Hi readers,

Here given 280 Idioms & phrases with their meaning. These phrases are picked from previous exam papers. It will help you improve your English language as well as descriptive paper score.

**Phrases with Meaning**

1) **A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush** - Having something that is certain is much better than taking a risk for more, because chances are you might losing everything.

2) **A blessing in disguise** - Something good that isn’t recognized by first

3) **Bull in china shop** - One who causes damage

4) **A chip on your shoulder** - Being upset for something that happened in the past

5) **A damp squib** - Complete failure

6) **A dime A dozen** - Anything that is common and easy to get

7) **A doubting Thomas** - A skeptic who needs physical or personal evidence in order to believe something

8) **A drop in the bucket** - A very small part of something big or whole

9) **A fool and his money are easily parted** - It’s easy for a foolish person to lose his/ her money

10) **A gentleman at large** - An unreliable person

11) **A green horn** - Inexperienced

12) **A house divided against itself cannot stand** - Everyone involved must unify and function together or it will not work out.

13) **A leopard can’t change his spots** - You cannot change who you are

14) **A lost cause** - A hopeless case, a person or situation having no hope of positive change.

15) **A man of straw** - A weak person

16) **A mare’s nest** - A false invention

17)
A penny saved is a penny earned - By not spending money, you are saving money (little by little)

A picture paints a thousand words - A visual presentation is far more descriptive than words

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19) A piece of cake - A task that can be accomplished very easily

20) A slap on the wrist - A very mild punishment

21) A stalking horse - Pretence

22) A steal - Very inexpensive, a bargain

23) A taste of your own medicine - When you are mistreated the same way you mistreat others

24) A toss-up - A result that is still unclear and can go either way

25) A wolf in sheep's clothing - A dangerous person pretending harmless

26) ABC: Very common knowledge about to - Ready to, just going to

27) Above all - Mainly, especially

28) Above board - Fair and honest

29) According to - In the order of; on the authority of

30) Actions speak louder than words - It’s better to actually do something than just talk about it

31) Add fuel to the fire - Whenever something is done to make a bad situation even worse than it is

32) Against the clock - Rushed and short on time

33) All (day, week, month, year) long - The entire day, week, month, year

34) All along - All the time, from the beginning (without change)

35) All and Sundry - Without making any distinction

36) All bark and no bite - When someone is threatening and/or aggressive but not willing to engage in a fight

37) All greek to me - Meaningless and incomprehensible like someone who cannot read, speak, or

38) All in all - Considering everything

39) All in the same boat - When everyone is facing the same challenges

40) All of a sudden - Suddenly, without warning (All at once)

41) All right - Acceptable, fine; yes, okay

42) Alpha and omega - First and last letter of Greek alphabet, means beginning and end
43) **An arm and a leg** - Very expensive, A large amount of money

44) **An axe to grind** - To have a dispute with someone

45) **An eye wash** - A pretence

46) **An iron hand** - By force

47) **Apple to my eye** - Someone who is cherished above all others

48) **As a matter of fact** - Really, actually (also: as to)

49) **As for** - Regarding, concerning (also: as to)

50) **As high as a kite** - Anything that is high up in the sky

51) **As soon as** - Just after, when

52) **As usual** - as is the general case, as is typical

53) **At all** - To any degree (also: in the least)

54) **At heart** - Basically, fundamentally

55) **At last** - Finally, after a long time

56) **At least** - A minimum of, no fewer (or less) than

57) **At odds** - In dispute

58) **At sixes and seven** - Persons who are having different opinions

59) **At the drop of a hat** - Willing to do something immediately

60) **Back and call** - At the service

61) **Back and forth** - In a backward and forward motion

62) **Back seat driver** - People who criticize from the sidelines, much like someone giving unwanted advice

63) **Back to square one** - Having to start all over again

64) **Back to the drawing board** - When an attempt fails and it’s time to start all over

65) **Bag and baggage** - with all goods

66) **Baker’s dozen** - Thirteen

67) **Bank on** - Depend on, count on

68) **Barking up the wrong tree** - A mistake made in something you are trying to achieve

