: To start a new job or activity by doing simple tasks first to become comfortable.

Origin: From the 16th century. It refers to a person slowly entering the water with their feet first to become comfortable with the temperature before going in with their whole body.

“Why don't you start with this first? It'll be a nice way to *get your feet wet*.”

Go Down in Flames

Meaning: To fail badly at something.

Origin: From the 1940s or earlier. It's a war reference to combat planes falling to the ground, leaving a trail of fire and bursting in flames upon landing.

“It's either going to be wildly successful or *go down in flames*. I'm not sure what will happen yet.”

Hang in There

Meaning: A way to tell someone not to give up because circumstances will improve.

Origin: 2 possible origins.

1. From competitive sport in the USA in the 1950s. Used as an encouragement to teammates.
2. From a motivational poster in the 1960s/70s that said “Hang in there, baby!”

“*Hang in there*. I know it's difficult but your final exam is just around the corner.”

Hard to Swallow

Meaning: Something that is difficult to believe or accept.

Origin: From the 17th century. It refers to pills that are sometimes hard to swallow. It originated as bitter (a bitter pill to swallow) and evolved to hard later on. It can be heard as “tough to swallow,” or, “A tough pill to swallow.”

“Honestly, his excuse is *hard to swallow*. I don't believe he was sick the day before a holiday.”

Have a Crush on (Someone)

Meaning: The initial stages of a romantic attraction to someone.

Origin: Traced to the 1884 journal of Isabella Maud Rittenhouse about a romantic interest.

“I *have a crush on* my new co-worker. She's not only cute but funny too!”

Have it in for (Someone)

Meaning: To constantly desire to harm someone physically or emotionally.

Origin: Unclear.

“Wow. Tony *has it in for Keith*. Is he trying to make him quit?”

Have the Upper Hand

Meaning: To have an advantage over others in a situation.

Origin: Used as a way to determine teams using a baseball bat for a game. It may also refer to a couple holding hands where the dominant person has the upper hand.

“Let's go in for the kill. I think we *have the upper hand*.”

It's the Best Thing Since Sliced Bread

Meaning: Something or someone that is useful or good, Refers to the best thing that has come around in a long time.

Origin: Most likely refers to a Wonderbread advertising Slogan (the first company to manufacture pre-sliced, pre-wrapped bread).

“This new TV series is *the best thing since sliced bread*! I love it so much.”

Jump Ship

Meaning: To leave or quit something abruptly, because you thought it was failing.

Origin: Refers to a sailor wishing to leave the ship without permission—thus jumping off the ship.

“Your company is about to go bankrupt. Don't you think it's time to *jump ship*?”

PHRASAL VERBS 6: HOLD ON

Mickey and Tanya are talking about a problem at work.

Mickey: So I think we can **head back** to work now. Let's just **keep to** our original plan.

Tanya: **Hold on** a second. Sorry to **butt in** like this but I think we need to **back up** a bit here. This problem isn't going to **go away** if we do nothing about it. We need to change something up.

Mickey: So what do you suggest?

Tanya: I think we need to **come back** to the original question and see if there's a more creative way of looking for solutions. There must be. Then we need to choose one of them and **stick with** the plan across the board.

Mickey: Okay, you're right. Back to the drawing board. Let's get this problem solved!

Vocabulary

head back: Go back to something.

keep to: Stick with something.

hold on: Wait.

butt in: Interrupt.

back up: Return to a previous thing.

go away: Leave.

come back: Return.

stick with: Not give up.

Practice

1. I'm going to _____ home now. I'm so tired.

2. Let's make dinner when you _____ from your run.
3. Sorry to _____ like this but I think it's an emergency.
4. Let's _____ and start at the beginning. I think I lost you somewhere there.
5. Let's try to _____ the schedule, okay?
6. Can you _____? I don't want to talk to you right now. I'm still angry.
7. I know it's difficult to learn to play guitar but _____ it.
8. Please _____ a second. I'll help you when I'm done with this customer.

Answers

1. head back
2. come back
3. butt in
4. back up
5. keep to
6. go away
7. stick with
8. hold on

SLANG 6: THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG

Bob and Sam are talking about Sam's son.

Bob: Hey, how's your son doing these days? I heard he got into a bit of trouble?

