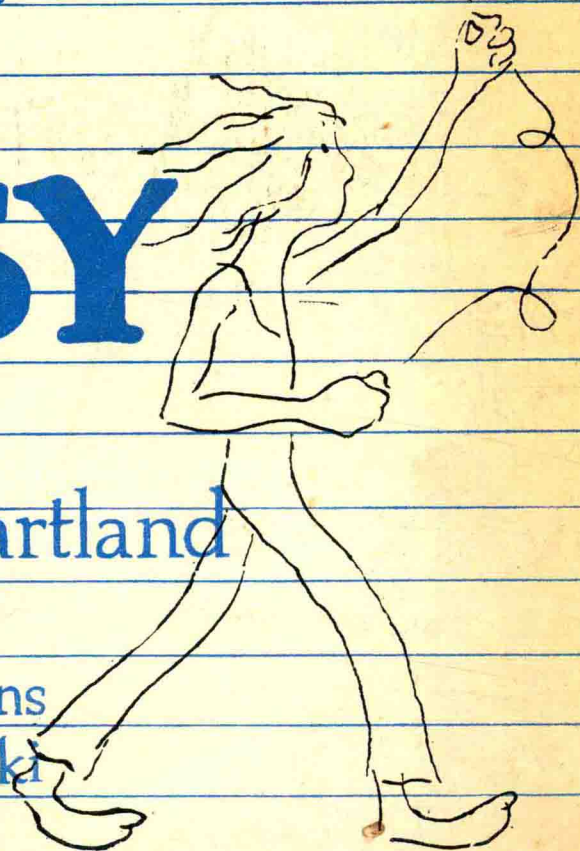


American Idioms

# TAKE IT EASY

Pamela McPartland

Illustrations  
A. Kaletski



# TAKE IT EASY

## *American Idioms*

Pamela McPartland  
*Hunter College*  
*City University of New York*

*Illustrations by* **Alexander Kaletski**

Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

McPartland, Pamela.

Take it easy.

1. English language--Text-books for foreigners.
  2. English language--Idioms, corrections, errors.
  3. English language--Conversation and phrase books.
  4. English language--Terms and phrases. I. Title.
- [PE1128.M327] 428.3'4 80-25142

ISBN 0-13-882902-0

*to my mother Rosie*

© 1981 by Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632

All rights reserved. No part of this book  
may be reproduced in any form or  
by any means without permission in writing  
from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Editorial/production supervision and  
interior design by Marybeth Brande  
Cover design by Judith A. Matz  
Manufacturing buyer: Harry P. Baisley

PRENTICE-HALL INTERNATIONAL, INC. *London*  
PRENTICE-HALL of AUSTRALIA PTY. LIMITED, *Sydney*  
PRENTICE-HALL of CANADA, LTD., *Toronto*  
PRENTICE-HALL of INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED, *New Delhi*  
PRENTICE-HALL of JAPAN, INC., *Tokyo*  
PRENTICE-HALL of SOUTHEAST ASIA PTE. LTD., *Singapore*  
WHITEHALL BOOKS LIMITED, WELLINGTON, *New Zealand*



## *Acknowledgments*

I wish to express my appreciation to the many people who contributed directly or indirectly to this book. First, I would like to thank Dr. Margaret Bedard of the College of New Rochelle, Professor John Fanselow and Professor Clifford Hill of Teachers College, Columbia University. I am especially indebted to Mr. Charles Barbosa who sparked my interest in idioms, and to my colleagues, Alan Devenish, Harriet Rubin, Joseph Barbarino, Robert Fertitta and Susan Schevers for testing out various drafts of the material in their classes, and making invaluable suggestions. The people who deserve much of the credit for this book are all the students who responded so well to the material, particularly Debora Tavares, Felix Bryla, Kazuo and Mieko Yamane, Mario and Doris Ponce, Angelica Sarmiento, Margret Dunkel, Bernard Yearly, Hiroko Fuse and Takashi Misu.

