



500+ IDIOMS & PHRASES

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669 essential idioms, expressions, proverbs and phrasal verbs with concise meanings for English vocabulary revision.

A FREE EXAM PREPARATION RESOURCE

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Study plan: learn 25 entries per day, revise the previous day's items, and attempt the self-test at the end. These are practice selections, not predictions or verified past-paper questions.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read the idiom and cover its meaning. Try to recall the definition, then reveal and check. Use the expression in your own sentence. For objective-type questions, look for the option closest in context, not the literal meaning of the words.

Everyday reading plan

Block 1: Entries 1-100 (four days at 25 entries per day).

Block 2: Entries 101-200 (four days at 25 entries per day).

Block 3: Entries 201-300 (four days at 25 entries per day).

Block 4: Entries 301-400 (four days at 25 entries per day).

Block 5: Entries 401-500 (four days at 25 entries per day).

Block 6: Entries 501-600 (four days at 25 entries per day).

Block 7: Entries 601-669 (four days at 25 entries per day).

IDIOMS & PHRASES REFERENCE

Listed in study blocks; each entry contains one standard meaning. An idiom may have additional meanings in other contexts.

STUDY SET 1 | 1-50

001	A blessing in disguise	A benefit that initially seems unfortunate
002	A dime a dozen	Very common and easy to find
003	Beat around the bush	Avoid the main point
004	Better late than never	Late action is preferable to none
005	Bite the bullet	Face a painful but necessary task
006	Break a leg	A way to wish someone luck
007	Call it a day	Stop working for now
008	Cut someone some slack	Treat someone less harshly
009	Cut corners	Save effort at the cost of quality
010	Easy does it	Proceed slowly and carefully
011	Get out of hand	Become uncontrollable
012	Get something out of one's system	Satisfy an urge so one can move on
013	Get one's act together	Become organized and effective
014	Give the benefit of the doubt	Assume good intentions despite uncertainty
015	Go back to the drawing board	Start planning again after failure
016	Hang in there	Persevere despite difficulty
017	Hit the sack	Go to bed
018	It's not rocket science	It is not difficult to understand
019	Let someone off the hook	Release someone from responsibility
020	Long story short	To state something briefly
021	Miss the boat	Lose an opportunity
022	No pain, no gain	Success requires effort
023	On the ball	Alert and efficient
024	Pull someone's leg	Tease or joke with someone
025	Pull oneself together	Regain control of one's emotions
026	So far so good	Progress has been satisfactory until now
027	Speak of the devil	The person just mentioned has appeared

028	The last straw	The final irritation one can tolerate
029	The best of both worlds	Advantages of two different situations
030	Time flies	Time passes quickly
031	Bent out of shape	Very upset or angry
032	To make matters worse	To worsen an already bad situation
033	Under the weather	Feeling unwell
034	Cross that bridge when we come to it	Deal with a problem when it arises
035	Wrap one's head around	Understand a difficult idea
036	You can say that again	I strongly agree
037	Your guess is as good as mine	I do not know either
038	A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush	A certain gain is better than a risky possibility
039	A penny for your thoughts	Tell me what you are thinking
040	A penny saved is a penny earned	Saving money is valuable
041	A perfect storm	A combination of adverse circumstances
042	A picture is worth a thousand words	An image can communicate more than description
043	Actions speak louder than words	Deeds matter more than promises
044	Add insult to injury	Make a bad situation worse
045	Bark up the wrong tree	Pursue a mistaken idea or accuse the wrong person
046	Birds of a feather flock together	Similar people tend to associate
047	Bite off more than one can chew	Take on too much responsibility
048	Break the ice	Ease initial social awkwardness
049	By the skin of one's teeth	Only just barely
050	Compare apples and oranges	Compare fundamentally different things

STUDY SET 2 | 51-100

051	Cost an arm and a leg	Be extremely expensive
052	At the drop of a hat	Immediately and without hesitation
053	Do unto others as you would have them do unto you	Treat others as you wish to be treated