Sam: He **drives me up the wall**. He's both a **slacker** and a **stoner**. I don't know if it's **the chicken or the egg** but whatever the case, he's **flunking** out of high school because he's always **high**.

Bob: You were such a **keener** in school. How did this happen?

Sam: Trust me. I have no idea.

Bob: What does he say when you talk to him?

Sam: He just yells, "**Get off my back!**" We can't even have a real conversation about it. I'm scared he's ruining his life.

Bob: Well, I'm here for you if you need to talk about things.

Vocabulary

drives me up the wall: Makes me crazy.

slacker: Describes someone who is lazy.

stoner: Describes someone who likes to do illegal drugs often.

the chicken or the egg: Which thing comes first?

flunking: Failing.

high: On drugs.

keener: Describes someone who is the opposite of lazy.

get off my back: Stop bugging me.

Practice

1. Seriously, _____. I don't want to talk about this anymore.
2. It _____ when he doesn't put his dishes in the dishwasher.
3. You're such a _____, studying two weeks before the test.
4. Is it _____? It's difficult to tell in this situation.
5. Let's get _____ after work tonight.
6. I was a _____ in high school but I quit when I went to university.
7. I'm _____ math but I don't care.
8. My daughter is a _____ and doesn't care about school. She'd rather just hang around with her friends.

Answers

1. get off my back
2. drives me up the wall
3. keener
4. the chicken or the egg
5. high
6. stoner
7. flunking
8. slacker

COLLOCATIONS 6: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Kerry and Joe are talking about the housing situation in Vancouver.

Kerry: Did you hear that the city of Vancouver is **taking action** to address **housing prices**?

Joe: What are they doing? I'd love to move but **affordable housing** is hard to come by.

Kerry: They're building a new **housing development** and offering **low-interest rate** mortgages.

Joe: **It's about time.** Unless you **inherit money**, it's almost impossible for the **working Joe** to buy a house here.

Kerry: Well, **check into it** and if you buy one, invite me to your **housewarming party**!

Vocabulary

taking Action: Doing something.

housing prices: The average price of houses in an area.

affordable housing: Housing that is designed to be cheaper than normal, usually subsidized by the government.

housing development: An area in which the houses have all been planned and built at the same time in an organized way.

low-interest rates: When interest rates are lower than normal.

it's about time: Finally.

inherit money: Getting money after someone has died.

working Joe: The average working person.

check into it: Find out more information about something.

housewarming party: A party after moving into a new home.

Practice

1. What are the average _____ in Victoria like?
2. Are you going to _____ when your parents die?
3. I've love to get into that new _____ in the west end of the city.
4. I'm happy that the city is finally _____ on that guy across the street.
5. There's no _____ in New York City.
6. Congratulations on your new place! When's the _____?
7. Did he finally do his chores? _____.
8. I'm just an average _____, doing the 9-5.
9. I'm not sure about that. I'll have to _____.

Answers

1. housing prices
2. inherit money
3. housing development
4. taking action
5. affordable housing
6. housewarming party
7. it's about time
8. working Joe
9. check into it

DIALOGUE 7: SCALE BACK

Harper and Logan are talking about something at work.

Harper: Just so I'm clear on this: you're asking me to **scale back** production on Model 1234?

Logan: Yes, correct. Fuel prices are **skyrocketing** and there isn't as much demand for things that aren't **fuel-efficient**. Put it on the **backburner** for now.

Harper: Is this the plan **for the long haul**?

Logan: **Pretty much** as long as fuel prices remain at current levels and we're **in the red**. We're **feeling the pinch** with our expansion into Canada and we just don't have **money to burn** like we did a few years ago.

Harper: Okay, I got it. I'll let my team know.

Vocabulary

scale back: Reduce something.

skyrocketing: Increasing rapidly.

fuel-efficient: Doesn't use much energy, compared to similar products.

backburner: Leave something for now and deal with it later.

for the long haul: For the long term.

pretty much: Almost 100% certain.

in the red: Losing money.

feeling the pinch: Experiencing financial difficulties.

money to burn: Extra money to spend freely.

