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## **IDIOMS AND PHRASES**

Idioms and Phrases form an important part of the English section of various competitive exams such as SSC exams, RRB exams, Bank exams and other Government exams. Candidates can easily fetch a good score in the English section if they are aware of important idioms and phrases, along with their meanings.

<b>Idioms &amp; Phrases</b>	<b>Meanings</b>
<b>Rank and File</b>	Ordinary People
<b>By fits and starts</b>	In short periods, not regularly
<b>A wee bit</b>	A little
<b>Out of the wood</b>	Free from difficulties and dangers
<b>Under his thumb</b>	Under his control
<b>At one's wits end</b>	In a state where one does not know what to do
<b>Between the devil and the deep sea</b>	Between two dangers
<b>Burn the midnight oil</b>	Work or study hard
<b>Call a spade a spade</b>	Speak frankly and directly
<b>Come off with flying colors</b>	Be highly successful
<b>Hoping against hope</b>	Without hope
<b>Hit the nail on the head</b>	Do or say the exact thing
<b>An axe to grind</b>	A personal interest in the matter
<b>To get rid of</b>	Dispose of
<b>At daggers drawn</b>	Bitterly hostile

<b>To play ducks and drakes</b>	To act foolishly or inconsistently
<b>To take the bull by the horns</b>	To tackle a problem in a bold and direct fashion
<b>Rain cats and dogs</b>	Rain heavily
<b>To move heaven and earth</b>	To make a supreme effort
<b>No avail</b>	Without any result
<b>Bark up the wrong tree</b>	Accuse or denounce the wrong person
<b>Keep one at bay</b>	Keep one at a distance
<b>Make a clean breast of it</b>	Confess – especially when a person has done a wrong thing
<b>Have a card up one's sleeve</b>	Have a secret plan in reserve
<b>Like a cat on hot bricks</b>	Very nervous
<b>Cat and dog life</b>	Life full of quarrels
<b>Cock and bull story</b>	Made up story that one should not believe
<b>Cry for the moon</b>	Ask for the impossible
<b>The pros and cons</b>	The various aspects of a matter in detail
<b>Be in a tight corner</b>	In a very difficult situation
<b>Cross one's t's and dot</b>	Be precise, careful and one's i's exact
<b>At arm's length</b>	To keep at a distance
<b>Out of the question</b>	Impossible
<b>Out of the way</b>	Strange
<b>Show a clean pair of heels</b>	Run away
<b>Keep one's fingers crossed</b>	The anxiety in which you hope that nothing will upset your plans

**In the nick of time**

Just at the last moment

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<b>Sitting on the fence</b>	Hesitate between two decisions
<b>Spread like wild fire</b>	Spread quickly
<b>The gift of the gab</b>	Talent for speaking
<b>By hook or by crook</b>	By fair or foul means
<b>Feather one's own nest</b>	Make money unfairly
<b>Throw out of gear</b>	Disturb the work
<b>Take to one's heels</b>	Run away
<b>Tooth and nail</b>	With all one's power
<b>Die in harness</b>	Die while in service
<b>Take a leaf out of one's book</b>	Imitate one
<b>Leave no stone unturned</b>	Use all available means
<b>A man of straw</b>	A man of no substance
<b>Read between the lines</b>	Understand the hidden meaning
<b>In cold blood</b>	Deliberately and without emotion
<b>A thorn in the flesh</b>	A constant source of annoyance
<b>Smell a rat</b>	Suspect something foul
<b>Harp on the same string</b>	Dwell on the same subject
<b>Bury the hatchet</b>	End the quarrel and make peace
<b>Leave one in the lurch</b>	Desert one in difficulties; leave one in a helpless condition
<b>Like a fish out of water</b>	In a strange situation

<b>At one's beck and call</b>	Under his control
<b>To make both ends meet</b>	To live within one's income
<b>In hot water</b>	In trouble
<b>Nip in the bud</b>	Destroy in the early stage
<b>Stick to one's guns</b>	Remain faithful to the cause
<b>To eat humble pie</b>	To apologize humbly and to yield under humiliating circumstances
<b>In high spirits</b>	Very happy
<b>Put the cart before the horse</b>	Put or do things in the wrong order
<b>To all names</b>	To abuse
<b>On tenterhooks</b>	In a state of suspense and anxiety
<b>Wash one's dirty linen</b>	Discuss unpleasant in public-private matters before strangers
<b>To bell the cat</b>	To face the risk
<b>A hard nut to crack</b>	A difficult problem
<b>Let the cat out of the bag</b>	Reveal a secret
<b>A big gun</b>	An important person
<b>Kill two birds with one stone</b>	To achieve two results with one effort
<b>Take one to task</b>	Rebuke
<b>Gain ground</b>	Become Popular
<b>To blow one's own</b>	To praise one's own trumpet achievement
<b>A bosom friend</b>	A very close friend

