

Idioms quiz

Explain the meaning of each of the idioms in bold.

1. I don't want **to be a wet blanket**, but you really must play your music more quietly or you'll disturb the people next door.
2. 'Will you let me take you out tonight?' 'As long as we **go Dutch**.'
3. She's **an old hand at** magazines, having trained on *Cosmopolitan* before editing *Company*.
4. After two hours spent wandering in the snow, I realised we were **on a wild-goose chase**.
5. He **is the spitting image of** his father.
6. I'd prefer to do the paperwork **in one fell swoop**, and get it all over and done with.
7. I won't be long. **I'm just going to see a man about a dog**.
8. After **a shotgun wedding** at 20, she had 3 children before divorcing her husband.
9. Their wedding was magnificent, with a champagne reception, three-course dinner and a band – **the full monty**.
10. So you lost your job. Well, **it's all part of life's rich tapestry**.
11. She never forgave her husband for having **a one-night stand** when he was away on business.
12. The manager got early retirement and **a golden handshake** when the company was restructured.
13. If people are really interested in helping the homeless **they should put their money where their mouth is**.
14. First of all it was the car breaking down, then the fire in the kitchen and now Mike's accident. **It never rains but it pours!**
15. I just don't want him **getting on my case for** being late for work.
16. I got **the third degree** from my dad when I got in last night.
17. 'Did he say we could stay with him?' 'Well, **not in so many words**, but that's definitely what he meant.'
18. You wouldn't want me to lose my **love handles**, would you?
19. Nigel has been **a closet alcoholic** for years.
20. When we got married we didn't have any cupboards. We **had to make do with** wooden boxes.
21. You know that girl we were talking to last night – the one with the long blond hair? Well, I got her number. **How do you like them apples!**
22. I'm not surprised Caroline doesn't like him. He really **did a number on her** at work.
23. You seem to talk the talk but will you walk the walk?
24. Nothing of what he said made sense – he was **talking through his hat**.
25. Here comes Damian – **talk of the devil!**
26. If I ever found out she was **two-timing** me, I'd never speak to her again.
27. He's so arrogant, he won't even **give you the time of day**.
28. **There's more to this than meets the eye**. I suspect Tom's not telling the truth.
29. **You're teaching your grandmother to suck eggs**, Ted. I've been playing this game since before you were born!
30. We know about your affair with Brad. **The cat's out of the bag**.
31. An early training in **the school of hard knocks** was good preparation for a career in politics.

Idioms quiz

KEY

1. Someone who does or says something that stops other people from enjoying themselves.
2. To share the cost of something, especially a meal.
3. Someone who has done a particular job or activity for a long time and who can do it very well.
4. A situation where you waste time looking for something that you are not going to find, either because that thing does not exist or because you have been given false information about it.
5. To look very much the same as someone else.
6. If you do something in one fell swoop, you do everything you have to do at the same time.
7. A way of saying that you do not want to tell someone where you are really going, especially when you are going to the toilet.
8. A marriage that is arranged very quickly because the woman is going to have a baby.
9. If something is *the full monty*, it is as complete as possible.
10. It's one of the difficult or bad experiences that is part of a full and varied life.
11. An occasion when two people have sex but do not intend to see each other again.
12. A large sum of money which is given to someone when they leave a company, especially if they are forced to leave.
13. To support something that you believe in, especially by giving money.
14. Something that you say which means that when one bad thing happens, a lot of other bad things also happen, making the situation even worse.
15. To criticize someone in an annoying way for something that they have done.
16. A situation in which someone tries to find out information by asking you a lot of questions.
17. Used in order to say that someone means something, even though they haven't said it directly.
18. A layer of extra fat around the middle of a person's body. (jenkkakahvat)
19. He has kept the fact hidden and hasn't admitted it.
20. To manage to live without things you would like to have or with things of a worse quality than you would like.
21. Something that you say when you want someone to know how clever or successful you are, especially when you have done something better than they have.
22. To treat someone very badly or unfairly.
23. You say the necessary or expected things in a particular situation but will you actually do the necessary or expected things?
24. To talk about something without understanding what you are talking about
25. Said when a person you have just been talking about comes into the room (but only when you have been saying positive things about that person).
26. To have a sexual or romantic relationship with two people at the same time.
27. To refuse to speak to someone because you do not like them or because you think you are better than them.
28. Something you say when you think that something or someone is less simple than they seem to be at first.
29. To give advice to someone about a subject that they already know more about than you.
30. The secret has been revealed; people know the secret.
31. Learning through difficult experiences. (elämäkoulu)

Idioms quiz – part two

Explain the meaning of each of the idioms in bold.