054	Don't count your chickens before they hatch	Do not assume success before it happens
055	Cry over spilt milk	Regret something that cannot be changed
056	Don't give up your day job	You are not very skilled at this activity
057	Put all one's eggs in one basket	Risk everything on one option
058	Every cloud has a silver lining	Some good can come from misfortune
059	A taste of one's own medicine	The same unpleasant treatment one gave others
060	Give someone the cold shoulder	Deliberately ignore someone
061	A wild goose chase	A futile search or pursuit
062	Good things come to those who wait	Patience can be rewarded
063	Bigger fish to fry	More important matters to handle
064	A chip off the old block	A child very similar to a parent
065	Hit the nail on the head	Be exactly correct
066	Ignorance is bliss	Not knowing may prevent worry
067	It ain't over till the fat lady sings	The result is not yet final
068	It takes one to know one	A criticism may apply to the critic
069	A piece of cake	A very easy task
070	Rain cats and dogs	Rain very heavily
071	Kill two birds with one stone	Achieve two objectives by one action
072	Let the cat out of the bag	Reveal a secret
073	Live and learn	Learn from experience or mistakes
074	Look before you leap	Consider consequences before acting
075	On thin ice	In a precarious situation
076	Once in a blue moon	Very rarely
077	Play devil's advocate	Argue the opposing case to test an idea
078	Put something on ice	Postpone something
079	Rain on someone's parade	Spoil someone's enjoyment
080	Save for a rainy day	Save resources for future difficulty
081	Slow and steady wins the race	Persistence matters more than haste

082	Spill the beans	Reveal confidential information
083	Take a rain check	Postpone an invitation or plan
084	Take with a pinch of salt	Treat a claim with scepticism
085	The ball is in your court	The next decision is yours
086	The best thing since sliced bread	An exceptionally useful innovation
087	The devil is in the details	Hidden details may cause difficulties
088	The early bird catches the worm	Those who act early gain an advantage
089	The elephant in the room	An obvious but unaddressed problem
090	The whole nine yards	Everything possible or the full extent
091	Other fish in the sea	Other opportunities remain available
092	Method in one's madness	An apparently strange action has a purpose
093	No such thing as a free lunch	Benefits usually carry a cost
094	Throw caution to the wind	Act despite the risks
095	Have one's cake and eat it too	Enjoy two incompatible advantages
096	Judge a book by its cover	Judge by external appearance
097	A little learning is a dangerous thing	Partial knowledge can mislead
098	A snowball effect	A process that grows increasingly powerful
099	A snowball's chance in hell	Almost no possibility
100	A stitch in time saves nine	Early action prevents bigger problems

STUDY SET 3 | 101-150

101	A storm in a teacup	Excessive fuss over a trivial matter
102	An apple a day keeps the doctor away	Healthy habits may prevent illness
103	An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure	Prevention is easier than repair
104	As right as rain	Completely well or satisfactory
105	A bolt from the blue	An unexpected occurrence
106	Burn bridges	Destroy relationships or options permanently
107	The calm before the storm	A quiet period before difficulty

108	Come rain or shine	Regardless of circumstances
109	Curiosity killed the cat	Excessive curiosity can cause trouble
110	Cut the mustard	Meet an expected standard
111	Beat a dead horse	Keep discussing a settled matter
112	Every dog has its day	Everyone eventually gets an opportunity
113	Familiarity breeds contempt	Overfamiliarity can reduce respect
114	Fit as a fiddle	In excellent health
115	Fortune favours the bold	Courageous people may succeed
116	Get a second wind	Regain energy after fatigue
117	Get wind of	Hear about something indirectly
118	Go down in flames	Fail spectacularly
119	Haste makes waste	Rushing leads to mistakes
120	Head in the clouds	Not paying attention to reality
121	He who laughs last laughs best	Final success matters more than early triumph
122	Straight from the horse's mouth	Directly from an authoritative source
123	Not playing with a full deck	Not thinking sensibly
124	Off one's rocker	Behaving irrationally
125	Sit on the fence	Avoid taking a side
126	A bad workman blames his tools	An unskilled person blames circumstances
127	Darkest before the dawn	Things may improve after hardship
128	It takes two to tango	Both sides share responsibility
129	Jump on the bandwagon	Join a popular trend
130	Know which way the wind blows	Understand prevailing opinions
131	Leave no stone unturned	Try every possible approach
132	Let sleeping dogs lie	Avoid reopening an old dispute
133	Like riding a bicycle	A skill that is not easily forgotten
134	Like two peas in a pod	Very similar or inseparable
135	Make hay while the sun shines	Use an opportunity while it lasts
136	On cloud nine	Extremely happy

137	Once bitten, twice shy	Cautious after a bad experience
138	Out of the frying pan into the fire	Move from bad circumstances to worse
139	Run like the wind	Run very quickly
140	Shape up or ship out	Improve performance or leave
141	Snowed under	Overwhelmed with work
142	That ship has sailed	The opportunity has passed
143	The pot calling the kettle black	Criticising another for one's own fault
144	Clouds on the horizon	Signs of future trouble
145	People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones	Do not criticise faults you also possess
146	Through thick and thin	In both good and bad times
147	Time is money	Time is valuable and should not be wasted
148	Waste not want not	Avoiding waste prevents future need
149	See eye to eye	Agree fully
150	Weather the storm	Survive a period of difficulty