<b>A brown study</b>	Dreaming
<b>Turn a deaf ear</b>	Disregard / ignore what one says
<b>A close shave</b>	Narrow escape
<b>Turn over a new leaf</b>	Change for the better
<b>Make up one's mind</b>	Decide
<b>In the long run</b>	Eventually; ultimately
<b>Bring to light</b>	Disclose
<b>Pay off old scores</b>	Take revenge
<b>Hard and fast rules</b>	Strict rules
<b>At the eleventh hour</b>	At the last moment
<b>To cut a sorry figure</b>	To make a poor show
<b>With a high hand</b>	Oppressively
<b>Burn one's fingers</b>	Get into trouble by interfering in other's affairs
<b>Laugh one's head off</b>	Laugh heartily
<b>Chew the cud</b>	Ponder over something
<b>Play second fiddle</b>	Take an unimportant part
<b>Above board</b>	Honest and open
<b>Through thick and thin</b>	Under all conditions
<b>Put a spoke in one's wheel</b>	To upset one's plans
<b>At sixes and sevens</b>	In a disordered/disorganized manner, chaotic

<b>At home</b>	Comfortable
<b>Alpha and omega</b>	The beginning and the end
<b>At sea</b>	Confused and lost
<b>By leaps and bounds</b>	Rapidly
<b>To burn one's boats</b>	Go back on a decision
<b>To beat about the bush</b>	Talk irrelevantly
<b>To burn candle at both ends</b>	To waste lavishly
<b>A bone of contention</b>	A source of quarrel
<b>Add fuel to the fire</b>	To aggravate the situation
<b>An acid test</b>	A critical test
<b>At a snail's pace</b>	Very slowly
<b>A bolt from the blue</b>	Something unexpected
<b>To build castles in the air</b>	Make imaginary schemes
<b>Once in a blue moon</b>	Something that happens very rarely
<b>Beating around the bush</b>	Avoiding the main topic
<b>Cry over spilled milk</b>	Complaining about a loss or failure from the past
<b>Chip on your shoulder</b>	When someone is upset about something that happened a while ago
<b>Piece of cake</b>	Something that is easy to understand or do
<b>Golden handshake</b>	A big sum of money given to a person when he/she leaves a company or retires
<b>Spill the beans</b>	To disclose a secret

<b>Blessing in disguise</b>	Something good and useful that did not initially seem that way
<b>Mean business</b>	Being Serious or Dedicated
<b>Come hell or high water</b>	Possible obstacles in your path
<b>Apple of one's eye</b>	Being cherished
<b>Bite off more than you can chew</b>	Not able to complete a task due to lack of ability
<b>The best of both worlds</b>	The benefits of widely differing situations, enjoyed at the same time
<b>Feeling a bit under the weather</b>	Feeling slightly ill
<b>Icing on the cake</b>	Something that turns good into great
<b>Cost an arm and a leg</b>	Be very expensive
<b>Jump the bandwagon</b>	To join a popular activity or trend
<b>Ball is in your court</b>	When it is up to you to make the next decision or step
<b>To be in the doldrums</b>	To be in low spirits
<b>To sit on the fence</b>	To remain neutral
<b>Break the ice</b>	To initiate a social conversation or interaction
<b>Hear it on grapevine</b>	To hear rumors about something or someone
<b>Can't judge a book by its cover</b>	Cannot judge something primarily on appearance
<b>It takes two to tango</b>	Actions or communications need more than one person
<b>Black and blue</b>	Full of Bruises
<b>Be on cloud nine</b>	Be very happy
<b>Last straw</b>	The final problem in a series of problems

<b>A bird's eye view</b>	A view from a very high place that allows you to see a very large area
<b>A litmus Test</b>	A method that helps to know if something is correct
<b>At the drop of a hat</b>	Willingness to do something instantly
<b>Afraid of one's own shadow</b>	To become easily frightened
<b>A house of cards</b>	A poor plan
<b>Fool's paradise</b>	False sense of happiness
<b>Get a raw deal</b>	To not be treated as well as other people
<b>Give cold shoulder</b>	To ignore
<b>Hand to mouth</b>	Live on only basic necessities
<b>Make a face</b>	To show dislike or disappointment through facial expressions
<b>It's Greek to me</b>	Something that is not understandable
<b>To pour oil on troubled waters</b>	To make peace
<b>Don't put all your eggs in one basket</b>	Do not put all your resources in one basket (in one place or thing)
<b>To put in a nutshell</b>	To say in a few words or to make something concise
<b>Back out</b>	To withdraw from a promise or contract
<b>Blow up</b>	To explode
<b>Back Up</b>	To support and sustain
<b>Back Upon</b>	To be relevant
<b>Break Down</b>	Failure in something
<b>Break off</b>	To end or discontinue