Practice

1. Look at that new car he bought. He must have _____.

2. My company is in it _____.
3. The most important thing for a new car is that it has to be _____
because of my long commute.
4. I'm worried about this project that's now running _____.
5. We're _____ with Covid-19.
6. I _____ only want to know where I stand with this company.
7. Let's put this on the _____ until the economy recovers.
8. Fuel prices are _____ these days with the shortages.
9. Let's _____ production until the new model comes out.

Answers

1. money to burn
2. for the long haul
3. fuel-efficient
4. in the red
5. feeling the pinch
6. pretty much
7. backburner
8. skyrocketing
9. scale back

IDIOMS 7

Keep it Under Wraps

Meaning: To keep something secret until a specified time.

Origin: A term from horse racing. It refers to a rider that intentionally keeps his or her horse from running at top speed.

“Please *keep it under wraps* for a few more months, okay? I don't want my boss to know.”

Keep your Cool

Meaning: To maintain control of your composure or temper.

Origin: Uncertain.

“I know that Ted is annoying but he's also your boss. You have to *keep your cool*.”

Kick the Bucket

Meaning: An informal way of saying that someone has died.

Origin: Taking one's own life by hanging by kicking the bucket from underneath the feet.

“I wonder when that dictator will finally *kick the bucket*? I hope it's soon!”

Leave (Someone) Hanging

Meaning: To keep someone waiting for a decision or an answer (leave someone hanging). Or, to leave or certain details until a later time (leave it hanging).

Origin: Not reciprocating a “high-five.”

“Don't *leave me hanging* here. You're either in or out. I need an answer now.”

Let the Cat Out of the Bag

Meaning: To reveal a secret, on purpose or unintentionally.

Origin: Refers to the “cat o-nine tails.” It's a whipping device (with nine cords) that is used to punish sailors. In the bag refers to the leather nature of the device because it has to be stored in a bag to prevent it from drying out.

“Jen! I can't believe you *let the cat out of the bag*. I'm so disappointed in you.”

Let the Dust Settle

Meaning: Wait for and let a situation become calm or normal after something exciting or unusual happened. Give something time before proceeding.

Origin: Unknown. But, could be related to construction where there's lots of dust that needs to settle before a place is inhabitable.

“I think we should *let the dust settle* before deciding on this.”

Love is Blind

Meaning: To imply that with love, one is unable to see the faults or imperfections of a person. It can also mean that the looks of a person do not matter when you're in love.

Origin: First appeared in the early 1400s and was popularized by Shakespeare's works.

"Just go on a date with him. He's such a nice guy and *love is blind*, right?"

Not My Cup of Tea

Meaning: A way to describe something that a person dislikes but which others enjoy.

Origin: First used as, "my cup of tea" by the British to describe something they like in the late 1800s. It then evolved to, "not my cup of tea" to describe something disliked in the 1920s.

"Game of Thrones *isn't my cup of tea*. I don't know why so many people love it."

Off the Hook

Meaning: To no longer be responsible for something. Another meaning is a phone line that is ringing constantly.

Origin: Refers to fishing where a fish that has been caught is out of options unless it is released back into the water.

"Please don't let her *off the hook* again! She needs to learn about consequences for her actions."

PHRASAL VERBS 7: CONNED OUT OF

Terry is talking to Lauren about how he lost some money.

Terry: So I just got **conned out of** \$1000! This salesman guy on *Craigslist* tricked me into buying a TV that doesn't even work.

Lauren: **Hang on.** Did you report it to the police?

Terry: No. I feel embarrassed about it. I didn't want to **come forward**.

Lauren: **Come on.** It won't take long to **fill out** the form at the police station. They see this kind of thing all the time. I'll **go with** you. I hate seeing you get screwed out of that much cash.

Terry: You're right. Let's **get it over with**. Maybe I can get some justice.

Vocabulary

conned out of: Tricked; fooled.

hang on: Wait.

come forward: Report something.

come on: Encouragement to do something.

fill out: Write information on a form.

go with: Join together.

get it over with: Do something that you don't want to do.

Practice

1. My grandpa was _____ his life-savings.
2. You have to _____ and report that guy!
3. Taxes! Let's just _____ now.
4. Please _____ this form and we'll get back to you if we're interested.
5. _____ a second. This is important. What's that website URL again?
6. Why don't I _____ you? It won't be so bad then. We'll grab some *Starbucks* before we go too.
7. _____. Keep going! You're almost there.

