

Idioms

Idioms are “a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words (e.g. over the moon, see the light).” We have attempted to cover all the important “idioms & phrases”, which are important for exams. So students need to go through all the idioms & phrases to have a better understanding of these type of questions.

'A'		
1.	Above board	Honest & Open
2.	Acid Test	Difficult Test
3.	Add fuel to the flame or fire	To make the situation worst
4.	At Sea, At a loss At your wit's end	Completely confused
5.	At cross purposes	At contrast/contrary
6.	Axe to grind	To behave selfishly
7.	A gentleman at large Snake in the grass	An unreliable person
8.	At daggers drawn	Full of enmity
9.	A close fist person	A miser
10.	At the first blush	At first sight
11.	Armed to the teeth	With weapons
12.	Add insult to injury	act in a way that makes a bad situation worse
13.	A bone to pick	A conflict to be resolved
14.	A Herculean Task	Very difficult work
15.	At the drop of a hat	Immediately
16.	A square deal	A deed full of honesty
17.	At odds	Contrast in thoughts
18.	Around the clock	All time
19.	All ears	Eager to listen
20.	Alive and kicking	Healthy and Active
'B'		
1.	Bad Blood	Old enmity
2.	Bad Mouth	To make comments on other
3.	Beyond the pale	Unacceptable by society
4.	Bite the dust	Defeat badly
5.	Bird Brain	Foolish
6.	Blink of an eye	Immediately
7.	Bits and Bobs	Many small things
8.	By fits and starts	Irregularly
9.	By the book	According to the rules

10.	By and large	Commonly
11.	Bury the hatchet	To foretold enmity
12.	Broken reed	An unreliable man
13.	Bread and butter	An issue directly affect the people
14.	Bottom line	Net profit/result
15.	Bone of contention	Cause of conflict
16.	Blue blood	Belong to high family
17.	Blow hot and cold	Fickle minded
18.	Beck and call	Ready to serve
19.	Bear the Palm	To win reward
20.	Back the wrong horse	to support a person or thing that fails
'C'		
1.	Call a spade a spade	In simple words/to tell the truth
2.	Carrot and stick	Policy of reward and punishment
3.	Carry the day	To become success
4.	Cast aspersions	To blame someone
5.	Curry favour	To flattery
6.	Cut above	Comparatively good
7.	Cross /Swords	To get enmity
8.	Come clean	To admit a mistake/crime
9.	Cliff hanger	An interesting situation
10.	Clean sweep	Clean victory
11.	Cat and dog life	Life full of Quarrel
12.	Cheek by jowl	Very closely
13.	Cloud nine	Extremely happy
14.	Crack of dawn	Early in the morning
15.	Cry over spilt milk	To regret uselessly
16.	Cook the book	To prepare false Accounts
17.	Chip off the old block	Same as parents
18.	Cock and bull story	A false story
'D'		
1.	Down to earth	Practical and realistic
2.	Dead right	Completely right
3.	Die in harness	To die on duty
4.	Draw the line	TO set limits
5.	Dog eat dog	A tough competition
6.	Drive home	To highlight a point
7.	Dime a dozen	Very common
8.	Devil's advocate	To favour wrong
9.	Dark horse	An unexpected winner
10.	Dry Run	To Rehearsal

11.	Drive someone up the wall	To make angry
'E'		
1.	Eat humble pie	To ask forgiveness
2.	Eagle Eyes	A keen observer
3.	At the eleventh hour	At the last moment
4.	Enough rope	To give freedom
5.	End in Smoke End in a fiasco	To get failure
6.	Even keel	In balance
7.	Eye wash	A deception
8.	Eye for an eye	Tit for tat
9.	Eat your words	To admit mistake openly
'F'		
1.	Face the music	To face consequences
2.	Fullness of time	At the correct time
3.	Fly a kite	To know public opinion
4.	Foul play	Mistake/Wrong act
5.	Fool's Paradise	Completely wrong thoughts
6.	Feather in one's cap	Any achievement
7.	Fair-weather friend	The friends of only good time
8.	Fat chance	Having no chance
9.	Flesh and blood	Close Relatives
10.	Flogging a dead horse	Try uselessly
11.	For the time being	For a short time
12.	Fall short on	To prove failure
13.	Foregone conclusion	a clean decision
14.	From scratch	since beginning
15.	Fight to the bitter end	To fight till last
'G'		
1.	Get the sack	To dismiss from the job
2.	Go a long way	To get success
3.	Greek to me	Out of understanding
4.	Gone fishing	Unaware about surrounding
5.	Grey area	Weak point
6.	Grease Someone's palm	To give bribe
7.	Go Dutch	To pay bill equally
8.	Gift of the gab	Expert in speaking
9.	Give the game away	To disclose secret
10.	Green-eyed monster	A jealous person
11.	Get a raw deal	To face humility
12.	Give it a shot	To try to do something