1. We're **breaking new ground** in television comedy. You're unlikely to have seen anything like this before.
2. I know there's something wrong, but I can't **put my finger on** exactly what it is.
3. Here, have a swig of this. **That should put hair on your chest!**
4. You should **put your own house in order** before you start giving me advice.
5. **Put a sock in it**, you two! You've been arguing all afternoon.
6. Who **put all these ideas into her head** about becoming an actress?
7. You keep saying you're going to ask her out. Well, **put up or shut up**.
8. After months of lying about the money, I decided **to make a clean breast of it** and tell the truth.
9. Talks between the two countries **are making** very little **headway**.
10. Twenty jobs will have to be cut if the company's going to be made more efficient. **But you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs**.
11. I think **you'd better make yourself scarce** – at least until I've had a chance to talk to your father.
12. With only three minutes left to play, Rooney scored the winning goal **in the nick of time**.
13. I hear Wendy's **got a bun in the oven**.
14. When it comes to removing children from parents suspected of abuse, social workers **are damned if they do and damned if they don't**.
15. **Well, what do you know!** Andy is here on time for once.
16. The break-up of his marriage **put years on him**.
17. Banks **are bending over backwards** to lend people money.
18. I've lived through a lot of changes recently, but I've learnt **to take each day as it comes**.
19. I was content **to take a back seat** and let the rest of my family deal with the crisis.
20. I'm not worried about Taylor. **I've got his number** and I know what to expect.
21. The very thought of what she said **makes my toes curl**.
22. There isn't much hope of him getting custody of the children – as far as the law is concerned, his wife **holds all the cards**.
23. Jane's **had more than her fair share of** bad luck recently, what with losing her job and getting divorced.
24. Her **can-do attitude** is the reason we chose her for the job.
25. You should **do your homework** on the company before you attend the interview.
26. 'Let's eat. **Shall I do the honours?**'
27. I felt the situation had existed for far too long and it was time **to take a stand**.
28. The band's second hit single also went into the charts at number one, proving that they were not **just a flash in the pan**.
29. They really **went out of their way** to make us feel welcome.
30. It's **make-or-break time** for Finland's tennis players.
31. There were several penalties and the referee **had words with** one of the players after the match.
32. I've told her again and again that you're too busy to see her, but she **won't take no for an answer**.
33. That was the record that **made me sit up and take notice of** Nelly Furtado.
34. **It doesn't take a rocket scientist** to figure out that the government covered the whole thing up.
35. She'll **have kittens** when she hears that you've damaged her new car.

Idioms quiz – part two

KEY

1. We are doing something that is different from anything that has been done before.
2. To know or be able to explain exactly what is wrong.
3. Said when you are offering someone a strong alcoholic drink (or food that will make them strong and healthy).
4. You should solve your own problems.
5. Said in order to tell someone to stop shouting or making a noise.
6. Encouraging someone to do something they had not thought about doing before, especially something stupid.
7. You mean they should either take action in order to do what they have been talking about or stop talking about it.
8. It means to tell the truth about something, especially something bad or illegal that you have done, so that you do not have to feel guilty any more.
9. They are making very little progress.
10. It is difficult to achieve something important without causing any unpleasant effects.
11. It means to leave, especially in order to avoid trouble.
12. He scored at the last possible moment, just before it was too late.
13. She is pregnant.
14. They will be criticized whatever they do.
15. It is something that you say when you are surprised at something.
16. It made him look and/or feel much older.
17. They are trying very hard to do something, especially to help or please someone.
18. To deal with things as they happen, and not to make plans or to worry about the future.
19. To let other people take a more active and responsible role in a situation.
20. To know that someone is trying to do something bad and therefore be able to deal with them.
21. It makes you feel extremely embarrassed and ashamed for someone else.
22. To be in a strong position when you are competing with someone else, because you have all the advantages.
23. She has had an unfair amount of bad luck.
24. She is willing to try different ways to solve problems and is confident that she will succeed.
25. Do some background research so that you know all you need to know about something and are well prepared.
26. It refers to pouring drinks or serving food.
27. Time to make a determined effort to defend something or to stop something from happening.
28. Something or someone that is popular or successful for only a short time.
29. They made an exceptional effort on their behalf.
30. It's important enough to make them succeed, or fail completely.
31. He spoke to the player angrily.
32. She keeps on asking even though her request has already been refused.
33. It made them take notice and become interested.
34. It is obvious.
35. She will be very upset and angry.

Idioms quiz – part three

Explain the meaning of each of the idioms in bold.