Answers

1. conned out of
2. come forward
3. get it over with
4. fill out
5. hang on
6. go with
7. come on

SLANG 7: HEY YA'LL

Mary, Sam, and Annie are friends who are at their high school dance.

Mary: Hey **ya'll**. Let's **split**. This dance is so **rinky-dink**.

Annie: Yeah for real. **Corny** is the only word for it.

Sam: Do you want to head back to my **pad**? We can **nuke** some pizza pockets and watch a movie or something?

Mary: I'm **bummed** about leaving. I had such **high hopes**. But yeah, I'm in. Let's go.

Annie: I'll come too. Should we ask Tony?

Sam: Nah, let's keep it small. My parents will get **pissed** if too many people come over.

Vocabulary

ya'll: A way of addressing more than one person, commonly used in the Southern USA.

split: Leave.

rinky-dink: Small or amateur.

corny: Cheezy, not slick.

pad: Where someone lives; place of residence.

nuke: Microwave (verb).

bummed: Feeling let down about something.

high hopes: High expectations.

pissed: Angry.

Practice

1. I had _____ for that movie. Why did everyone think it was so good?
2. My dad is _____ at me for crashing his car last week.
3. Let's _____. I'm getting so tired.
4. Hey _____, what are we doing this weekend?
5. Let's hang out at my _____ tonight.
6. I'm so _____ that I didn't get into UBC.
7. My dad is super _____ but also quite entertaining.
8. Just _____ it for 3 minutes.
9. That amusement park? It's _____. Don't waste your time going.

Answers

1. high hopes
2. pissed
3. split
4. ya'll
5. pad
6. bummed
7. corny
8. nuke
9. rinky-dink

COLLOCATIONS 7: GET INTO TROUBLE

Ian is talking to Ted about his many problems on the weekend.

Ted: Hey Ian, how was your weekend?

Ian: Oh, I **got into trouble** again! I got a **parking ticket**, **got lost** while hiking and then maybe got **food poisoning**.

Ted: Oh wow. That sounds terrible. You always have interesting stories though, right?

Ian: I'm **envious of** your life. It seems much calmer.

Ted: Well, it's **not all rainbows and unicorns**. I **asked somebody out** but she rejected me. I'm thinking about **giving up** on dating altogether.

Ian: Hang in there my friend. There are **plenty of fish in the sea**.

Vocabulary

got into trouble: Had some problems happen.

parking ticket: A fine you have to pay for parking illegally.

got lost: Didn't know where you were.

food poisoning: Getting sick from something that you ate.

envious of: Jealous of.

not all rainbows and unicorns: Real life isn't as good as it appears to others.

asked somebody out: Asked someone if they wanted to go on a date.

giving up: Stop trying.

plenty of fish in the sea: There are many eligible people to date.

Practice

1. He _____ out hiking because he didn't have any extra clothes or food and then he got lost.
2. When was the last time you _____? Maybe that's why you don't have a girlfriend!
3. I _____ all the time when I was visiting Seoul. It's such a big city!
4. Do you think that maybe it's _____? Why don't you go to the ER?
5. I'm _____ Joe. He always seems to have so many ladies to go on dates with.
6. I'm thinking about _____ scuba diving. It's such an expensive hobby.
7. Things are not always as they appear. My life is _____.
8. I know you're sad but there are _____.
9. If you don't pay your _____ on time, the fine doubles after a month.

Answers

1. got into trouble
2. asked somebody out
3. got lost
4. food poisoning
5. envious of
6. giving up
7. not all rainbows and unicorns
8. plenty of fish in the sea
9. parking ticket

DIALOGUE 8: UP IN THE AIR

Emma and Oliver are talking about a customer.

Emma: Hey, so I was just talking to Noah and it looks like they won't renew the contract. It's a bit **up in the air** but I think they want to **sever ties** with us.

Oliver: To me, **the writing is on the wall**. They haven't been happy for months now.

Emma: Not to **throw someone under the bus** but the **elephant in the room** is Mia's performance as their account manager. It's just not good enough.

Oliver: I think you've **hit the nail on the head**. She's already **in the dog house**.

