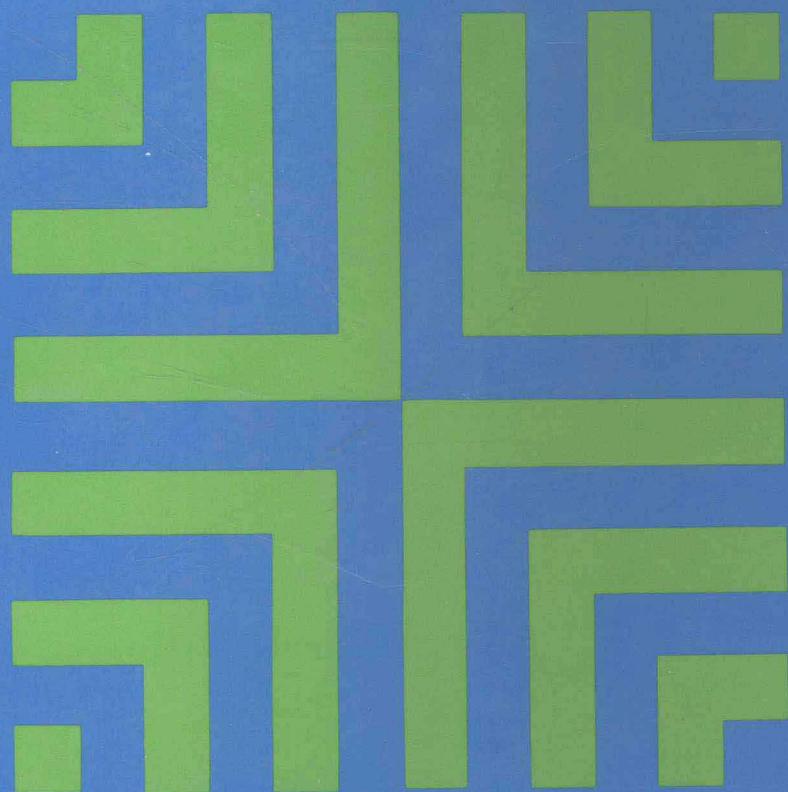


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RONALD E. FEARE

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# PRACTICE WITH IDIOMS



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PRACTICE WITH  
**IDIOMS**

# Preface

The purpose of this workbook is to encourage the active participation of the learner in acquiring knowledge of the meaning and structure of American idiomatic expressions. It is believed that students of English, especially those of the intermediate and advanced levels at which this book is aimed, are capable of searching for and discovering much of the relevant information regarding proper idiom usage with only minimal guidance and instruction from the teacher. This active involvement in the learning process can be of much greater benefit to the student than simple memorization.

To achieve this goal, the author has chosen to employ inductive, problem-solving techniques in this workbook which focus on the meaning and structure of American idiomatic expressions. Much emphasis has been placed on the ability to guess meaning from the context within which an idiom is used, and on the ability to figure out the grammatical features which distinguish certain sets of idioms. Once students are equipped with the necessary skills for analyzing and understanding idiomatic forms, they will be in a much better position to expand their knowledge beyond the scope of this workbook.

Few idiom textbooks currently available address themselves in any systematic way to the definable characteristics of idiomatic expressions. As a result, students learning English as a Second or Foreign Language often come to believe that idioms are insurmountable obstacles standing in the way of fluent control of the language. This attitude is particularly distressing because idioms play such an important role in all aspects of communication; without command of idiomatic expressions, students cannot truly feel comfortable and confident in their efforts to master English thoroughly.

It is hoped that the new approach incorporated in this workbook will serve to alleviate many of the difficulties encountered by students in their study of American idioms, and by instructors in their efforts to teach them.

# Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Ann Johns of the American Language Institute, San Diego State University, for her encouragement and advice in the preparation of this workbook, and Dr. Suzette Elgin, Department of Linguistics, San Diego State University, for her many useful suggestions for improving the organization and format of this text.

I would further like to acknowledge A. P. Cowie and R. Mackin whose text, *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English*, proved valuable in confirming the presentation of the grammatical categories used in this book.