69) **Bated breath** - In anxiety, expectancy

70) **Beat a dead horse** - To force an issue that has already ended

71) **Beating around the bush** - Avoiding the main topic, not speaking directly about the issue

72) **Bend over backwards** - Do whatever it takes to help. Willing to do anything
Between a Rock and a Hard place - Stuck between two very bad options

Between Scylla and Charybdis - Choice between two unpleasant alternatives

Between the cup and the lips - On the point of achievement

Bite off more than you can chew - To take on a task that is a way to big

Bite your tongue - To avoid talking

Black and white - In writing

Blood is thicker than water - The family bond is closer than anything else

Blow hot and cold - Having no stand, shows favour at one time and unfavour at another

Blue moon - A rare event or occurrence

Body and soul - Entirely

Break a leg - A superstitious way to say ‘Good Luck’ without saying ‘Good Luck’,

Buy a lemon - To purchase a vehicle that constantly gives problems or stops running after you drive it

By & by - Gradually

By all means - Certainly, definitely, naturally (also: of course); using any possible way or method

By far - By a great margin, clearly

By fits and starts - Irregularly

By heart - By memorizing

By hook or by crook - By any means

By leaps and bound - speedily

By oneself - Alone, without assistance

By the way - Incidentally

Call a spade a spade - Straight talks

Can’t cut the mustard - Someone who isn’t adequate enough to compete or participate

Cast iron stomach - Someone who has no problems, complications or ill effects with eating anything

Cats and bull story - Untrue story

Cats and dogs - Heavy rain

Charley horse - stiffness in the leg/ A leg cramp

Chew someone out - Verbally scold someone
101) **Chip on his shoulder**- Angry today about something that occurred in the past

102) **Chow down**- To eat

103) **Clear-cut**- Clearly stated, definite, apparent

104) **Close but no cigar**- To be near and almost accomplish a goal, but fall short

105) **Close call**- A situation involving a narrow escape from danger

106) **Cock and bull story**- An unbelievable tale, untrue story

107) **Come hell or high water**- Any difficult situation or obstacle

108) **Crack someone up**- To make someone laugh

109) **Cross your fingers**- To hope that something happens the way you want it to

110) **Cry wolf**- Intentionally raise a false alarm

111) **Cup of joe**- A cup of coffee

112) **Curtain lecture**- A reproof by wife to her husband

113) **Cut and dried**- Ready made form

114) **Cut to the chase**- Leave out all the unnecessary details and just get to the point

115) **Dark horse**- One who was previously unknown and is now prominent

116) **Day in and day out**- Continuously, constantly

117) **Dead Ringer**- 100% identical, a duplicate

118) **Devil's advocate**- Someone who takes a position for the sake of argument without believing in that

119) **Dog days of summer**- The hottest day of the summer season

120) Don’t count your chickens before they hatch- Don’t rely on it until you sure of it

121) Don’t look a gift horse in the month - When someone gives you a gift, don’t be ungrateful

122) Don’t pull all your eggs in one basket- Do not pull all your resources in one possibility

123) **Doozy**- Something outstanding

124) **Down to the wire**- Something that ends at the last minute or last few seconds

125) Drastic times call for drastic measures- When you are extremely desperate you need to take extremely desperate actions

126) **Drink like a fish**- To drink very heavily, drinking anything
127) **Dry run**- Rehearsal

128) **Egg on**- To urge somebody

129) **Eighty six**- A certain item is no longer available. Or this idiom can also mean, to throw away

130) **Elvis has left the building**- The show has come to an end. It’s all over

131) **Ethnic cleansing**- Killing of a certain ethnic or religious group on a massive scale

132) **Ever and anon**- Now and then

133) Every cloud has a silver lining - Be optimistic, even difficult times will lead to better days

134) **Every other (one)**- Every second (one), alternate (ones)

135) Everything but the kitchen sink- Almost everything and anything has been included