13.	Give one a piece of mind	To scold
14.	Go scot free	To escape from punishment
15.	Go off on a tangent	To charge the topic
'H'		
1.	Have the last laugh	To get succeed at last
2.	Hue and cry	To make a noise uselessly
3.	Hold water	Correct and logical
4.	Have a way with words	Expert in using words
5.	Hard up	Lack of money
6.	High and low	Everywhere
7.	Hobson's choice	Having no choice in fact
8.	Hornets' nest	A big problem
9.	Hand to mouth	Very poor
10.	Hale and Hearty	Completely healthy
11.	High and dry	Alone and helpless
12.	Hop, skip and a jump	Very close
'I'		
1.	In a fix	In difficult situation
2.	In the red	A situation of more expense than income
3.	In the good books of	Favourite of someone
4.	Ins and outs	Complete details
5.	In hot water	In a difficult situation
6.	In high spirits	In happiness
7.	In a nutshell	In brief
8.	In the long run	At last
9.	In apple pie order	Clean and in order
10.	In cold blood	deliberate and callously
11.	In saddle	Under control
'J'		
1.	Jump to a conclusion	To conclude without thinking
2.	Jump on the bandwagon	To follow a fashion blindly
'K'		
1.	Keep under wraps	to keep secret
2.	Knit brows	Tense and sad
3.	Kith and kin	Close relatives
4.	Kick the bucket give up the ghost	To die
5.	Kick in the teeth	To be treated badly and unfairly
6.	Knee jerk reaction	A quick & natural response
7.	Keep pants on	To have patience
8.	Keep at bay	To keep at a distance

9.	Keep ear to the ground	To keep a close eye on the situation
10.	Keep the wolf from the door	Avoid from poverty
11.	Keep body & soul together	To line with a great difficulty
‘L’		
1.	Look blank	To see flatly
2.	Long shot	Less chance of success
3.	Lose face	To spoil name goodwill
4.	Larger than life	Attractive & effective
5.	Left handed compliment	To praise in the manner of criticism
6.	Lion’s share	A great share
7.	Lock horns	To do quarrel/ conflict
8.	Long face	Sad/ unhappy
9.	Lead with the chin	Speak fearlessly
10.	Leave in the lurch	To leave in middle
11.	Let bygones be bygones	To forget the past
12.	Let the cat out of the bag	To disclose secret
13.	Level playing field	Equal opportunity
14.	Leave no stone unturned	To do all possible efforts
15.	Lip service	False respect
‘M’		
1.	Mend his ways	To reform oneself
2.	Make good the loss Make amends for	To compensate
3.	Miss the boat/ but	Not to avail opportunity
4.	Man of letters	A scholar
5.	Man of his word	One who keeps promise
6.	Man of means	Very rich
7.	Man of parts	Versatile
8.	Man of straw	A weak on easily affected person
9.	Mend fences	To compromise
10.	Make both ends meet	To survive hardly
11.	Make flesh creep	To make someone fear
12.	Make a mint	To earn a lot of money
‘N’		
1.	Nick of time	At the last moment
2.	Nail in the coffin	Cause of downfall
3.	Nail-biter	something that causes anxiety
4.	No love lost	enmity
5.	Nuts and bolts	An important part
6.	Not bat an eyelid	To show no reaction
7.	Nitty Gritty	Most important issue