<b>Break Up</b>	To disperse / dissolve
<b>Bring up</b>	To rear
<b>Call forth</b>	To provoke
<b>Call out</b>	To shout
<b>Call upon</b>	To order
<b>Carry on</b>	To continue
<b>Cast away</b>	To throw aside
<b>Catch up with</b>	To overtake
<b>Come off</b>	To take place
<b>Cry Down</b>	To make little of
<b>Cry out against</b>	To complain loudly against
<b>Cut out</b>	Designed for
<b>Drop in</b>	To Visit Casually
<b>Drop out</b>	To fall
<b>Fall back</b>	To Recede; To Retreat
<b>Fall down</b>	From a higher position to a lower one
<b>Fall off</b>	To Withdraw; To Drop Off
<b>Fall under</b>	To come under
<b>Get along</b>	To Prosper; To Progress; To Proceed
<b>Get on with</b>	To Live Pleasantly Together; To Progress

<b>Get into</b>	To be involved in
<b>Give in</b>	To Surrender; To Yield
<b>Give over</b>	Not to do any longer
<b>Go after</b>	To Follow; To Pursue
<b>Go Down</b>	To be accepted
<b>Go without</b>	To remain without
<b>Go by</b>	To follow
<b>Hang about</b>	To Loiter near a place
<b>Hang upon</b>	To depend upon
<b>Hold out</b>	To Endure; To Refuse to yield; To continue; To offer
<b>Hold to</b>	Abide By
<b>Keep off</b>	To ward off
<b>Keep up with</b>	To keep pace with
<b>Knock out</b>	To win by hitting another one
<b>Keep something at bay</b>	Keep something away
<b>Let sleeping dogs lie</b>	Leave something alone if it might cause trouble
<b>Open the floodgates</b>	Release something that was previously under control
<b>Out of the blue</b>	Happen unexpectedly
<b>Out on a limb</b>	Do something risky
<b>Over the Top</b>	Totally excessive and not suitable for the occasion

<b>Pen is mightier than the sword</b>	Words and communication have a greater effect than war
<b>Push one's luck</b>	Trying to obtain more than what one has
<b>Reap the harvest</b>	Benefit or suffer as a direct result of past actions
<b>Roll up sleeves</b>	To get yourself prepared
<b>See eye to eye</b>	To be in agreement with
<b>Shot in the dark</b>	A complete guess
<b>Sink your teeth into</b>	Do something with a lot of energy and enthusiasm
<b>Take with a grain/pinch of salt</b>	To doubt the accuracy of information
<b>Skating on thin ice</b>	Do or say something risky
<b>Tight spot</b>	A difficult situation
<b>Strike while the iron is hot</b>	To act at the right time
<b>Take the plunge</b>	Venture into something of one's interest despite the risks involved
<b>Take a nosedive</b>	Rapid drop or decrease in value
<b>Think the world of</b>	Admire someone very much
<b>Stand in a good stead</b>	To be useful or be of good service to someone
<b>Take a back seat</b>	Choose to be less important in a role
<b>Wave a dead chicken</b>	Do something useless
<b>Whale of a time</b>	Enjoy a lot
<b>Wrap one's brain around</b>	Concentrate on something to understand
<b>Zero in on something</b>	Focus all attention on one thing
<b>Above all</b>	Chiefly, Mainly

<b>On Account of</b>	Due to
<b>On no account</b>	Not for Any Reason
<b>A Fidus Achates</b>	A faithful friend or a devoted follower
<b>The Heel of Achilles</b>	A Weak Point
<b>An Adonis</b>	A very handsome man
<b>To assume airs</b>	To affect superiority
<b>To stand aloof</b>	To keep to oneself and not mix with others
<b>To lead to the altar</b>	To marry
<b>An Ananias</b>	A Liar
<b>An Apollo</b>	A Man with Perfect Physique
<b>To Upset the Apple Cart</b>	To disturb the peace
<b>Apple Pie Order</b>	In perfect order
<b>Arcadian Life</b>	A blissful, happy, rural and simple life
<b>To take up arms</b>	To fight or go to the war
<b>To Grind</b>	To have some selfish objective in view
<b>To break the back of anything</b>	To perform the most difficult part
<b>To backbite a person</b>	To speak disguise about someone
<b>He has no backbone</b>	He has no will of his own
<b>To cause bad blood</b>	To Cause Enmity
<b>Bag and Baggage</b>	With all one's belongings
<b>To keep the ball rolling</b>	To keep things going
<b>Barmecide feast</b>	Imaginary Benefits