1. 'What if the flight is delayed?' **'I'll cross that bridge when I come to it.'**
2. Look, if **push comes to shove** we'll just have to sell the car.
3. All this happened a very long time ago, **when you were a mere twinkle in your father's eye.**
4. Hey, it's 2.00 am already. I'm just about ready to **hit the sack.**
5. **They broke the mould when they made** Elvis. There's never been a star to match him.
6. **If it comes to the crunch,** will she play well enough to win?
7. Country and western music **is as American as apple pie.**
8. 'Did you know her then?' 'Yes, but **not in the biblical sense.'**
9. 'Is his name Howard?' **'Close, but no cigar.** It's Harold.'
10. We were only going away for the weekend, but Jack insisted on taking **everything but the kitchen sink.**
11. He's fresh out of college, still **wet behind the ears.**
12. You must be thirsty after all that work – would you care **to wet your whistle?**
13. For me, watching golf on television is about as interesting as **watching paint dry.**
14. Why does he talk to Alison as if she's stupid, when we all know she **could run rings around him?**
15. It's just a **run-of-the-mill** war film.
16. The last time we played squash he beat me **hands down.**
17. I'm in a **no-win situation** here. Whatever I do, I'm going to annoy someone.
18. We've certainly had our disagreements in the past, but **that's all water under the bridge now.**
19. I'll get you to the airport by 12 o'clock, **come hell or high water.**
20. I don't think we should **throw the baby out with the bath water.** There are some good features of the present system that I think we should retain.
21. We can go in his car if he prefers. **It's no skin off my nose.**
22. **Off the top of my head** I could probably only name about three women artists.
23. She was hoping that some glamorous young Frenchman would come along and **sweep her off her feet.**
24. I don't really know why, but somehow Clare and I **got off on the wrong foot.**
25. You've been living with Jean for five years, isn't it time you **made an honest woman of her?**
26. Despite being the daughter of two Hollywood stars, **she's** very much **her own woman** with her own acting style
27. When they sacked her, she simply set up a rival company of her own. **You can't keep a good woman down.**
28. **To add insult to injury,** her name was spelled incorrectly in the rejection letter.
29. Editors are very much **the backroom boys** of the film world.
30. I had no idea they were related. Oh well, **you live and learn.**
31. It was a bloody awful meal. **Pardon my French.**
32. I want to make sure we're **all singing the same tune** before we give any interviews to the newspapers
33. I bumped into **an old flame** of yours in Oxford on Saturday.
34. She was a teacher of **the old school** and believed in strict discipline.
35. Realizing I was **the new kid on the block** in this job, I was determined to prove myself.

Idioms quiz – part three

KEY

1. I'll deal with it when it happens.
2. This is what will have to be done if the worst comes to the worst.
3. It happened at a time before someone was born.
4. To go to bed.
5. It means someone or something is very special and that there is not another person or thing like them
6. Used in order to say what you will do when a difficult or important decision has to be made, for example.
7. It's typically American.
8. You mean you have not had sex with her.
9. What they tell you or what they do is nearly correct but not completely.
10. It refers to a lot of different things, many of which you do not need.
11. He is young and not very experienced.
12. It means to have a drink, especially an alcoholic drink.
13. You mean that it is very boring.
14. She has much more skill, ability, or intelligence than someone else.
15. It's ordinary.
16. It means to win easily.
17. A difficult situation in which the result will be bad for the people involved whatever the outcome.
18. It happened a long time ago and no one is upset about it now.
19. You mean you are determined to do it even if it is difficult.
20. It means to get rid of the good parts as well as the bad parts of something when you are trying to improve it.
21. It means you do not care about something because it will not affect you.
22. You say it without thinking about it for very long.
23. Do or say things to make her fall completely in love with him.
24. It means your relationship starts badly, often with an argument.
25. It means you marry someone that you are having a relationship with.
26. She behaves in the way that she wants and does not let other people influence her.
27. It means that a person with a strong character will always succeed, even if they have a lot of problems.
28. Someone who has caused a bad situation has made it even worse.
29. They do a lot of important work but don't get much attention or fame.
30. You say it when you have just discovered something that you did not know.
31. Used in order to apologize after saying a swear word which you think may have offended your listener(s).
32. We have to say the same things about a subject in public.
33. Someone with whom you had a romantic relationship in the past.
34. She had traditional ideas about how to do something and did not accept new ways of doing it.
35. It refers to someone who is new to something and has many things to learn about it.

Idioms quiz – part four

Explain the meaning of each of the idioms in bold.

