

Listening Idioms

<Lesson 1>

About to : almost ready to

Above all : most importantly

Add up : make sense, be logical

All at once : suddenly, without warning

All of a sudden : all at once, suddenly

As a matter of fact : in reality, actually

As a rule : generally, customarily

At ease : not nervous, calm

At the drop of a hat : quickly, without any preparation time

Back out (of) : withdraw an offer

Bank on : depend on, count on, rely on

Be my guest : do what you want, feel free, help yourself

Be rusty : need practice or review

Beats me : I don't know, I have no idea (often used in response to a question)

Better off : in an improved condition

Bite off more than one can chew : take on more responsibility than one can handle

Bound to : certain to, sure to

Break down : stop functioning (a machine, for example)

Break in (on) : interrupt

Break the ice : break through social barriers (as at a party)

Break the news (to) : inform, give bad news

Break up : end (a meeting, for example)

Break up (with) : stop being a couple (a boyfriend and girlfriend, for example)

A breeze : something very simple and easy to do

Bring about : cause to happen

Bring up : (1) raise (a child)

(2) introduce (a topic, for example)

Brush up on : review, study, practice

Bump into : meet unexpectedly, run into

By and large : mostly, generally, on the whole

By heart : by memory, learned word for word

By no means : in no way, not at all

<Lesson 2>

call it a day : stop working for the day, go home

call off : cancel

call on : visit

calm down : relax

care for : (1) take care of (2) like, feel affection for

catch on : become popular

catch on (to) : understand, learn

catch up (with) : go as fast as, catch

check in (or into) : register (at a hotel)

check out (of) : (1) leave (a hotel) (2) take material (from a library, for example)

cheer up : become cheerful, be happy

chip in (on/for) : contribute

clear up : (1) clarify, make understandable

(2) become nice and sunny (used to talk about the weather)

come across : find, meet, encounter

come around (to) : begin to change one's opinion, begin to agree with

come down with : become sick with (an illness)

come up with : think of (an idea)

cost an arm and a leg : be very expensive

count on : depend on, rely on, bank on

count out : eliminate, no longer consider as a factor

cut off : stop, discontinue (a service, for example)

cut out for : have an aptitude for, be qualified for

<Lesson 3>

day in and day out : constantly, for a long time

die down : become less severe, quiet down

do over : do again, repeat

do without : not have

down the drain : wasted, done for no reason (work, for example)

dream up : invent, think of, come up with

drop (someone) a line : send someone a letter

drop in (on) : visit informally

drop off : (1) leave something (a package, for example)

(2) take (someone) home, let someone out of a car

drop out (of) : stop attending (classes, for example)

easy as pie : very simple, a piece of cake

eyes bigger than one's stomach : said of someone who takes more food than he or she can eat

fall behind : not move as quickly as, lag behind

fall through : fail to happen

a far cry from : not similar, not as good as

fed up (with) : not able to tolerate, disgusted with, annoyed by

feel free : do something if one wants

feel like : be inclined to, want to

feel like a million dollars : feel very good

feel up to : feel able to do something, ready to

few and far between : uncommon and infrequent

figure out : understand, solve

fill in : write in a blank (on an application form, for example)

fill in (for) : substitute for

fill one in : provide missing information

fill out : complete (an application form, for example)

find out : learn, discover

a fish out of water : someone not in his or her normal surroundings

fix up : repair, renovate

follow in one's footsteps : do what someone else did (especially a parent)

for good : permanently, forever

for the time being : temporarily, for now

from out of the blue : unexpectedly, without warning

<Lesson 4>

get a kick out of (doing something) : enjoy, have fun (doing something)

get along with : have good relations with

get carried away : go too far, do too much, buy too much

get in one's blood : become a habit, become customary

get in over one's head : take on too much responsibility, bite off more than one can chew

get in the way : block, obstruct

get in touch with : contact

get off : leave (a vehicle)

get off the ground : start to be successful

get on : board (a vehicle)

get over : recover from (a disease)

get rid of : discard, no longer have

get under way : begin, start

give (someone) a cold shoulder : act unfriendly toward someone, ignore

give away : distribute (for free)