Emma: She's **all talk**. It's time she **puts her money where her mouth is**.

Oliver: I'd love to go behind her back and **blow the whistle** on this but I don't want to draw attention to myself.

Vocabulary

up in the air: Not decided yet.

sever ties: To stop a relationship.

the writing is on the wall: It's obvious to everyone.

throw someone under the bus: To blame someone for something.

the elephant in the room: The obvious thing that nobody is talking about.

hit the nail on the head: See the problem clearly.

in the dog house: In trouble.

all talk: Good at talking but their actions don't reflect this.

puts her money where her mouth is: Her actions need to reflect her words.

blow the whistle: To disclose true information that might be harmful to someone.

Practice

1. Honestly, I just think he should _____ on his company. They're doing some terrible things.
2. I'm _____ with my kids if I get home too late from work.
3. I think we need to _____ with that contractor.
4. Why is nobody talking about _____?
5. It's time for her to _____ and do some work.
6. He's _____ but no action.
7. I hate that we have to _____ for this.
8. You've made a good point and _____ exactly.
9. Don't you think that _____? I'm going to get fired.

Answers

1. blow the whistle
2. in the dog house
3. sever ties
4. the elephant in the room
5. put her money where her mouth is
6. all talk
7. throw someone under the bus
8. hit the nail on the head
9. the writing is on the wall

IDIOMS 8

On the Ball

Meaning: Refers to a person who is proactive and alert.

Origin: Generally refers to sports games that include a ball. A similar phrase is, “keep your eye on the ball.”

“Marni is so *on the ball*. She's a great addition to our team.”

On the Straight and Narrow

Meaning: Usually refers to a person who had previous hardship, and is now beginning to live life in an honest way.

Origin: From the Bible in Matthew 7:13-14: “Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

“How's Tony doing these days? I heard that he cleaned himself up and is back *on the straight and narrow*.”

Out of Touch

Meaning: Refers to a person whose views do not align with a majority of people, or a widely accepted conclusion or circumstance.

Origin: It may originate from the 1800s but it not clear.

“That professor is so *out of touch*! I can't believe that he doesn't allow us to email him but instead makes us sign up for office hours.”

Play it Cool

Meaning: To make an effort to be calm and sensible in a difficult or uncertain situation. It can also refer to dating where you don't want to show someone just how much you like them.

Origin: Unclear.

“Do NOT text her back immediately. You need to *play it cool* and wait for at least a couple of hours.”

Push (Someone’s) Buttons

Meaning: To do something to intentionally make someone angry, upset or frustrated

Origin: From the 1920s, of American origin. Comes from a time when home appliances started requiring just the push of a button to work.

“You're starting to *push my buttons*. I need to take a walk and cool off. Why don't we talk later?”

Rule of Thumb

Meaning: General rule about something.

Origin: Various theories:

- Builders who don't measure well and just use an approximate measure (thumb).
- A thumb is generally equivalent to an inch when measuring cloth.
- The thumb is used when brewing beer to gauge temperature.
- An alleged British law that allowed men to beat their wives with sticks no wider than a thumb.

“A good *rule of thumb* is to think about big purchases for at least a week before buying them.”

Run Before you Can Walk

Meaning: Saying that you should be confident with fundamentals before attempting to complete more complex tasks.

Origin: Uncertain but could refer to young children who start with crawling, then walking and finally running.

“He always wants to *run before he can walk*. Math is the basis for just about anything in the engineering field—he has to master it.”

PHRASAL VERBS 8: WEAR OFF

Matt is talking to Tony about his new pool.

Tony: Hey, how's your new pool?

Matt: Well, the novelty is starting to **wear off**. That's for sure. It **uses up** so much electricity to run the filters 24/7! It costs me money every time I **turn around**.

Tony: That doesn't sound good. What do you have to buy for it?

Matt: You have to buy all these chemicals when you're just **starting out**. The salespeople, of course, **leave out** how expensive they are! I certainly didn't **plan for** it.

Tony: But are the kids happy?

Matt: Oh yeah. 100% they would **stay in** until they were burnt to a crisp if we let them.

Vocabulary

wear off: Lose effectiveness or intensity.

uses up: Consumes.

turn around: Change direction.

starting out: Beginning.

leave out: Don't include.

plan for: Decide or arrange something ahead of time.

stay in: Not go anywhere.