1. I may be old, but **I haven't lost my marbles** yet.
2. It's good to see their goalkeeper's **not losing his touch**.
3. I don't intend **to lose any sleep over** this problem.
4. He'd **move mountains** for her but she treats him like dirt.
5. I don't really like using a computer, but you have **to move with the times**, I suppose.
6. Many young people learn to drive long before they officially **come of age**.
7. I don't want to wait **until kingdom come** before you get round to painting the fence.
8. I don't think she likes to praise men. **It goes against the grain**.
9. Cunningham, who usually **goes straight for the jugular**, seemed strangely reluctant to say anything.
10. His late-night visit to her home **has set tongues wagging**.
11. This is a private deal – we don't have **to do everything by the book**.
12. Les isn't much of a saver. It's **easy come, easy go** with him.
13. **Rise and shine**, sleepy head – you have to leave for school in twenty minutes.
14. I wasn't very keen on the decision but it was easier just **to go with the flow**.
15. I kept my composure throughout the funeral, but **I went to pieces** after everyone had gone home.
16. He finally decided **to come out of the closet** so his mother would stop asking him why he wasn't married.
17. We started to argue soon after we got married, and things **went downhill** from there.
18. If you miss any more classes, your teachers will be down on you **like a ton of bricks**.
19. If they cut down those trees, they'll do it **over my dead body**.
20. Is shopping on the internet **the shape of things to come**?
21. Apparently **he's turned over a new leaf** and he doesn't drink anymore.
22. I tried to stop the kids dropping their clothes on the floor, but finally decided it was **a lost cause**.
23. *The Eagles* said: "We won't play together again **till hell freezes over!**"
24. Tickets for the show are limited and we operate **on a first-come, first-served basis**.
25. You've got to apply for this job. **It's got your name written all over it**.
26. Mr Barker-Fowles was forced to **slum it** in economy class because there were no seats available in first class.
27. I'm sure you can talk yourself into believing that you're well. It's a case of **mind over matter**.
28. It was the kind of neighbourhood where everyone was intent on **keeping up with the Joneses**.
29. They'll probably **go easy on him** since he hasn't been in trouble before.
30. She's really **let herself go** since she split up with her husband.
31. Rob Thompson, the producer, admits the series **is going out on a limb** in that it is quite different from anything else currently on television.
32. I felt it was time **to come clean** and tell her what the doctor had told me.
33. He was such a gifted musician, I always knew he would **go places**.
34. I've **started the ball rolling** by setting up a series of meetings.
35. He's a public figure, and so a certain amount of media intrusion **goes with the territory**.

Idioms quiz – part four

KEY

1. I haven't started acting in a strange way and forgetting things.
2. If you lose your touch, you can no longer do something as well as you could before.
3. It means to not worry about something.
4. Somebody is so important to you that you would do anything to please them.
5. It means to change your way of living or working to make it modern.
6. It means to reach the age when you are an adult and are legally responsible for your behaviour.
7. I don't want to wait for a very long time.
8. It means you do not like saying or doing it and it is not what you would usually say or do.
9. The jugular is a large vein in the neck that runs straight to the heart. Used figuratively, the expression means that you criticize someone in a way that you know will harm them the most.
10. It has caused people to gossip about them.
11. It doesn't have to be handled exactly as the rules dictate.
12. Used in order to say that something, especially money, was easily obtained and is just as easily used or spent.
13. Something you say to tell someone to get out of bed and start their day (like the sun).
14. It means to do what other people are doing or to agree with other people because it is the easiest thing to do.
15. To become so upset that you are unable to control your feelings or think clearly.
16. To reveal that you are sexually attracted to people of the same sex as yourself.
17. Things gradually became worse.
18. They will punish you very quickly and severely.
19. You mean that you will do everything you can to prevent it.
20. A sign of what is likely to become popular in the future.
21. He has started behaving in a better way.
22. Something or someone that has no chance of success.
23. They meant that it would never happen.
24. It means that the people who ask for something first will be the ones who get it, when there is not enough for everyone.
25. You have all the qualifications that are needed for that job.
26. To spend time in worse conditions than you are used to.
27. A common way of referring to the power of the mind to control and influence the body and the physical world generally.
28. Trying to have all the things that your neighbours have so that you don't appear to be less successful or wealthy than they are.
29. To treat someone in a gentle way and not punish them severely if they have done something wrong.
30. It means to take less care of your appearance.
31. To be the only person who takes or has taken a risk, with the result that you are in a weak position.
32. It means to tell the truth, often about something bad that you have been trying to keep a secret.
33. Become very successful.
34. It means to do something which starts an activity, or to start doing something in order to encourage other people to do the same.
35. Used in order to say that something, usually a problem, is an unavoidable part or result of a particular situation.