<b>Bee-line</b>	The shortest distance between two places
<b>Behind one's back</b>	Without one's Knowledge
<b>Behind the scenes</b>	In Private
<b>To hit below the belt</b>	To act unfairly in a contest
<b>To bite the dust</b>	To be Defeated in Battle
<b>A Wet Blanket</b>	A person who discourages enjoyment or enthusiasm
<b>A blue Stocking</b>	A learned/educated or intellectual woman
<b>At First Blush</b>	At first sight
<b>One's bread and butter</b>	One's means of livelihood
<b>To breathe one's last</b>	To Die
<b>To make bricks without straw</b>	To attempt to do something without proper materials
<b>To kick the bucket</b>	To die
<b>Good wine needs no bush</b>	There is no need to advertise something good
<b>To burn the candle at both ends</b>	To expend energy in two directions at the same time
<b>If the cap fits, wear it</b>	If you think the remarks refer to you, then accept the criticism
<b>Care killed the cat</b>	Don't fret and worry yourself to death
<b>To Catch one's eye</b>	To attract attention
<b>To take the chair</b>	To preside a meeting
<b>She is no chicken</b>	She is older than she says
<b>To pick and choose</b>	To make a careful selection
<b>To square the circle</b>	To attempt something impossible
<b>Every cloud has a silver</b>	Adverse conditions do not last forever

<b>lining</b>	
<b>Close fistcd</b>	Mean
<b>Cut your cloth according to your cloth</b>	Live within your income
<b>A cock and bull story</b>	A foolishly incredible story
<b>To be cock sure</b>	To be perfectly sure or certain
<b>To throw cold water upon anything</b>	To discourage efforts
<b>Off color</b>	Not in the usual form
<b>To commit to memory</b>	To learn by heart
<b>Too many cooks spoil the broth</b>	Where there are more workers than necessary
<b>Crocodile tears</b>	Hypocritical Tears
<b>Cut and dried</b>	Readymade
<b>Up to date</b>	Recent
<b>Evil days</b>	A period of misfortune
<b>Halcyon Days</b>	A time when there are peace and happiness in the land
<b>To step into dead man's shoes</b>	To come into an inheritance
<b>Go to the devil</b>	Be off
<b>Devil's bones</b>	Dice
<b>Devil's Playthings</b>	Playing Cards
<b>Give a dog a bad name and hang him</b>	Once a person loses his reputation
<b>Every dog has his day</b>	Sooner or later, everyone has his share of good fortune
<b>To throw dust in one's eyes</b>	To try to deceive someone or mislead someone
<b>A white elephant</b>	A useless possession which is extremely expensive to keep

<b>To set the Thames on fire</b>	To do something sensational or remarkable
<b>A burnt child dreads the fire</b>	One who has had a previous unpleasant experience is always scared of situations where such experiences are likely to be repeated
<b>A fish out of water</b>	Anyone in an awkward
<b>Foul play</b>	Cheating
<b>To jump from a frying pan into fire</b>	To come out of one trouble and get into a worse
<b>All that glitters are not gold</b>	Things are not always as attractive as they appear
<b>To die in harness</b>	To continue at one's occupation until death
<b>Make hay while the sun shines</b>	Take advantage of all opportunities
<b>Lock, stock and barrel</b>	The whole of everything
<b>A miss is as good as a mile</b>	Comes nowhere near it. If someone narrowly misses the target it still is treated as a missed one or failure.
<b>One swallow does not make a summer</b>	It is unreliable to base one's conclusions on only a single test or incident
<b>If wishes were horses, beggars might ride</b>	If wishing could make things happen, then even the most destitute people would have everything they wanted
<b>A nine days' wonder</b>	An event which relates a sensation for a time but is soon forgotten
<b>Yellow press</b>	Newspapers which publish sensational and unscrupulous stories and exaggerate the news to attract readers.
<b>A ball park figure</b>	A general financial figure
<b>To balance the books</b>	To make certain that the amount of money spent is not more than the amount of money received.
<b>A cash cow</b>	A product or service that makes a lot of money for a company
<b>Devil's Advocate</b>	To present a counter argument
<b>Don't give up the day job</b>	You are not very good at something. You could not do it professionally.
<b>To cook the books</b>	To modify financial statements
<b>To get the sack</b>	To be dismissed from your job