Practice

1. The drugs started to _____ and it was super painful.
2. It's always difficult when you're _____. Don't give up.

3. Let's _____ dinner at 7:00 but I'll let you know when I leave work.
4. Can you _____ for a minute? I have to get changed.
5. Why don't we _____ tonight? We've spent so much money lately.
6. Please don't _____ Carrie. I think she wanted to help too.
7. I think that old thing _____ way too many batteries.

Answers

1. wear off
2. starting out
3. plan for
4. turn around
5. stay in
6. leave out
7. uses up

SLANG 8: NO BIGGIE

Keith is asking his girlfriend Mandy for some help.

Keith: Hey **babe**, can you help me out with the garden this weekend?

Mandy: **You bet.**

Keith: You're so **chill**. That's why I love you. Plus, you're **hot** too.

Mandy: You really know how to flatter a girl. It's **no biggie**.

Keith: Okay, let's **crack open a bottle** when we're done and **kick back** a bit.

Mandy: **Wicked.**

Vocabulary

babe: Honey, sweetie (said to someone you're in a romantic relationship with).

you bet: Agreeing to something.

chill: Describes someone who is generally relaxed about things.

hot: Describes someone good-looking.

no biggie: Not a big deal.

crack open a bottle: Open a bottle of wine.

kick back: Relax.

wicked: Awesome; great.

Practice

1. That's so _____ about your new job!
2. Will you give me a ride to the airport on Tuesday? _____.
3. Oh, _____. I don't mind at all.
4. Hey _____, let's get sushi tonight.
5. Your new boyfriend is so _____.
6. Let's _____ and BBQ tonight.
7. When should we _____? Is it too early?

Answers

1. wicked
2. you bet
3. no biggie
4. babe
5. hot
6. kick back/chill
7. crack open a bottle

COLLOCATIONS 8: CORE VALUES

Lindsey and Ted are talking about a partnership with Tim, a business associate.

Lindsey: I'd like to talk to you about something.

Ted: Sure, what's up?

Lindsey: I'm **not comfortable with** our partnership with Tim anymore. I know it's **highly profitable** but I don't want to be **associated with** him. It raises questions about what our **core values** are.

Ted: I agree. I think we should **take action** on this **as soon as possible**. I've been having the same doubts. We're not quite **breaking the law** but what we're doing isn't really above board.

Lindsey: Okay, good. I'm happy that we're **on the same page**.

Vocabulary

not comfortable with: Not feeling relaxed about something.

highly profitable: Something that can make a lot of money.

associated with: Connected to.

core values: A person or an organization's most important beliefs.

take action: Do something.

as soon as possible: Quickly, at the first possible opportunity.

breaking the law: Doing something illegal.

on the same page: Agree about something.

Practice

1. I'm _____ going out alone at night.
2. One of our _____ is to care for the environment.

3. I want to finish up this assignment _____.
4. My husband and I are _____ with our budget.
5. Even though it's _____, it takes up too much of my time to continue with it.
6. Let's _____ on this tomorrow morning.
7. I can't believe that jaywalking is considered _____ in this city.
8. I don't want to be _____ that guy. Nothing good will come of it.

Answers

1. not comfortable with
2. core values
3. as soon as possible
4. on the same page
5. highly profitable
6. take action
7. breaking the law
8. associated with

BEFORE YOU GO

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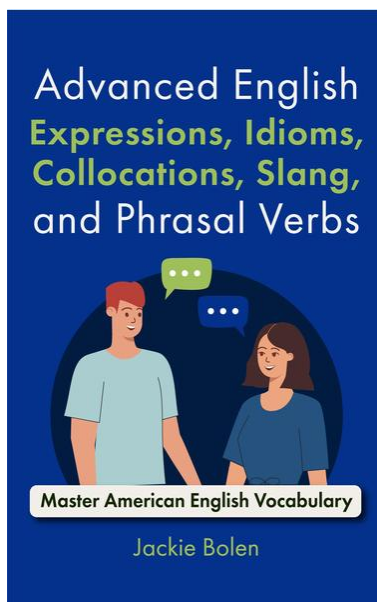
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