Richard Grassey, formerly of Prentice-Hall was the one who got the ball rolling, and Pam Kirshen, of Prentice-Hall contributed guidance and many suggestions for improving the book.

A special word of thanks goes to Alexander Kaletski whose insight and imagination played a major part in shaping the book into its present form.

*Pamela McPartland*  
February 19, 1980

## To the Student

*Take It Easy* is a book about idioms. In fact, "take it easy" is an idiom. An idiom is a group of words (two or more) which together form a unit. The meaning of the unit is different from the meaning of each of the individual words. For example, the group of words "take it easy" means "relax." The word, "take," alone, does not mean "relax," and "easy," alone, does not mean "relax," but when they are combined, as in "take it easy," they form a unit which means "relax."

This does not mean that every group of words is an idiom. For example: "in the morning," and "on the desk," are groups of words but they do not form a unit of meaning. Therefore, they are not idioms.

Many words used in English idioms come from Old English (Anglo-Saxon), or Middle English, ancestors of the English we use today. Their one-word equivalents often come from Latin. For example:

talk into	=	convince
Old English		Latin

Therefore, idioms are at the heart of the English language. As you probably have noticed, idioms sound less formal than their Latin equivalents. For example:

She <i>made up</i> an excuse.	(informal)
She <i>invented</i> an excuse.	(formal)

This does not mean that all idioms are slang or incorrect English. Most idioms are perfectly acceptable forms of expression and appear in literature, magazine and newspaper articles, and can be heard in speeches, and radio and television broadcasts.

By doing the exercises in this book, you will learn to recognize and use 164 verb idioms. First, you will read an introductory passage which contains several idioms related to one theme. Each theme is practical and should help you communicate better in your everyday life. Then, you will do exercises to discover the meaning of the idiom, and to learn the position of any objects that the idiom requires. For example:

get [     ] across

He got            across           . (it)

In the text, the position of the object is shown by brackets, [    ].

But to use idioms correctly, it is not enough to know the meaning and the position of the object. You must also know what words are generally associated with each idiom.

For example:

Put on \_\_\_\_\_

- a. (X) your glasses
- b. (X) your necklace
- c. ( ) your comb and brush

Both a and b can be used with the idiom *put on*, but c cannot.

This book has special listening comprehension exercises and tapes to give you practice hearing the idioms in context. This also serves as excellent preparation for the Listening Comprehension section of the T.O.E.F.L. (Test of English as a Foreign Language).

To master idioms, you must also practice using them in your own sentences. There are **Practical Application** exercises to give you the opportunity to write original sentences using the idioms. You will also find exercises which focus on the \*preposition or \*\*particle which follows the verb in many idioms.

\*A preposition is a word which follows a verb and requires an object.

Examples: He escaped *from* prison. We are leaving *for* Chicago.

**\*\*A particle is a word that is used with a verb to give the verb a special meaning. A particle is not followed by an object.**

Examples: We must get *together*.      Go *ahead*.



For example:

I can't cope \_\_\_\_\_ this situation any longer. You are driving me \_\_\_\_\_ of my mind. You know it gets \_\_\_\_\_ my nerves, but you continue to do it anyway.

At the end of the book there is an extensive review section which tests all the idioms presented in the book. You will also find the following:

- a. List of prepositions and particles
- b. Idioms and the position of their pronoun objects and noun objects
- c. Idioms listed according to preposition or particle
- d. Alphabetical listing of the idioms
- e. Transcripts of the listening comprehension exercises
- f. Answer key

*Take It Easy* is designed for use in class but it may also be used for self study since the answers are given in the book. The important thing is to take it easy! Don't try to memorize each idiom. By doing all the exercises you will learn more and more about how to use each idiom. The study of idioms can be enjoyable as well as rewarding. Idioms are at the heart of English and they will bring you closer to a native-like command of the English language.

## To the Teacher

*Take It Easy* is a book of verb idioms. It contains ten lessons with idioms presented in a variety of contexts including a dialog, monolog, resume, letter, advertisement, etc.

