

idiom drills

for students of English as a second language
second edition

George P. McCallum

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as a Second
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Preface

This second edition of *Idiom Drills* is designed to help foreign students of English at the upper-intermediate and advanced levels master 180 useful idiomatic expressions. In selecting the idioms in this collection, an attempt was made to include expressions currently in use in the United States and other English-speaking countries. Slang and regional expressions have been excluded, however.

The book is divided into six units, with five drills in each. At the end of each unit is a dramatized reading that incorporates all 30 idioms appearing in that unit.

Each lesson contains six new idioms with definitions and illustrative sentences. The idioms are practiced in a dialogue, an oral exercise, and a written exercise. There is also a communicative exercise in the form of questions for discussion.

There are various ways to use these drills and the teacher should feel free to incorporate them into his or her class in the manner most suitable for that class. However, since these are supplements to the basic lessons and take up no more than 15 or 20 minutes, the following approach is suggested as one that might be practical:

1. The instructor introduces the drill through the dialogue, which two students can read aloud.
2. The instructor goes over the definitions, making sure the class understands the meaning of the idioms.
3. The class then does the oral exercise.
4. The written exercise is assigned as homework.
5. In the following class period the teacher goes over the homework with the class, then the "Questions for Discussion" can be done. It would perhaps be better to do this communicative exercise toward the end of the hour since it lends itself to free conversation.
6. The reading at the end of each unit, being in the form of short, dramatic pieces, is meant to be read aloud in class by the students. It not only reviews the idioms in the unit but gives additional oral practice as well.

George P. McCallum

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UNIT ONE

DRILL 1

BRUSHING UP

DIALOGUE

A: Let's go to the movies. There's a good picture at the Roxy.

B: I'd like to, but I can't. I have to study. I forgot that I had to **brush up on** my French. Then, **all of a sudden**, I remembered.

A: Oh, come on! We'll be home early.

B: **I'd better not**. I have an exam tomorrow. I **was about to** begin studying when you came in. You know how it is—if you don't study, you don't pass. That **goes without saying**.

A: Exam? Tomorrow? Oh-oh!

B: **What's the matter?**

A: I just remembered. I have an exam, too!

B: We can go to the movies on Saturday.

DEFINITIONS

**brush up on
something**

**review something (a skill,
knowledge) one has learned in the
past**

I've been asked to repeat my speech
on Mark Twain. It's been over a year
since I gave it, however, so I'll have to
brush up on my notes.

all of a sudden

quickly, without advance warning
It started out to be a beautiful day.
Then, *all of a sudden*, it became
cloudy and began to rain.

had better

should, ought to
I'd better go now or I'll be late for
class.

**be about to do
something**

be on the point of doing something
Helen *was about to* leave when the
telephone rang

**(It/That) goes
without saying**

**(It/That) is so obvious that it
doesn't even have to be mentioned**
Frank is an extremely hard worker. It
goes without saying that his employers
are very pleased with him.

**What's the
matter?**

What's wrong?
What's the matter with Alice? She
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ORAL EXERCISE

In the oral exercises in each lesson the first student asks a question. The second student answers the question using one of the idioms from the drill. If an idiom is used in the question, a definition of that idiom is used in the answer.