STUDY SET 4 | 151-200

151	Well begun is half done	A good start greatly helps success
152	When it rains it pours	Problems often arrive together
153	Catch more flies with honey than vinegar	Politeness often works better than hostility
154	Lead a horse to water	Offer help without being able to force acceptance
155	Make an omelette without breaking eggs	Achieve a goal without any sacrifice
156	Rank and file	Ordinary members of an organization
157	By fits and starts	Irregularly and intermittently
158	A wee bit	A small amount
159	Out of the woods	Free from danger or difficulty
160	Under someone's thumb	Controlled by another person
161	At one's wits' end	Unable to think of a solution

162	Between the devil and the deep blue sea	Caught between two unpleasant options
163	Burn the midnight oil	Work or study late into the night
164	Call a spade a spade	Speak plainly and frankly
165	Come through with flying colours	Succeed brilliantly
166	Hope against hope	Continue hoping despite poor odds
167	An axe to grind	A private motive or grievance
168	At daggers drawn	In bitter hostility
169	Play ducks and drakes with	Waste or squander recklessly
170	Take the bull by the horns	Confront a problem boldly
171	Move heaven and earth	Make every possible effort
172	To no avail	Without achieving the desired result
173	Keep at bay	Prevent from coming closer
174	Make a clean breast of	Confess completely
175	Have a card up one's sleeve	Keep a secret advantage in reserve
176	Like a cat on hot bricks	Very restless or nervous
177	A cat-and-dog life	A life full of quarrels
178	A cock-and-bull story	An unbelievable fabricated account
179	Cry for the moon	Demand something impossible
180	Pros and cons	Advantages and disadvantages
181	In a tight corner	In a difficult predicament
182	Dot the i's and cross the t's	Attend carefully to every detail
183	Keep at arm's length	Maintain distance from someone
184	Out of the question	Not possible or acceptable
185	Out of the way	Unusual or unexpected
186	Show a clean pair of heels	Run away quickly
187	Keep one's fingers crossed	Hope for a favourable outcome
188	In the nick of time	Just before it is too late
189	Spread like wildfire	Spread extremely rapidly

190	Gift of the gab	Ability to speak persuasively
191	By hook or by crook	By any means, fair or unfair
192	Feather one's nest	Enrich oneself dishonestly
193	Throw out of gear	Disrupt normal operations
194	Take to one's heels	Run away
195	Tooth and nail	With fierce determination
196	Die in harness	Die while still working
197	Take a leaf out of someone's book	Imitate a good example
198	A man of straw	A person of little substance
199	Read between the lines	Understand an implied meaning
200	In cold blood	Deliberately and without emotion

STUDY SET 5 | 201-250

201	A thorn in the flesh	A persistent annoyance
202	Smell a rat	Suspect deceit
203	Harp on the same string	Repeat the same subject excessively
204	Bury the hatchet	End a quarrel
205	Leave someone in the lurch	Abandon someone in difficulty
206	A fish out of water	Uncomfortable in unfamiliar surroundings
207	At someone's beck and call	Always ready to obey someone
208	Make ends meet	Live within one's income
209	In hot water	In trouble
210	Nip in the bud	Stop at an early stage
211	Stick to one's guns	Maintain one's position firmly
212	Eat humble pie	Admit fault and apologise
213	In high spirits	Cheerful and lively
214	Put the cart before the horse	Do things in the wrong order
215	Call someone names	Insult someone verbally
216	On tenterhooks	Anxiously awaiting an outcome

217	Wash dirty linen in public	Discuss private disputes openly
218	Bell the cat	Undertake a dangerous or difficult task
219	A hard nut to crack	A difficult person or problem
220	A big gun	An influential person
221	Take someone to task	Reprimand someone
222	Gain ground	Become more successful or accepted
223	Blow one's own trumpet	Praise one's own achievements
224	A bosom friend	A very close friend
225	In a brown study	Deep in thought
226	Turn a deaf ear	Refuse to listen
227	A close shave	A narrow escape
228	Turn over a new leaf	Change one's behaviour for the better
229	Make up one's mind	Decide
230	In the long run	Eventually
231	Bring to light	Reveal previously hidden facts
232	Pay off old scores	Take revenge for past grievances
233	Hard-and-fast rule	A strict rule
234	At the eleventh hour	At the last possible moment
235	Cut a sorry figure	Make a poor impression
236	With a high hand	In an arrogant or oppressive manner
237	Burn one's fingers	Suffer from a risky involvement
238	Laugh one's head off	Laugh very hard
239	Chew the cud	Think about something carefully
240	Play second fiddle	Occupy a subordinate role
241	Above board	Honest and transparent
242	Put a spoke in someone's wheel	Obstruct someone's plans
243	At sixes and sevens	In confusion or disorder
244	At home	Comfortable and at ease
245	Alpha and omega	The beginning and the end