136) **Excuse my French**- Please forgive me for cussing

137) **Fabian policy**- Policy of delaying decisions

138) **Face-to-face**- Direct, personal; directly, personally (written without hyphens)

139) **Fair and wide**- Equal opportunity to all

140) **Far and wide**- Every where

141) **Few and far between**- Not frequent, unusual, rare

142) **Field day**- An enjoyable day or circumstance

143) **Fifty- fifty**- Divided into two equal parts

144) **Finding your feet**- To become more comfortable in whatever you are doing

145) **Finger licking good**- To become more comfortable in whatever you are doing

146) **Fire and brimstone**- A very tasty food or meal

147) **Fire and fury**- Fearful penalties

148) **First and foremost**- Extreme enthusiasm

149) **Fishy: doubtful**- Highest priority

150) **Fixed in your ways**- Not willing or wanting to change from your normal way of doing something

151) **Flash in the pan**- Something that shows potential or looks promising in the beginning but fails to deliver

152) **Flea market**- A swap meet. A place where people gather to buy and sell inexpensive goods

153) **Flesh and blood**- This idiom can mean living material of which people are made of, or it can refer to human nature

154) **Flip the bird**- To raise your middle finger at someone
155) **Foam at the mouth** - To be enraged and show it

156) **Fools' Gold** - Iron pyrites, a worthless rock that resembles real gold

157) **Foot the bill** - Bear expenses

158) **For good** - Permanently, forever

159) **For once** - This one time, for only one time

160) **For sure** - Without doubt (also: for certain)

161) **For the time being** - Temporarily (also: for now)

162) **Free and easy** - Natural and simple

163) **French kiss** - An open mouth kiss where tongues touch

164) **From now on** - From this time into the future

165) **From rags to riches** - To go from very poor to being very wealthy

166) **Fuddy-duddy** - An old-fashioned and foolish type of person

167) **Full monty** - This idiom can mean either, “The whole thing” or “Completely nude”

168) **Funny farm** - A mental institutional facility

169) **Gall and wormwood** - Source of irritation

170) **Get down to brass tacks** - To become serious about something

171) **Get over it** - To move beyond something that is bothering you

172) Get up on the wrong side of the bed - Someone who is having a horrible day

173) **Get your walking papers** - Get fired from the job

174) **Gird up the loin** - To be ready

175) **Give and take** - Compromise, cooperation between people

176) **Give him the slip** - To get away from, to escape

177) **Give in** - Surrender

178) **Go down like a lead balloon** - To be received badly by an audience

179) **Go for broke** - To gamble everything you have

180) **Go out on a limb** - Put yourself in a tough position in order to support someone/ something

181) **Go the extra mile** - Going above and beyond whatever is required for the task at hand

182) **Good Samaritan** - Someone who helps others when they are in need, with no discussion for

183) **Graveyard shift** - Working hours from about 12:00 am to 8.00

184) **Great minds think alike** - Intelligent people think like each other
Green room - The waiting room, especially for those who are about to go on a TV or radio show

Gut feeling - A personal intuition you get, especially when feel something may not be right

Had better - Should, ought to, be advisable to

Hand a gloves - Very intimate friends

Hard and fast - Certain

Hard of hearing - Partially deaf, not able to hear well

Haste makes waste - Quickly doing things results in a poor ending

Hat Trick - When one player scores three goals in the same hockey game.

Haughty and naughty - Arrogant and naughty

Have an axe to grind - To have a dispute with someone

Have got - To have, to possess

Have got to - Must (also: have to)

He lost his head - Angry and overcome by emotions

Head and shoulder - Superior

Head over heels - Very excited and/or joyful, especially when in love

Heart and soul - With full devotion

Hell in a hand basket - Deteriorating and headed for complete disaster

Helter Shelter - Here and there

Herculean task - A tedious job

High five - Slapping palms above each others heads as celebration gesture

High on the Hog - Living in luxury

Hit below the belt - Contrary the principles of fairness

Hit the books - To study, especially for a test or exam

Hit the hay - Go to bed or go to sleep

Hit the nail on the head - Do something exactly right or say something exactly right

