

Idioms and Phrases Capsule - PDF

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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)

18)

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

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 sevens**- 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

73)

Between a Rock and a Hard place- Stuck between two very bad options

74) **Between Scylla and Charybdis**- Choice between two unpleasant alternatives

75) **Between the cup and the lips**- On the point of achievement

76)

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

77) **Bite your tongue**- To avoid talking

78) **Black and white**- In writing

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

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

81) **Blue moon**- A rare event or occurrence

82) **Body and soul**- Entirely

83) **Break a leg**- A superstitious way to say 'Good Luck' without saying 'Good Luck',

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

85) **By & by**- Gradually

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

87) **By far**- By a great margin, clearly

88) **By fits and starts**- Irregularly

89) **By heart**- By memorizing

90) **By hook or by crook**- By any means

91) **By leaps and bound**- speedily

92) **By oneself**- Alone, without assistance

93) **By the way**- Incidentally

94) **Call a spade a spade**- Straight talks

95) **Can't cut the mustard**- Someone who isn't adequate enough to compete or participate

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

97) **Cats and bull story**- Untrue story

98) **Cats and dogs**- Heavy rain

99) **Charley horse**- stiffness in the leg/ A leg cramp

100) **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 mouth- 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

- 185) **Green room-** The waiting room, especially for those who are about to go on a TV or radio show
- 186) **Gut feeling-** A personal intuition you get, especially when feel something may not be right
- 187) **Had better-** Should, ought to, be advisable to
- 188) **Hand a gloves-** Very intimate friends
- 189) **Hard and fast-** Certain
- 190) **Hard of hearing-** Partially deaf, not able to hear well
- 191) **Haste makes waste-** Quickly doing things results in a poor ending
- 192) **Hat Trick-** When one player scores three goals in the same hockey game.
- 193) **Haughty and naughty-** Arrogant and naughty
- 194) **Have an axe to grind-** To have a dispute with someone
- 195) **Have got-** To have, to possess
- 196) **Have got to-** Must (also: have to)
- 197) **He lost his head-** Angry and overcome by emotions
- 198) **Head and shoulder-** Superior
- 199) **Head over heels-** Very excited and/ or joyful, especially when in love
- 200) **Heart and soul-** With full devotion
- 201) **Hell in a hand basket-** Deteriorating and headed for complete disaster
- 202) **Helter Shelter-** Here and there
- 203) **Herculean task-** A tedious job
- 204) **High five-** Slapping palms above each others heads as celebration gesture
- 205) **High on the Hog-** Living in luxury
- 206) **Hit below the belt-** Contrary the principles of fairness
- 207) **Hit the books-** To study, especially for a test or exam
- 208) **Hit the hay-** Go to bed or go to sleep
- 209) **Hit the nail on the head-** Do something exactly right or say something exactly right
- 210) **Hit the sack-** Go to bed or go to sleep
- 211) **Hither and thither-** Here and there
- 212) **Hocus Pocus-** In general, a term used in magic or trickery
- 213) **Hold your horses-** Be patient
- 214) **Hole and corner policy-** A secret policy for an evil purpose
- 215) **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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