246	At sea	Confused or uncertain
247	By leaps and bounds	Very rapidly
248	Burn one's boats	Make retreat impossible
249	Burn the candle at both ends	Overwork by staying up early and late
250	A bone of contention	A cause of dispute

STUDY SET 6 | 251-300

251	Add fuel to the fire	Make conflict worse
252	An acid test	A decisive test of worth
253	At a snail's pace	Extremely slowly
254	Build castles in the air	Imagine unrealistic plans
255	A chip on one's shoulder	A resentful attitude
256	Golden handshake	Large payment on leaving employment
257	Mean business	Be serious about one's intention
258	Come hell or high water	Despite any obstacles
259	Apple of one's eye	A deeply cherished person
260	Icing on the cake	An extra benefit added to a good situation
261	Be in the doldrums	Feel depressed or inactive
262	Hear through the grapevine	Learn by unofficial conversation
263	Black and blue	Covered in bruises
264	A bird's-eye view	An overall view from above
265	Litmus test	A decisive measure of suitability
266	Afraid of one's own shadow	Extremely timid
267	A house of cards	An unstable arrangement
268	A fool's paradise	A state of false happiness
269	Get a raw deal	Be treated unfairly
270	Live from hand to mouth	Barely earn enough for essentials
271	Make a face	Show displeasure by expression
272	It's all Greek to me	I cannot understand it

273	Pour oil on troubled waters	Calm a conflict
274	In a nutshell	In very few words
275	Back out	Withdraw from a commitment
276	Blow up	Explode or become very angry
277	Back up	Support or make a reserve copy
278	Break down	Stop functioning or lose emotional control
279	Break off	End suddenly
280	Break up	End a relationship or disperse
281	Bring up	Raise a child or mention a subject
282	Call forth	Evoke or produce
283	Call out	Shout or challenge publicly
284	Call upon	Request or appeal to
285	Carry on	Continue
286	Cast away	Discard or abandon
287	Catch up with	Reach the same level as
288	Come off	Happen successfully or detach
289	Cry down	Disparage
290	Cry out against	Protest strongly
291	Cut out for	Naturally suited to
292	Drop in	Visit informally
293	Drop out	Leave an activity before completion
294	Fall back	Retreat or move back
295	Fall down	Collapse or fail to meet expectations
296	Fall off	Decrease or become detached
297	Fall under	Be classified as
298	Get along	Manage or have a good relationship
299	Get on with	Continue or make progress
300	Get into	Become involved in

STUDY SET 7 | 301-350

301	Give in	Yield or surrender
302	Give up	Stop trying or abandon
303	Go after	Pursue
304	Go down	Decrease or be accepted
305	Go without	Manage despite not having something
306	Go by	Pass or follow a rule
307	Hang around	Remain idly near a place
308	Hang on	Wait or hold tightly
309	Hold out	Resist or continue to last
310	Hold to	Remain faithful to
311	Keep off	Stay away from
312	Keep up with	Maintain the same pace as
313	Knock out	Defeat or render unconscious
314	Look into	Investigate
315	Look up to	Admire or respect
316	Look down on	Regard with contempt
317	Look after	Care for
318	Look forward to	Anticipate eagerly
319	Look out for	Watch carefully for
320	Look over	Examine briefly
321	Look back on	Remember the past
322	Make out	Discern or understand with difficulty
323	Make up for	Compensate for
324	Pass away	Die
325	Pass out	Faint or lose consciousness
326	Pass up	Decline an opportunity
327	Put off	Postpone

328	Put up with	Tolerate
329	Put forward	Suggest for consideration
330	Put down	Criticise or suppress
331	Run into	Encounter unexpectedly
332	Run out of	Exhaust a supply
333	Run over	Review quickly or strike with a vehicle
334	Set aside	Reserve for later use
335	Set off	Begin a journey or trigger
336	Set up	Establish or arrange
337	Stand by	Support or remain ready
338	Stand for	Represent or tolerate
339	Stand out	Be conspicuous or exceptional
340	Take after	Resemble a family member
341	Take off	Depart or become successful
342	Take over	Assume control
343	Take up	Begin a hobby or occupy time
344	Turn down	Reject or reduce volume
345	Turn up	Appear or increase volume
346	Turn out	Prove to be or attend
347	Work out	Solve or exercise
348	Wear out	Make exhausted or use until unusable
349	Write off	Dismiss as worthless or cancel a debt
350	A drop in the ocean	A tiny amount compared with what is needed

STUDY SET 8 | 351-400

351	A flash in the pan	A brief success that is not repeated
352	A feather in one's cap	An achievement to be proud of
353	A red-letter day	A memorable happy day
354	A red herring	A distraction from the real issue