<b>To be snowed under</b>	To be very busy
<b>To work your fingers to the bone / to sweat blood</b>	To work really hard
<b>Hear it on the grapevine</b>	To hear rumors
<b>In the heat of the moment</b>	Overwhelmed by what is happening in the moment
<b>Not a spark of decency</b>	No Manners
<b>Speak of the devil!</b>	This expression is used when the person you have just been talking about arrives
<b>Whole nine yards</b>	Everything. All of it
<b>Your guess is as good as mine</b>	To have no idea about anything
<b>Fishy</b>	Doubtful, Suspicious
<b>First and foremost</b>	Extreme enthusiasm
<b>Fire and fury</b>	Fearful penalties
<b>Fire and brimstone</b>	A very tasty food or meal
<b>Finding your feet/ Finger licking good</b>	To become more comfortable in whatever you are doing
<b>Fabian policy</b>	Policy of delaying decisions
<b>Excuse my French</b>	Please forgive me for cussing
<b>Everything but the kitchen sink</b>	Almost everything and anything has been included
<b>Break a leg</b>	A superstitious way to say 'Good Luck' without saying 'Good Luck'
<b>Barking up the wrong tree</b>	A mistake made in something you are trying to achieve
<b>Bated breath</b>	In anxiety, expectancy
<b>Beat a dead horse</b>	To force an issue that has already ended
<b>Between Scylla and Charybdis</b>	Choice between two unpleasant alternatives

<b>Fixed in your ways</b>	Not willing or wanting to change from your normal way of doing something
<b>A penny saved is a penny earned</b>	By not spending money, you are saving money (little by little)
<b>A picture paints a thousand words</b>	A visual presentation is far more descriptive than words
<b>A piece of cake</b>	A task that can be accomplished very easily
<b>To hold a brief for</b>	Be retained as counsel for, to argue for
<b>Shot in the arm</b>	A boost or act of encouragement
<b>To go at each other hammer and tongs</b>	To do something or perform some task with tremendous fervor, determination
<b>Step into someone's shoes</b>	Take someone's place
<b>Back to drawing board</b>	Revising something from the beginning, typically after it has failed
<b>Bring / Ring The Curtain Down</b>	To bring something to an end; to declare something to be at an end
<b>A slap on the wrist</b>	A very mild punishment

**Directions (1-10):** In each of the following questions a statement has been given with highlighted text. You are required to replace the text with correct Idioms or phrases given in the options.

1. A video call from my favourite film star on my birthday was a **complete surprise**.

1. A damp squib
2. Bolt from the blue
3. A field day
4. A mare's nest

**Answer: 2**

2. The article on the world population published in today's journal is a **duplicate of** what was published the other day.

1. On tenterhooks
2. An Ananias
3. Dead Ringer

4. A wee bit

**Answer: 3**

3. Even though he is a learned person, he **talks nonsense** when it comes to morality and integrity.

1. Talks through one's hat
2. Bark up the wrong tree
3. Like a cat on hot bricks
4. Show a clean pair of heels

**Answer: 3**

4. The world today is **facing an unpleasant situation** because of the pandemic disease.

1. Thrown out of gear
2. Harps on the same string
3. Like a fish out of water
4. A bitter spill

**Answer: 4**

5. Students have **to face the risk** in order to attain success in the Civil Services exams.

1. To bell the cat
2. To nip in the bud
3. To take one to task
4. A hard nut to crack

**Answer: 1**

6. Due to lack of professional knowledge, the tricks used in the marketing and branding of the new product **yielded no result**.

1. Gained ground
2. No Avail
3. Throwing cold water on anything
4. Reaped the harvest

**Answer: 2**

7. Mary had a bad experience in relationship in the past, now, she is in **a state of confusion** whether she should marry someone or not.

1. All at Sea
2. Wrapped one's brain around
3. Playing ducks and drakes
4. At one's beck and call

**Answer: 1**

8. Being an atheist, he **differs strongly** with his parents teachings on principles and the idea of the almighty.

1. Call a spade a spade
2. Burn the midnight oil
3. At loggerheads
4. Keep one at bay

**Answer: 3**

9. She has **to begin gaining experience** if she wishes to join the media industry.

1. Cost an arm and a leg
2. Get one's feet wet
3. Cross one's T's and dots
4. To sit on the fence

**Answer: 2**

10. A large crowd was **anticipated** for the art exhibition by the organisers, but it did not happen.

1. Break down
2. A house of cards
3. On the cards
4. Keep up with

**Answer: 3**



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