*Take It Easy* is the first book of idiomatic expressions to present idioms relating to a specific topic (e.g. work, love, travel) in a meaningful context and provide extensive exercises to help students gain mastery of the idioms.

The material is geared to high intermediate or advanced students of English as a second or foreign language. By the time students reach the advanced level they recognize the importance of being able to understand and use idiomatic English.

There are varying degrees of idiomacity, that is, some idioms are considered highly idiomatic (e.g. come up with, have a crush on) and others are considered semi-idioms (e.g. cope with, apply for). If, for example we removed or changed any of the words in the idiom *come up with*, we would not retain the meaning, i.e., come with, come up, go up with, come, do not mean 'invent.' However, with the idiom *cope with*, we can eliminate the preposition *with*, or change *cope* to *deal* and still retain the meaning of the idiom, that is, 'tolerate.'

<i>come up with</i>	≠	come with, come up, go up with, come
<i>cope with</i>	=	cope, deal with



## Degrees of Idiomaticity

## Semi-idioms

cope with  
apply for  
turn around  
listen to  
fill up

## True idioms

come up with  
have a crush on  
drop by  
cut out  
run over

Idioms have been given a variety of names including: two-word verbs; phrasal verbs; prepositional verbs; and idiomatic expressions. For the sake of simplicity, all the expressions in this text will be referred to as *idioms*.

Most of the idioms in *Take It Easy* fall into one of six patterns. The patterns are not presented in the text proper because it is not necessary for students to be able to discuss the patterns in order to learn the idioms. The danger in presenting the patterns to students is that they will be so preoccupied with the patterns and the terms of each pattern that they will never fully grasp the meaning of the idiom itself. In the text, the students are simply shown the position of the direct object and/or prepositional object by the use of brackets, [     ].

The six patterns are:

### Examples

1. Intransitive verb + Particle — — — — — come on
2. Intransitive verb + — — [ ] — — — — — put across [the  
Preposition park]
3. Intransitive verb + Particle + — — — — — go back to [his  
Preposition country]
4. Transitive verb + Particle — — — — — fill [it] up
5. Transitive verb + Preposition — — — — — talk [him] into [it]
6. Transitive verb + Particle + — — — — — drive [her] out of  
Preposition [her mind]

If a teacher wishes to present these patterns to the students, it would be necessary to clarify the following terms:

- a. **Intransitive verb** = a verb which is not followed by an object.  
Examples of intransitive verbs: come, go, get, stay.  
**Transitive verb** = a verb which must be followed by an object.  
Example: put it on. The object is it.  
 c. **Particle** = a word that is used with a verb to give special meaning to the verb. It is not followed by an object.  
Example: away, back.  
 d. **Preposition** = a word which follows a verb and requires an object.  
Example: from, of.

Note that some verbs can be both transitive and intransitive.

It should also be noted that some words function only as prepositions, some only as particles, and others as both prepositions and particles. (Refer to the Table of Prepositions and Particles.)

In addition to the above patterns this text includes complex expressions which contain other parts of speech besides prepositions and particles such as nouns and adjectives, examples: make *a living* by, drive somebody out of *his mind*. Many of these expressions although they look different fit into the above patterns.

Make [a living] by [ ] = Number 5, Transitive verb + Preposition

Drive [somebody] out of [his mind] = Number 6 Transitive verb +  
Particle + Preposition

This book contains a few idioms which have a preposition or particle but do not fit into the above patterns, example:

bring [ ] into [contact] with [ ] = Transitive verb + Preposition +  
Preposition

There are also a few idioms that have no preposition or particle and therefore do not fit into the patterns, example:

take it easy, make good time

Rather than concentrating on the grammatical patterns, the teacher may wish to spend class time helping students learn how flexible each idiom is, for example:

- what tenses are commonly associated with the idiom
- what grammatical structures are usually associated with the idiom, for example: passive voice, imperative form, the -ing form of the verb
- what objects, in addition to those presented, are appropriate to the idiom
- whether any words may be omitted without destroying the unit, example: *She winds him around her little finger*. "Little" may be omitted.
- What pronouns are used with certain idioms, example: He drives *me* out of *my* mind, (Object pronoun and possessive pronoun)  
She buried *herself* in *her* work, (Reflexive pronoun and possessive pronoun)
- Which idioms are semi-idioms, i.e. which ones retain the meaning without the preposition. Examples: We couldn't *cope with* it. We couldn't *cope*.
- Other meanings of the idiom

All the idioms in *Take It Easy* are listed in their base form, i.e. the infinitive without 'to' except those which contain a verb restricted to a certain form, examples:

*It stands to reason* (Always third person singular)  
*To tell you the truth* (Always the full infinitive)

Likewise, if the idiom contains a noun that is always either singular or plural, it is listed that way, example:

go through the proper channels

The idioms that appear in this text were chosen because of the frequency with which they are used in everyday life. The topics are among the most commonly discussed themes and they appear regularly in newspaper and magazine article. Certain idioms are labeled "informal" e.g. *calm down* and *fix up* because they have a casual tone and represent a closeness or familiarity between speakers. It also means that they are predominantly used in spoken rather than written English. There is no slang in this book because of its tendency to go out of date quickly.

*Take It Easy* uses an inductive approach to the study of idioms. Students read a story containing the idioms without seeing any definitions, and are then expected to guess the meaning of each idiom. The book does not contain mechanical drills which students can do by simply following a model. Each exercise requires the student to think, to draw his own conclusions about the idioms, and to guess.

*Take It Easy* can be used for a separate class in idioms or as an ancillary text for a grammar class, (e.g. idioms are fun to use to review the tenses) or for a vocabulary class or a conversation class. This material also provides excellent practice for the listening comprehension section of the TOEFL.

There are many ways to use this text. The number of different things that can be done to help students master the material depends, of course, on how much class time can be devoted to idioms. To complete the ten lessons in this book requires approximately twenty hours of class time. If that much time cannot be spent on idioms, it is recommended that only five chapters be covered a semester, or the students can be assigned most of the exercises for homework, except for the listening comprehension. If it is possible to spend more than twenty hours on this material, the students should be given a great deal of oral and written practice using the idioms in the students' own sentences and situations. The following suggestions are provided to help the teacher make good use of the exercises in the book:

- I. *THE ILLUSTRATIONS* help the students focus on the topic and remember particular idioms. The pictures generally do not illustrate the introductory passage but are related in a broad sense.
  - a. The students describe the picture in their own words, as a pre-test. This can be an oral or written exercise.
  - b. After they do exercises in the chapter, they can write their own story about the picture using as many idioms as possible.



- c. After covering two or three chapters, the students select one picture and ask each other questions about the idioms in those chapters. (There is an example of this in the review section at the back of the book.)

## II. *THE INTRODUCTORY PASSAGE*

- a. The teacher reads the story aloud, then students retell it in their own words. This is the first step in guessing the meaning of the idioms from the context.
- b. The students read the passage line-by-line replacing each idiom with other words. Again, they are guessing the meaning.
- c. The students read each line and write the meaning on their 'Notes' page.
- d. The teacher or a student dictates the passage and the students write it below the illustrations.
- e. The students transform the story into a different tense, indirect speech, questions, etc.

## III. *NOTES*

This page gives valuable information about grammar, style and the position of the object.

- a. The students write the meaning of the idiom.
- b. The students write sample sentences.
- c. The students copy sentences containing the idiom from a short story, novel, newspaper or magazine.
- d. The students give examples of appropriate direct objects and objects of the preposition for each idiom that requires an object.
- e. The students practice saying the idioms with correct stress. In general, prepositions are unstressed, and verbs and particles are stressed.