355	A white elephant	An expensive but useless possession
356	A black sheep	A disreputable member of a group
357	A dark horse	An unexpected successful contender
358	A lame duck	An ineffective person or organization
359	A golden opportunity	An exceptionally favourable chance
360	A narrow escape	Barely avoiding danger
361	A bitter pill to swallow	An unpleasant fact to accept
362	A double-edged sword	Something with both benefits and drawbacks
363	A mixed blessing	Something both good and bad
364	A storm is brewing	Trouble is developing
365	A tough row to hoe	A difficult task ahead
366	A tall order	A difficult demand to fulfil
367	A shot in the dark	A guess without enough information
368	A rule of thumb	A practical approximate guideline
369	A square peg in a round hole	A person unsuited to a position
370	A skeleton in the closet	An embarrassing hidden secret
371	A slap on the wrist	A mild punishment
372	A stumbling block	An obstacle to progress
373	A stone's throw	A very short distance
374	A tempest in a teapot	A disproportionate fuss
375	A wolf in sheep's clothing	A dangerous person appearing harmless
376	Achilles' heel	A vulnerable point
377	Against the clock	Under severe time pressure
378	Against all odds	Despite very low chances
379	All and sundry	Everyone without exception
380	All ears	Listening attentively
381	All in the same boat	Facing the same difficulty
382	All over the place	Disorganized or scattered
383	All thumbs	Clumsy with one's hands

384	An open secret	Something widely known but not formally admitted
385	An old hand	An experienced person
386	An uphill battle	A very difficult struggle
387	Apple-pie order	Perfect neatness
388	Armed to the teeth	Heavily armed
389	As cool as a cucumber	Very calm under pressure
390	As good as gold	Very well behaved
391	As the crow flies	In a straight line
392	At a crossroads	Facing an important choice
393	At a loss	Unable to decide what to do
394	At a premium	In high demand and short supply
395	At close quarters	At a very short distance
396	At first sight	On initially seeing
397	At loggerheads	In serious disagreement
398	At one's fingertips	Immediately available for use
399	At one's own risk	Accepting responsibility for danger
400	At the end of one's tether	Having no patience left

STUDY SET 9 | 401-450

401	At the top of one's lungs	As loudly as possible
402	Back to square one	Return to the starting point
403	Bad blood	Ill feeling between people
404	Bag and baggage	With all belongings
405	Be a wet blanket	Spoil others' enjoyment
406	Be all smiles	Look very happy
407	Be beside oneself	Be overwhelmed by emotion
408	Be born with a silver spoon	Be born into wealth
409	Be in two minds	Be undecided
410	Be left high and dry	Be abandoned without help

411	Be on one's last legs	Be near exhaustion or collapse
412	Be over the moon	Be extremely delighted
413	Be up in arms	Be strongly opposed
414	Bear the brunt	Suffer the main force of something
415	Behind closed doors	In private
416	Behind the scenes	Without public attention
417	Below the belt	Unfair or improper
418	Bend over backwards	Make an exceptional effort to help
419	Bend the rules	Apply rules less strictly
420	Beyond the pale	Outside acceptable standards
421	Big fish in a small pond	Important person in a limited setting
422	Bite one's tongue	Avoid saying something
423	Bite the dust	Fall or fail
424	Black and white	Clear and unambiguous
425	Blank cheque	Unrestricted authority to act
426	Blow hot and cold	Frequently change one's attitude
427	Blow the whistle	Expose wrongdoing
428	Bone up on	Study intensively
429	Born and bred	Raised from birth in a place
430	Break even	Have neither profit nor loss
431	Break new ground	Do something innovative
432	Bring home the bacon	Earn money to support a household
433	Bring to book	Punish for wrongdoing
434	Brush aside	Dismiss without considering
435	Brush up on	Refresh one's knowledge
436	Burn a hole in one's pocket	Make one eager to spend money
437	Burst one's bubble	Destroy an unrealistic belief
438	By and large	Generally speaking
439	By word of mouth	Through personal communication

440	Call the shots	Make the important decisions
441	Carry the day	Win a contest or argument
442	Cast in the same mould	Have very similar characteristics
443	Catch red-handed	Discover someone doing wrong
444	Change hands	Pass to a different owner
445	Cheek by jowl	Very close together
446	Clam up	Suddenly stop speaking
447	Clear the air	Remove tension or misunderstandings
448	Climb the ladder	Advance professionally or socially
449	Close ranks	Unite in defence of a group
450	Come to a head	Reach a crisis point