8.	Nip in the bud	To end in start
'O'		
1.	Out and out	Completely
2.	On the cuff	On credit
3.	Off and on	Irregularly
4.	Out of this world	Marvelous
5.	Out of the blue	Suddenly, not expected
6.	Out of hand	Uncontrol
7.	On the cards	Certainly
8.	Once in a blue moon	Rarely
9.	Off-hand	Without preparation
10.	On the level	Honest
11.	On a roll	Period of success
12.	Olive branch	An Appeal for peace
'P'		
1.	Part and Parcel	Important & necessary part
2.	Pass the buck	To avoid from responsibility
3.	Pay old scores	To take revenge
4.	Pie in the sky	Impractical/imaginary plan
5.	Play by ear	To work without rules
6.	Play havoc	To destroy
7.	Play ducks and darker with	To waste
8.	Pay off odd scores	To pay old credit
9.	Put to the sword	To kill/to hang
10.	Poker face	Face with no emotion
11.	Pros and cons	Both sides
12.	Pay through the nose	To pay very high
13.	Prim and Proper	With etiquette
14.	Play fast and loose	To work irresponsible
15.	Point blank	To say in a straight manner
'Q'		
1.	Quick fix	A temporary solution
2.	Queer fish	Eccentric
'R'		
1.	Run Riot, Run amok	To become uncontrollable
2.	Rue the day	To repent
3.	Red letter day	An important day
4.	Read between the lines	To understand the hidden meaning
5.	Raining cats and dogs	Raining heavily
6.	Red carpet	Welcome warmly
7.	Rainy day	Days of difficulties

8.	Red hearing	To divert the main issue
9.	Red tape	To hinder the gout process
10.	Rule the wrong way	To make angry
'S'		
1.	See eye to eye	To agree
2.	Sail in the same boat	To be in the same situation (bad)
3.	See red	To get angry
4.	Shifting sands	Changing situations
5.	Sit on the fence	To be neutral
6.	Small try	
7.	Slap on the wrist	A light punishment
8.	Spit blood	To be extremely angry
9.	State of the art	Developed and modern
10.	Spick and span	Neat & clean
11.	Status Quo	As it is
12.	Smoking gun	A definite proof
13.	Smell a rat	To be something suspicious
14.	Spin a yarn	To develop a false story
15.	Sharp practice	Dishonest deeds
16.	Send him to covetry	To stop talking
'T'		
1.	Take someone to task	To scold
2.	Take stock of	To evaluate the situation
3.	Take someone for a ride	To deceive someone
4.	Take the bull by its horns	To face the challenge bravely
5.	Take forty winks	To take a nap
6.	Tall order	A difficult task
7.	Turn one's head	To feel my proud
8.	Take into account	To consider
9.	Throw down the glove/ Gauntlet	To challenge
10.	Tongue in cheek	Irony, not serious
11.	The man in the street	Common people
12.	Touch and go	May be good or bad result
13.	Toe the line	To follow a rule etc.
'U'		
1.	Under fire	Under criticism
2.	Under the table	Bribe
3.	Up in the air	Uncertain
4.	Ups and downs	Rise & Fall
5.	Under a cloud	Under suspicion
6.	Upset the apple cast	To spoil a plan

7.	Upper hand	Comparatively good situation
'V'		
1.	Vicious circle	a sequence of reciprocal cause and effect
2.	Vent the spleen	To show anger
'W'		
1.	Wrong foot	Bad start
2.	Writing on the wall	Leading to a failure
3.	Worth your salt	Respectables
4.	With a heavy hand	In an excessive, authoritarian, or oppressive way or manner
5.	Win by a nose	To win closely
6.	Wet blanket	One who spoils enjoyment
7.	White elephant	A costly but useless thing
8.	Well-heeled	Very rich
9.	Walking on air	Extremely happy
10.	Wide of the Mark	Wrong, Illogical
'Y'		
1.	Young Turk	An uncontrollable rebellion
2.	Yeoman's Service	A great work
'Z'		
1.	Zero tolerance	Policy of not bearing wrong work
2.	Zero hour	Starting point of a time

Exercise

Direction: In questions 1 to 35, four alternatives are given for the idiom/phrase given bold in the sentence. Choose the alternative which best expresses the meaning of the idiom/phrase.