# To the Instructor

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

*Practice With Idioms* is a workbook designed for intermediate and advanced level students of English as a Second or Foreign Language who have a basic knowledge of grammatical terms. The book may be effectively used at the high school, college, and university levels, as well as in adult education and intensive language center programs.

The workbook format of *Practice With Idioms* encourages the student to guess the meaning of idiomatic expressions by using contextual information. Use of this workbook requires some basic awareness of English grammar. Such terms as “subject,” “verb,” “preposition,” and “transitive/intransitive” should be well understood before an instructor attempts to use this book. The author would strongly suggest that the instructor preview chapters before work with the students begins, especially those units which deal with the important grammatical characteristics. In addition, it is suggested that the instructor preview the **Appendix**, which provides an explanation of the grammatical terms used in this book and which serves as a handy reference outline of all the grammatical structures. The **Appendix** should prove very useful for both student and teacher when talking about the grammar rules.

The instructor should find the exercises to be self-explanatory for the most part and should have little trouble in advising students of the work to be done. The instructor should soon feel comfortable in guiding students through their work, helping them to discover and understand for themselves the rules and concepts associated with the various idiomatic expressions.

## ORGANIZATION

Each chapter of this workbook, with the exception of the review chapters, is made up of the same set of exercises. The idioms are

divided into chapters according to their grammatical category. The chapters covering intransitive verbal idioms form **Section I** of the book; chapters covering transitive verbal idioms form **Section II**. Chapters covering nominal, adjectival, and adverbial idioms form **Section III**, which is intended primarily as supplementary material for those advanced students who move rapidly through **Sections I** and **II**. It is believed that verbal forms are more useful in general and deserve far greater concentration and effort. This is the reason why they constitute the larger and more important sections of the book.

## WORKING THROUGH A CHAPTER

**Part I**, a guessing exercise which begins each chapter, requires the student to analyze the contextual setting of the idiom and to extract an appropriate definition or synonym. In addition, the student is asked to underline those clues in the sentence which help him to guess the possible meaning of the idiom. These tasks foster and refine the student's ability to rely on his own knowledge and skill in deciding on meaning. This exercise also promotes class discussion and tends to limit student dependence on dictionaries as a source of definition. It is important to realize that there are no "correct" answers at this initial stage; the student is merely trying to provide some possible, acceptable meanings for the idioms. No attention should be given at this point to the grammar of the idioms, as this is covered thoroughly in following parts and would be a premature consideration.

**Part II**, a matching exercise, provides the student with a way to check the guesses made in **Part I**. The definitions are listed on the left side of sentences which have blanks to be filled in with appropriate idioms; the sentences are comprised of context clues which are very similar to the ones found in **Part I**. The student can take a definition and check the context of the sentence, go back to **Part I** to match up the definition and context with the correct idiom, and then place that idiom in its proper blank. The instructor would guide the student through this process, helping him to notice similar contexts when difficulties arise. In this way the student can develop his ability to discover the meaning himself before resorting to outside references, such as dictionaries.

**Part III** provides a detailed explanation of each idiom. Information includes a listing of the most common noun phrases which are associated with each idiom. When necessary, further useful points on grammar or meaning are given. Some example sentences show how the common noun phrases are used with the particular idiom. A set of possible discussion topics is also provided to encourage student feedback and the sharing of ideas with each other and with the instructor.



**Part IV** focuses on the grammatical features which tie the idioms in each chapter together. A brief introduction provides the student with the basic grammatical framework of the chapter. The student is then asked to compare and analyze sets of contrasting sentences, some correct and some incorrect, which draw out the relevant grammatical features. After he has tried to discover the rules by answering the questions posed, the student finds an explanation of the information which he tried to uncover. It is highly recommended that the instructor preview this part before starting each new chapter.

**Part V** is a multiple-choice test of idiom understanding and retention. Review is cumulative through each of the first two sections of the book, so in later chapters the student must be careful to follow the correct grammar rules as well as pay attention to the important contextual information. In addition to discussing why an answer is correct, it is also useful to discuss the inappropriateness of other choices as a way to differentiate between the various verbal forms.