STUDY SET 10 | 451-500

451	Come to grips with	Deal with or understand
452	Come to light	Become known
453	Cook the books	Falsify accounts
454	Cool one's heels	Wait for a long time
455	Cross swords	Argue or clash
456	Cry wolf	Raise a false alarm
457	Cut a dash	Make a striking appearance
458	Cut down to size	Reduce someone's exaggerated pride
459	Cut no ice	Have no influence
460	Cut one's coat according to one's cloth	Live according to one's means
461	Dance to someone's tune	Do what another person orders
462	Dead end	A situation with no prospect of progress
463	Dead letter	A rule that is no longer enforced
464	Die hard	Disappear very slowly
465	Dig one's heels in	Refuse to change position

466	Dog in the manger	Someone who prevents others using what they do not need
467	Draw a blank	Fail to obtain an answer
468	Draw the line	Set a firm limit
469	Drive home	Make a point clear
470	Eat one's words	Admit that a previous statement was wrong
471	Elbow room	Space or freedom to act
472	End in smoke	Come to nothing
473	Face the music	Accept unpleasant consequences
474	Fair and square	Honestly and according to rules
475	Fall flat	Fail to produce an intended effect
476	Fall on deaf ears	Be ignored
477	Far and wide	Over a large area
478	Fast and loose	In a reckless or dishonest manner
479	Feel the pinch	Suffer financial pressure
480	Fight shy of	Avoid doing something
481	Find one's feet	Become comfortable in a new situation
482	Fish in troubled waters	Exploit a confused situation
483	Fly off the handle	Lose one's temper suddenly
484	For good	Permanently
485	For the time being	Temporarily
486	From hand to hand	Passed from one person to another
487	Get a foothold	Establish an initial position
488	Get a grip	Regain self-control
489	Get cold feet	Become nervous before an action
490	Get down to brass tacks	Focus on practical essentials
491	Get the upper hand	Gain an advantage
492	Get to the bottom of	Find the real cause
493	Give a wide berth	Stay well away from
494	Give the green light	Grant permission

495	Go against the grain	Contradict one's natural preference
496	Go for broke	Risk everything for success
497	Go off the rails	Behave unpredictably or badly
498	Go out on a limb	Take a risk without support
499	Go the extra mile	Make an additional effort
500	Go through the motions	Act without genuine enthusiasm

STUDY SET 11 | 501-550

501	Go to the dogs	Deteriorate badly
502	Grasp at straws	Try desperate solutions
503	Grease someone's palm	Bribe someone
504	Green with envy	Very jealous
505	Hands down	Easily or without doubt
506	Hand in glove	Working very closely together
507	Hang by a thread	Be in a very precarious state
508	Hard up	Short of money
509	Have a field day	Enjoy an opportunity for criticism or success
510	Have a finger in every pie	Be involved in many affairs
511	Have a heart of gold	Be very kind
512	Have a soft corner for	Feel affection or sympathy for
513	Have one's hands full	Be very busy
514	Head over heels	Deeply in love
515	Heart and soul	With complete commitment
516	High and dry	Abandoned without support
517	Hit rock bottom	Reach the lowest point
518	Hit the jackpot	Achieve unexpected great success
519	Hold one's horses	Wait and be patient
520	Hold water	Be logically sound
521	In a fix	In a difficult situation

522	In a flash	Very quickly
523	In a jiffy	Very soon
524	In a pickle	In trouble
525	In black and white	In written form
526	In broad daylight	Openly during the day
527	In deep water	Facing severe difficulty
528	In full swing	At the height of activity
529	In good faith	With sincere intentions
530	In lieu of	Instead of
531	In one's element	Comfortable in a suitable setting
532	In one's shoes	In another person's position
533	In the bag	Virtually certain to be secured
534	In the dark	Unaware of information
535	In the limelight	Receiving public attention
536	In the same breath	At almost the same moment
537	Inside out	Thoroughly or completely
538	Iron out differences	Resolve disagreements
539	Jump the gun	Act before the proper time
540	Keep a straight face	Avoid laughing
541	Keep an eye on	Watch carefully
542	Keep body and soul together	Earn enough to survive
543	Keep one's chin up	Remain cheerful in adversity
544	Keep one's head above water	Avoid financial or other failure
545	Keep one's nose to the grindstone	Work continuously and hard
546	Keep the ball rolling	Maintain progress
547	Keep under wraps	Keep secret
548	Kick the bucket	Die (informal)
549	Know the ropes	Know how a process works
550	Leave in the cold	Exclude from participation