get the hang of something : learn how to do something

give a hand : applaud, clap

give a hand (with) : assist

go easy on : not punish severely

go on (with) : continue

go overboard : do too much, buy too much

go with : (1) accompany

(2) look good together, complement (for example, two articles of clothing)

go without saying : be clear, be obvious

grow up : mature, become an adult

<Lesson 5>

hand in : give back to, return

hand out : distribute

hang on : wait

hard to come by : difficult to find

have a heart : be compassionate, show mercy

have a hunch : have an intuitive feeling

have a word with (someone) : talk to someone briefly

have on : wear

have one's hands full : be very busy, have a challenging job

have the time of one's life : have fun, have a great time

hear firsthand (from) : get information directly from someone

hear from : be contacted by, be in touch with

hear of : know about, be familiar with

hit it off : become friendly (especially at a first meeting)

hit the road : leave, go away

hold on : wait

hold on (to) : grasp

hold still : not move

hold up : delay

<Lesson 6>

in a nutshell : in summary, in brief

in favor of : in agreement with, supporting

in hot water : in trouble

in no time : very soon, very quickly

in person : face to face (not by telephone, letter, etc.)

in store : in the future, coming up

in the dark : not knowing, confused

in the long run : over a long period of time

in the same boat : in the same situation, having the same problems

iron out : solve (a problem)

join the club : have the same problem as other people

jump to conclusions : form opinions without sufficient evidence

keep an eye on : watch, take care of, look after

keep an eye out (for) : look for

keep on (with) : continue

keep track of : know where something or someone is

keep up (with) : maintain the same speed as

kill time : spend time doing unimportant things (before an appointment, for example)

know like the back of one's hand : be very similar with

lay off : put out of work

learn the ropes : become familiar with, get used to, get the hang of

leave out : not include, omit

leave someone/something alone : not disturb

let someone down : disappoint

let up : decline in intensity (rain, for example)

look after : take care of, mind

look for : try to locate

look forward to : anticipate (with pleasure)

look into : investigate

look like : resemble

look out (for) : be careful

look over : examine, read

look up : (1) find information (especially in a reference book)

(2) try to locate someone

look up to : respect, admire

<Lesson 7>

make a fool of oneself : act embarrassingly

make a point of : make a special effort

make ends meet : balance a budget

make sense (of) : be logical and clear, understand

make up : invent, create

make up one's mind : decide

make way for : allow space for, provide a path for

mean to : intend to

mixed up : confused

music to one's ears : something that sounds pleasant

a nervous wreck : someone who is very nervous

next to nothing : very little (money, for example), cheap

no doubt about it : certainly, definitely

no harm done : there was no damage done

not at all : not in any way, not to any degree

not believe one's ears(or eyes) : be unable to believe what one hears (or sees)

not think much of : not like, not have a good opinion of

odds and ends : small, miscellaneous items

an old hand (at) : an experienced person

on edge : nervous

on end : consecutively, without a break (days on end, for example)

on hand : easily available

on needles and pins : nervous, anxious

on one's own : independent

on second thought : after reconsidering

on the go : always busy, always moving

on the tip of one's tongue : almost able to remember

on the whole : in general

out of (something) : not having something

out of one's mind : insane, illogical, irrational

out of order : broken, not functioning, properly

out of the question : definitely not, impossible

over and over : again and again, repeatedly

over one's head : not understandable (a joke, for example), obscure

<Lesson 8>

part with : no longer have, get rid of, not be in the company of

pass up : not accept, not choose

pass with flying colors : do very well (on a test)

pat oneself on the back : congratulate oneself

pick out : choose, select

pick up : (1) take something from a surface (for example, a floor)