**Part VI** requires the student to write a brief, original sentence using an idiom in correct response to a specific question. The context is provided but must be developed appropriately.

All the exercises and parts of each chapter in **Sections I and II** build on the idioms from previous chapters, so that idioms already learned are constantly being reviewed. This also applies to **Section III**, although verbal forms are not included as review.

## REVIEW

The review chapters for **Sections I and II** also provide valuable reinforcement of grammatical forms, as well as useful information about changing the verbal idioms into nominal (noun) and passive (verb) forms. In addition, topics for paragraph writing, role-playing, and further discussion are provided as interesting ways for students to apply the knowledge they have learned.

## ALTERNATE FORMS

It is important to note that some of the idioms which are used in this workbook may have other meanings which have not been included. The author has found it confusing for students to try to grasp too many distinct meanings and forms of the same idiom, and thus has avoided this in the workbook. The instructor should keep this fact in mind, but should concentrate primarily on the meanings and forms provided in this text.

## TEACHER AS FACILITATOR

Until students begin to feel comfortable with the new approach in this workbook, all exercises should be done in class, preferably as group activities or on an individual-student basis with the instructor moving around the room offering advice. Optimally, the first two chapters would be done entirely as group activities. It is the author's suggestion that the first two exercises in each chapter also be done in class in order to promote discussion and to discourage students from looking ahead to **Part III** to find the answers. Only the last two exercises in each chapter are recommended for outside homework at any stage or level. The instructor should use his or her own discretion in differentiating classwork and homework as he or she becomes familiar with the students' abilities. The instructor will probably be most involved in the third and fourth parts of each chapter, as they delineate the semantic and syntactic features of the idioms and therefore require more explanation.

# To the Student

What exactly is an idiom? This is not an easy question to answer, because many parts of speech may be called idioms. In general, however, an idiom is an expression which has a special meaning, and this meaning cannot be understood completely by looking at the individual words in the idiom.

In this workbook, you will be studying the grammar rules of idioms, as well as the meanings. These rules will describe and distinguish various kinds of idioms; if you are able to separate and understand these different types, you will have an easier time using the idioms you have studied as well as learning new ones. Look at the following examples:

1. I **went over** my speech well.
2. The politician's speech **went over** well.

In each sentence, you are looking at an idiom which has its own special meaning. In the first example, **to go over** means "to review"; in the second example, however, it means "to be received (by an audience)." You should also notice that each idiom is described in a different grammatical way. In the first case, **go over** is followed by a noun, and in the second case, **go over** cannot be followed by a noun. This grammatical difference is one of the many you will learn in this book.

This brief introduction should give you an idea of the new material you will be learning in this book, but learning new material is not all that you will be doing. Slowly but surely you will be learning new ways to guess the meaning of unfamiliar idioms by yourself. A student who develops the necessary skills of guessing will be better prepared to learn the new, and more difficult, idioms he or she encounters outside of class.

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# INTRANSITIVE VERBAL IDIOMS





# 1

## Intransitive Verbs with Particles

to die down  
to come about  
to break down  
to get ahead  
to stand out

to get around  
to fall through  
to hold on  
to open up  
to come up

to break in  
to catch on  
to look on  
to settle down  
to show up

### I. GUESSING THE MEANING FROM CONTEXT

You can learn a lot about an idiom if you look at the *context* of its use. The meaning of the words around it, and the meaning of the whole sentence, can give you a good idea of the idiom's meaning. You don't need a dictionary to understand the *general meaning* of the idiom.

Try to guess the meaning of each idiom as it is used in the following sentences. Provide either a one-word synonym or a definition.

1. For three days the wind blew hard and strong, but on the fourth day it **died down**. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I thought John and Mary were happy, but they recently got a divorce; how did it **come about**? \_\_\_\_\_
3. My old car has a very bad engine; it will probably **break down** and need repairs. \_\_\_\_\_
4. If you want to **get ahead** in life, you have to work hard and save your money. \_\_\_\_\_
5. His poor clothes really **stood out** at the meeting because everyone else was wearing a suit and tie. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Since you don't have a car or motorcycle, how do you **get around**? \_\_\_\_\_