- For his alleged involvement in espionage, he is **under a cloud** these days.
 (a) experiencing cloudy weather (b) enjoying favourable luck
 (c) under suspicion (d) under observation
- We have appealed to him again and again; there is no use **flogging a dead horse** now.
 (a) repeating our request (b) making him see reason
 (c) beating about the bush (d) wasting time in useless effort
- we shouldn't **look down upon** the wretched of the earth.
 (a) sympathies with (b) hate intensely
 (c) be indifferent to (d) regard with contempt
- Because of his misbehavior, he is bound to **face the music**.
 (a) get finished (b) get reprimanded
 (c) feel sorry (d) listen to the music
- The working of the factory was disrupted on account of a **token strike** by the workers.
 (a) total strike (b) carefully planned strike
 (c) short strike held as a warning (d) sudden call of strike
- By opposing his proposal I **fell foul of** him.
 (a) quarreled with (b) felt annoyed with
 (c) agree with (d) did not agree with

7. Those who work **by fits and starts** seldom show good results.
(a) rarely (b) disinterestedly
(c) irregularly (d) regularly
8. The new manager thought that he would give employees **enough rope** for the first six months after which he would check the work done himself.
(a) many directives and orders (b) sufficient advice
(c) all the material they needed (d) enough freedom for action
9. He was all **at sea** when he began his new Job.
(a) happy (b) sad
(c) puzzled (d) triumphant
10. The **sweeping statement** by the boss left the conscientious workers disgusted.
(a) rash statement (b) unpremeditated statement
(c) thoughtless statement (d) generalized statement
11. When he saw the snake he **took to his heels**.
(a) ran away in fear (b) went slowly
(c) walked in fear (d) jumped fast
12. He has to abide by the **hard and fast** rules of the company.
(a) flexible (b) strict
(c) difficult (d) honest
13. She goes to her mother's house **off and on**.
(a) frequently (b) rarely
(c) occasionally (d) sometimes
14. The robber **murdered** the woman in **cold blood** for the sake of the jewels.
(a) a murder done without feeling
(b) a murder done in revenge
(c) a murder done in great anger
(d) a murder done in enmity
15. Indians are **going places** in the field of software technology.
(a) going abroad (b) going to spaces
(c) talented and successful (d) friendly and amicable
16. He went on **sowing wild oats**; he reaped suffering in his later life.
(a) inviting troubles as a boy
(b) warning others as a young man
(c) irresponsible pleasure seeking in young age
(d) sowing grains called oats when young
17. I don't know why she has become **stand-offish** recently.
(a) angry (b) hilarious
(c) indifferent (d) unmanageable
18. Why don't you put an end to **blowing your own trumpet**?
(a) playing your own trumpet to produce music
(b) making too much noise
(c) praising your own abilities and achievements
(d) none of the above
19. I knew he had **an axe to grind** and turned down his offer of help.

- (a) a blunt axe (b) a sharp tongue
(c) a private interest to serve (d) a tendency to fight
20. The saint's life was **an open book**.
(a) an uncomplicated one (b) one that held no secrets
(c) an example to all (d) an interesting biography
21. **Reading between the lines** I realized that my friend wanted to keep something from me.
(a) looking for meanings that are not actually expressed
(b) reading carelessly
(c) reading with anxiety
(d) glancing over the lines
22. Sometimes, it happens that we have **to give the devil his due**.
(a) to give credit to even a notorious person
(b) to give encouragement even to the enemy
(c) to invite the devil
(d) to stand in the way of the devil
23. The king had been made **to eat humble pie**.
(a) to eat slowly (b) to have an excellent dish
(c) to eat a good pie (d) to have to apologies
24. He was given **Hobson's choice** by the employer.
(a) excellent choice (b) no real choice at all
(c) choice to live or die (d) first choice
25. He has a very nice manner, but you would better take what he says **with a grain of salt**.
(a) to listen to something with considerable doubt
(b) to talk sensibly
(c) to criticize
(d) to complement
26. I think it is **a square deal**.
(a) a fair bargain (b) a decent sale
(c) a unfair sale (d) an unfair bargain
27. Rohit will have to **mend his ways** if he wants to keep his job.
(a) modify his plans (b) improve his work
(c) improve his habits (d) plan his future
28. His winning the Man of the Month award is **a feather in his cap**.
(a) a feather added to his collection
(b) an achievement of which he can be proud
(c) an exciting event
(d) a prize no one else has won
29. Ever since the Sinhas moved to their new flat, they've tended to **put on airs**.
(a) play a lot of music
(b) use the fan a great deal
(c) behave as if they're better than they really are
(d) become very argumentative and opinionated
30. Through he is **a close fisted person**, he donated liberally to the Earthquake Relief Fund.
(a) a frugal person (b) physically handicapped
(c) a miserly person (d) a poor person