(2) go to a location and get someone or something

(3) learn (especially without formal training)

pick up the tab (for) : pay for

the picture of : a perfect example of something

play it by ear : do something without a definite plan

play it safe : choose a cautious plan

point out : indicate

a pretty penny : a lot of money

pull one's leg : joke with someone, make up a story

push one's luck : to continue doing something too long, to keep taking chances

put aside : save for later, set aside

put away : return something to its proper place

put off : delay, postpone

put on : begin to wear

put together : assemble

put up with : tolerate

<Lesson 9>

right away : immediately

ring a bell (with) : sound familiar to

rough it : experience somewhat difficult or primitive conditions

rule out : say something is impossible, eliminate

run a temperature : have a fever

run for office : try to get elected

run into : (1) meet unexpectedly, bump into

(2) collide with

run late : be late, be in a hurry

run of the mill : ordinary

run out of : exhaust the supply of

save one's breath : don't bother asking someone

search me : I don't know, I have no idea, beats me

see eye to eye (with someone) (on something) : have the same opinion, be in agreement

see (someone) off : accompany (to an airport or train station, for example)

- see to : take care of, check on, fix
- serve one right : receive the proper punishment, get the penalty one deserves
- short for : a nickname for
- show around : orient, give a tour
- show off : try to attract attention by unusual behavior
- show up : arrive
- shut down : close
- sign up (for) : enroll (for a class, for example)
- sing another tune : change one's opinion, feel differently
- size up : measure, estimate
- sleep on it** : postpone a decision until the next day
- slowly but surely : gradually, steadily but not quickly
- snowed under** : very busy
- so far, so good : up until now, there are no problems
- sooner or later : at some indefinite future time
- speak one's mind : say what one is thinking
- speak up : speak more loudly
- speak up for : support verbally
- spell out (for) : make something very clear, explain in detail
- spick and span** : extremely and clean, spotless
- stack up against** : compare with
- stamp out : eliminate, wipe out
- stand for** : (1) tolerate, put up with (2) symbolize, represent
- stand out : be noticeable
- stay out : not come home
- stay out (or up) to all hours : come home (or go to bed) very late
- stay up : not go to bed
- stock up (on) : get a large supply of something
- a stone's throw from : not far away from, close to
- stop by : visit informally, go to see
- straighten up** : clean up, make tidy
- stuck with : have something one cannot get rid of

<Lesson 10>

- take a break : stop working for a short time
- take a lot of nerve : requires a lot of courage
- take a lot out of (someone) : be hard on someone, drain energy from someone
- take advantage of : utilize, make use of, exploit
- take after : resemble, look like (especially an older relative)
- take apart : disassemble
- take it easy : relax, calm down
- take a short cut : take a more direct or faster route than usual
- take off : (1) remove (clothing, for example)
(2) ascend (a plane, for example)
(3) become popular quickly
- take over : assume control or responsibility
- take part (in) : participate in
- take the plunge** : finally take action, do something different
- take time off (from) : take a vacation or a break from work or school
- take up : begin to study some topic or engage in some activity
- talk down to : speak to someone as if he or she were a child, patronize
- talk into : persuade, convince
- talk out of : dissuade, convince not to do something
- talk over : discuss
- tear oneself away from something : stop doing something interesting
- tear up : rip into small pieces
- tell apart : distinguish
- things are looking up** : the situation is improving
- think over : consider
- throw away : discard, get rid of
- throw cold water on : discourage, force to cancel (a plan, for example)
- throw the book at someone : give someone the maximum punishment
- try on : test clothing before buying (for size, style, and so on)
- try out : test a product before buying
- try out (for) : audition for (a role in a play, for example), attempt to join (a team, for example)
- turn around : face in a different direction
- turn down : (1) reject an offer (2) decrease the intensity of
- turn in** : (1) return, give back, hand in (2) go to bed
- turn into : change to, transform into
- turn off : stop the operation (of an appliance, for example), shut off

turn on : start the operation (of an appliance, for example)

turn out : (1) result, end up, be the final product
(2) produce
(3) arrive, gather (for a meeting, for example)

turn up : (1) increase the intensity of
(2) arrive

under the water : slightly all

use up : use completely

wait on : serve

walk on air : be very happy

warm up : (1) heat
(2) practice, prepare for

warm up (to) : become friendly with, start to enjoy

watch out (for) : be alert, look out for

wear out : become no longer useful because of wear

what the doctor ordered : exactly what was needed, the perfect thing

wipe out : eliminate, stamp out

without a hitch : without a problem

work out : (1) exercise
(2) bring to a successful conclusion, solve