STUDY SET 12 | 551-600

551	Lend an ear	Listen sympathetically
552	Lend a hand	Help someone
553	Lie low	Avoid attention
554	Lion's share	The largest portion
555	Lock horns	Enter into an argument
556	Lose heart	Become discouraged
557	Lose one's touch	Lose a previously held skill
558	Make a beeline for	Go directly towards
559	Make a mountain out of a molehill	Exaggerate a small problem
560	Make a virtue of necessity	Turn an unavoidable situation to advantage
561	Make one's mark	Become notable or successful
562	Make short work of	Complete quickly and efficiently
563	Meet one's Waterloo	Suffer a decisive defeat
564	Mince words	Speak indirectly to avoid offence
565	Move with the times	Adapt to changing circumstances
566	Neither here nor there	Irrelevant to the matter
567	No love lost	Mutual dislike
568	Not one's cup of tea	Not to one's taste
569	Off the beaten track	Away from usual routes or methods
570	Off the cuff	Without preparation
571	On a shoestring	With very little money
572	On borrowed time	Continuing beyond an expected limit
573	On edge	Nervous and tense
574	On the brink	Very close to a major event
575	On the dot	Exactly on time
576	On the horns of a dilemma	Faced with two difficult choices
577	On the spur of the moment	Without advance planning

578	Once and for all	Finally and decisively
579	Open a can of worms	Cause many new problems
580	Out of one's depth	In a situation too difficult to handle
581	Out of pocket	Having spent or lost money
582	Out of the blue	Without warning
583	Over one's head	Too difficult to understand
584	Pass the buck	Shift responsibility to another
585	Pay through the nose	Pay an excessive price
586	Pick holes in	Find faults in
587	Play fast and loose	Behave irresponsibly or dishonestly
588	Play into someone's hands	Unintentionally help an opponent
589	Pull out all the stops	Use every available resource
590	Pull strings	Use personal influence
591	Put one's foot down	Act firmly and refuse to yield
592	Put one's foot in one's mouth	Say something embarrassing
593	Put the lid on	Stop or suppress something
594	Put two and two together	Infer the truth from evidence
595	Rain check	A promise to accept an invitation later
596	Raise eyebrows	Cause surprise or disapproval
597	Raise the bar	Set a higher standard
598	Read the riot act	Reprimand severely
599	Red tape	Excessive bureaucratic formalities
600	Rest on one's laurels	Rely on past achievements

STUDY SET 13 | 601-650

601	Ride roughshod over	Treat others' rights with contempt
602	Ring a bell	Sound familiar
603	Rise to the occasion	Perform well when challenged
604	Rock the boat	Disturb an existing arrangement

605	Rub salt into the wound	Make someone's distress worse
606	Run in the family	Be common among relatives
607	Run the gauntlet	Face criticism or attacks
608	Save one's skin	Escape danger to oneself
609	See the light	Finally understand
610	Set the record straight	Correct a false impression
611	Shake a leg	Hurry up
612	Show one's true colours	Reveal one's actual nature
613	Sink or swim	Succeed or fail without help
614	Sit tight	Remain where one is and wait
615	Sleep on it	Delay deciding until after reflection
616	Slip through one's fingers	Lose an opportunity
617	Small fry	An insignificant person or thing
618	Speak volumes	Communicate a great deal implicitly
619	Stand in good stead	Prove useful in future
620	Stand one's ground	Refuse to retreat or yield
621	Steal someone's thunder	Take credit or attention intended for another
622	Stick out like a sore thumb	Be noticeably out of place
623	Stonewall	Refuse to cooperate or answer
624	Straight as an arrow	Very honest
625	Strike while the iron is hot	Act while conditions are favourable
626	Take a back seat	Accept a less prominent role
627	Take a leaf from someone's book	Follow someone's example
628	Take a plunge	Commit to a risky new action
629	Take a toll	Cause harm or exhaustion
630	Take by storm	Achieve sudden widespread success
631	Take for granted	Assume something without appreciation
632	Take heart	Become encouraged
633	Take it to heart	Feel criticism or trouble deeply

634	Take the cake	Be the most remarkable example
635	Take the law into one's own hands	Act without lawful authority
636	Take the wind out of someone's sails	Reduce someone's confidence or advantage
637	The acid test	The decisive test
638	The writing on the wall	Clear signs of impending failure
639	Thick as thieves	Very close and secretive
640	Think on one's feet	Respond quickly without preparation
641	Throw a spanner in the works	Cause an unexpected obstacle
642	Throw cold water on	Discourage an idea
643	Throw down the gauntlet	Issue a challenge
644	Throw in the towel	Admit defeat
645	Throw light on	Clarify or explain
646	Tie the knot	Get married
647	To the bitter end	Until the very end despite difficulty
648	Tongue in cheek	Not intended seriously
649	Touch and go	Uncertain and risky
650	Turn a blind eye	Deliberately ignore wrongdoing