## IV. *DEFINITIONS*

- a. After the students do this exercise, the teacher says a sentence using the meaning of the idiom and the students must say the sentence with the idiom. Students may wish to look at the list of idioms on the 'Notes' page.

## V. *WORD ASSOCIATION*

- a. The students must explain why one response is wrong. Some reasons are as follows:
  - 1. The answer repeats the meaning of the idiom
  - 2. There is a word missing
  - 3. It is a literal understanding of the idiom

4. The object must be:
  - a. a person, or persons
  - b. a thing
  - c. a situation
  - d. a place
  - e. an action
  - f. a specific thing, e.g. a country, an expensive item, a ruler, something negative, a problem
5. The grammar is incorrect, e.g. the idiom must be followed by the -ing form
6. It doesn't make sense (or it conflicts with the meaning of the idiom)
7. It is too general
8. It doesn't correspond to the subject

#### VI. *POSITION OF THE OBJECT*

- a. The students change pronoun objects to nouns noting which idioms have two positions for the noun, e.g.,

He built it up

He built the company.

He built the company up.

but

We came across it.

We came across an interesting advertisement.

- VII. *LISTENING COMPREHENSION* This is a test of the students' ability to hear and understand the idioms when they are mixed with other words which may or may not be familiar to the student.

- a. The students discuss why two responses are incorrect. They will have to refer to the transcript.
- b. The students read and act out the dialogues adding their own sentences.

- VIII. *FILL IN.* This is a review of the prepositions and particles in the idioms.

- IX. *PRACTICAL APPLICATION* exercises give the students a chance to write original sentences containing the idioms by making use of the information given. These exercises can be done individually or in groups.

- a. The students discuss the topic after doing the exercise.

Remember, the important thing is to take it easy. It is difficult for students to learn precisely how to use each idiom in one course. This takes constant practice and reinforcement. However, by doing the exercises in this book, students will come very close to the mastery of 164 idioms.

## Contents

Acknowledgments		iv
To the Student		v
To the Teacher		ix
Chapter One	CONVERSATION	1
Chapter Two	WORK	17
Chapter Three	RESIDENCE	36
Chapter Four	CRIME	51
Chapter Five	LOVE	69
Chapter Six	FASHION	83
Chapter Seven	ANGER	98
Chapter Eight	TRAVEL	113
Chapter Nine	TAKE IT EASY	127
Chapter Ten	IMMIGRATION	141
General Review		156
Appendices A-D		174
Appendix E: Listening Comprehension Transcripts		193
Appendix F: Answer Key		205



1

# CONVERSATION



K-

# Conversation

## INTRODUCTORY PASSAGE

*She:* Excuse me, I usually don't **strike up** a conversation with strangers, but can you tell me what kind of dog that is? I've never seen one like that before.

*He:* It's a bull terrier. I **gather from** your accent that you're not American, but you speak English very well!

*She:* Thanks. **To tell you the truth**, I still have trouble with English, especially vocabulary.

*He:* It's funny, I was just reading an article about the English language. Can I tell you about it?

*She:* Sure. **Go ahead**.

*He:* It says that an educated adult has a vocabulary of about 250,000 words. And **listen to this**—English has more words than any other language; there are about 450,000 words in the dictionary!

*She:* Oh, **come on**. That's impossible.

*He:* I'm not **making it up**. It's right here in the paper.

*She:* Well, now I understand why it's difficult for me to express myself.

*He:* I think you are able to **get your ideas across** very well.

*She:* Yes, but when people ask me the simplest things, sometimes I **just clam up**. 拒不开口

*He:* You've **touched on** an interesting point. In the article, it says that the everyday words in English come from Anglo-Saxon, but the sophisticated words come from Latin. If your language comes from Latin, **it stands to reason** that it would be easier for you to discuss politics than to discuss everyday life.

*She:* I'm very sorry but I completely **disagree with** your theory.

*He:* Well, now that we aren't strangers anymore, perhaps I could **talk you into** continuing this conversation over dinner!

*She:* Okay, but no politics, please.