31. The judge **turned down** the plea of the accused.
 (a) accepted (b) rejected
 (c) heard (d) opposed
32. I dislike people who keep talking **nineteen to the dozen**.
 (a) too much (b) too loudly
 (c) incessantly (d) too little
33. It is not easy to **beat off** a swarm of wasps if they attack you.
 (a) catch (b) swish off
 (c) drive back (d) escape
34. In the securities scam, the ministers and the Governor of the Reserve Bank were said to be **above board**.
 (a) honest (b) uninvolved
 (c) indifferent (d) accountable
35. A wise politician is one who keeps his flatterers **at an arm's length**.
 (a) well looked after (b) in good humour
 (c) quarrelling among themselves (d) at a safe distance

Direction: In these following questions, four alternatives are given for the Idiom/Phrase mentioned below. Choose the one which best expressed the meaning of the Idiom/Phrase and mark in the answer sheet.

36. A dark horse
 (a) an unforeseen competitor (b) a black horse
 (c) a nightmare (d) an unknown person
37. To run across
 (a) to have an appointed meeting (b) to meet by chance
 (c) to run in the playground (d) to run very fast
38. To get one's own back
 (a) to get one's revenge (b) to get control over someone
 (c) to get one's position back (d) to get hold of someone
39. To steer clear of
 (a) to drive carefully (b) to avoid
 (c) to explain clearly (d) to escape
40. To beat a retreat
 (a) to withdraw in defeat or humiliation
 (b) to withdraw after scoring a victory
 (c) to march back after a ceremonious parade
 (d) to run away in fear
41. To blaze a trail
 (a) to lead the way as a pioneer (b) to light a track
 (c) to set up a fire (d) to wear a blazer while running
42. Red-letter day
 (a) colourful day (b) fatal day
 (c) happy and significant day (d) happyless day
43. Have the last laugh
 (a) be of a cheerful nature
 (b) laugh only after understanding something
 (c) to be victorious at the end of an argument
 (d) to crack the final joke

44. Turn a deaf ear
 (a) disregard (b) defy
 (c) disobey (d) dismiss
45. To smell a rat
 (a) to experience bad smell (b) to misunderstand
 (c) to see a hidden meaning (d) to suspect a trick
46. Fly a kite
 (a) take some more time musing over details
 (b) take it easy
 (c) put forward the idea to test public reaction
 (d) enjoy himself
47. Put his foot down
 (a) resign (b) not yield
 (c) withdraw (d) accept the proposal unconditionally
48. Keep a level head
 (a) remain cool and composed (b) eke out an existence
 (c) make both ends meet (d) maintain a standard of living
49. Call a spade a spade
 (a) say something to be taken seriously
 (b) desist from making controversial statements
 (c) find meaning or purpose in your action
 (d) be outspoken in language
50. Rode roughshod over
 (a) showed lack of consideration of feelings and wishes of
 (b) spoke rudely to
 (c) rejected the appeals of
 (d) insulted

Solutions

1.	c	2.	d	3.	d	4.	b	5.	c
6.	d	7.	c	8.	d	9.	c	10.	c
11.	a	12.	b	13.	c	14.	a	15.	c
16.	c	17.	c	18.	c	19.	c	20.	b
21.	a	22.	a	23.	d	24.	b	25.	a
26.	a	27.	c	28.	b	29.	c	30.	c
31.	b	32.	a	33.	c	34.	a	35.	d
36.	a	37.	b	38.	a	39.	b	40.	d
41.	a	42.	c	43.	c	44.	a	45.	d
46.	c	47.	b	48.	a	49.	d	50.	a