STUDY SET 14 | 651-669

651	Turn the tables	Reverse the relative positions
652	Twist someone's arm	Pressurise someone to agree
653	Under a cloud	Under suspicion or disapproval
654	Under one's nose	Directly in one's presence
655	Under the table	Secretly or illegally
656	Up and about	Active again after illness
657	Up in the air	Not yet decided
658	Upset the apple cart	Disrupt established plans
659	Walk on eggshells	Act very cautiously
660	Wear one's heart on one's sleeve	Show feelings openly

661	Wet behind the ears	Inexperienced or naive
662	When pigs fly	Never or almost certainly never
663	Win laurels	Earn honour or recognition
664	With flying colours	With outstanding success
665	With open arms	Warmly and eagerly
666	Work against the clock	Work under time pressure
667	Work hand in hand	Cooperate closely
668	Worth one's salt	Competent and deserving respect
669	Zero in on	Focus attention precisely

QUICK REVISION TEST

Select the closest meaning for each idiom. Answers appear below the questions.

1. Straight from the horse's mouth

- A. Directly from an authoritative source
- B. Compensate for
- C. Very jealous
- D. Discuss private disputes openly

2. Put up with

- A. Facing severe difficulty
- B. A guess without enough information
- C. Perfect neatness
- D. Tolerate

3. Heart and soul

- A. With complete commitment
- B. Help someone
- C. An apparently strange action has a purpose
- D. Continuing beyond an expected limit

4. In black and white

- A. Stop or suppress something
- B. Do not criticise faults you also possess
- C. In written form
- D. Never or almost certainly never

5. Win laurels

- A. Punish for wrongdoing
- B. Accept unpleasant consequences
- C. A very short distance
- D. Earn honour or recognition

6. Burn bridges

- A. Destroy relationships or options permanently
- B. Destroy an unrealistic belief
- C. Final success matters more than early triumph
- D. Be logically sound

7. Make up one's mind

- A. Earn money to support a household
- B. Find the real cause
- C. Cause many new problems
- D. Decide

8. Slip through one's fingers

- A. Thoroughly or completely
- B. Very similar or inseparable
- C. Immediately and without hesitation
- D. Lose an opportunity

9. The acid test

- A. In both good and bad times
- B. Grant permission
- C. The decisive test
- D. Exploit a confused situation

10. Off the cuff

- A. Without preparation
- B. Become comfortable in a new situation
- C. Exaggerate a small problem
- D. Despite any obstacles

11. Break new ground

- A. Do something innovative
- B. With outstanding success
- C. Suffer a decisive defeat
- D. With complete commitment

12. Play fast and loose

- A. Live within one's income
- B. Stop trying or abandon
- C. Explode or become very angry
- D. Behave irresponsibly or dishonestly

13. Make one's mark

- A. Admit that a previous statement was wrong
- B. Become notable or successful
- C. Succeed or fail without help
- D. At almost the same moment

14. Grease someone's palm

- A. Take a risk without support
- B. Bribe someone
- C. An unstable arrangement
- D. In a reckless or dishonest manner

15. Ride roughshod over

- A. Make a point clear
- B. Faint or lose consciousness
- C. Manage or have a good relationship
- D. Treat others' rights with contempt

16. Come to light

- A. Just before it is too late
- B. Refuse to change position
- C. Become known
- D. Make one eager to spend money

17. At sea

- A. Confused or uncertain
- B. Almost no possibility
- C. Facing the same difficulty
- D. Feel affection or sympathy for

18. Beat around the bush

- A. A situation with no prospect of progress
- B. A good start greatly helps success
- C. Persevere despite difficulty
- D. Avoid the main point

19. Take a toll

- A. An exceptionally useful innovation
- B. Turn an unavoidable situation to advantage
- C. Cause harm or exhaustion
- D. A promise to accept an invitation later

20. Take a rain check

- A. Postpone an invitation or plan
- B. The decisive test
- C. Become notable or successful
- D. Similar people tend to associate

21. Fit as a fiddle

- A. Controlled by another person
- B. In excellent health
- C. A way to wish someone luck

D. Discern or understand with difficulty

22. Fall down

A. Collapse or fail to meet expectations

B. Passed from one person to another

C. Decide

D. Turn an unavoidable situation to advantage

23. A storm in a teacup

A. Excessive fuss over a trivial matter

B. Succeed brilliantly

C. Raised from birth in a place

D. Hidden details may cause difficulties

24. Dance to someone's tune

A. Having no patience left

B. Do what another person orders

C. Avoid saying something

D. In a difficult situation

25. Get something out of one's system

A. Perfect neatness

B. Persevere despite difficulty

C. Satisfy an urge so one can move on

D. Meet an expected standard

ANSWER KEY

1. A 2. D 3. A 4. C 5. D

6. A 7. D 8. D 9. C 10. A

11. A 12. D 13. B 14. B 15. D

16. C 17. A 18. D 19. C 20. A

21. B 22. A 23. A 24. B 25. C

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