Hit the sack - Go to bed or go to sleep

Hither and thither - Here and there

Hocus Pocus - In general, a term used in magic or trickery

Hold your horses - Be patient

Hole and corner policy - A secret policy for an evil purpose

Hornet's nest - Raise controversy
216) **Hue and cry**- Great noise

217) **Hush money**- A bribe

218) **Icing on the cake**- When you already have it good and get something on top of what you already have

219) **Idle hands are the devil’s tools**- You are more likely to get in trouble if you have nothing to do

220) **If**

it’s not one thing, it’s another- When one thing goes wrong, then another, and another…

221) **Ill at ease**- Uncomfortable or worried in a situation

222) **In a hurry**- Hurried, rushed (also: in a rush)

223) **In case**- In order to be prepared if the meaning is in order to be prepared if something happens

224) **In hand**- Under firm control, well managed

225) **In like Flynn**- To be easily successful, especially when sexual or romantic

226) **In no time**- Very quickly, rapidly

227) **In the bag**- To have something secured

228) **In the buff**- Nude

229) **In the heat of the moment**- Overwhelmed by what is happening in the moment

230) **In the long run**- Eventually, after a long period of time

231) **In the worst way**- Very much, greatly

232) **In time to**- Before the time necessary to do something

233) **In touch**- Having contact

234) **In vain**- Useless, without the desired result

235) **In your face**- An aggressive and bold confrontation

236) **Ins and outs**- Full detail

237) **Inside out**- With the inside facing the outside

238) **Intents and purposes**- Practically

239) **It figures**- It seems likely, reasonable, or typical

240) **It takes two to tango**- A two person conflict where both people are at fault

241) **It’s a small world**- You frequently see the same people in different places

242) **It anyone’s call**- A competition where the outcome is difficult to judge or predict

243) **Ivory tower**- Imaginary world
244) Ivy league- Since 1954 the Ivy league has been the following universities: Columbia, Brown, Cornell

245) Jaywalk- Crossing the street (from the middle) without using the crosswalk

246) Joshing me- Tricking me

247) Keep an eye on him- You should carefully watch him. Keep an eye on

248) Keep body and soul together- To earn a sufficient amount of money in order to keep yourself alive

249) Keep your chin up- To remain joyful in a tough situation

250) Kick the bucket- Die

251) Kith and kin- Blood relatives

252) Kitty-corner- Diagonally across. Sometimes called Catty-Corner as well

253) Knock on Wood- Knuckle tapping on wood in order to avoid some bad luck

254) Know the ropes- To understand the details

255) Last but not least- An introduction phrase to let the audience know that the last person mentioned is also very important

256) Last straw- The final event in a series of unacceptable actions

257) Latin and Greek- Unable to understand

258) Leave no stone unturned- Make all possible efforts

259) Lend me your ear- To politely ask for someone’s full attention

260) Length and breadth- All over

261) Let along- and certainly not (also: not to mention, to say nothing of)

262) Let the cat out of the bag- To share a secret that wasn’t suppose to be shared

263) Level playing field- A fair competition where no side has an advantage

264) Life and soul- Main support

265) Like a chicken and its head cut off- To act in a frenzied manner

266) Liquor someone up- To get someone drunk

267) Little by little- Gradually, slowly (also: step by step)

268) Live-wire- Energetic

269) Loaves and fish- Material interests

270) Lock and key- In safe place

271) Long in the tooth- Old people (or horses)

272) Loose cannon- Someone who is unpredictable and can cause damage if not kept in check
273) **Make no bones about** - To state a fact so there are no doubts or objections

274) **Method to my madness** - Strange or crazy actions that appear meaningless but in the end are done for a good reason

275) **Might and main** - With all enthusiasm

276) **Milk and water** - Weak

277) **More or less** - Approximately, almost, somewhat, to a certain degree

278) **Mumbo Jumbo** - Nonsense or meaningless speech

280) **Mum's the word** - To keep quiet, To say nothing

280) **Narrow-minded** - Not willing to accept the ideas of others

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