

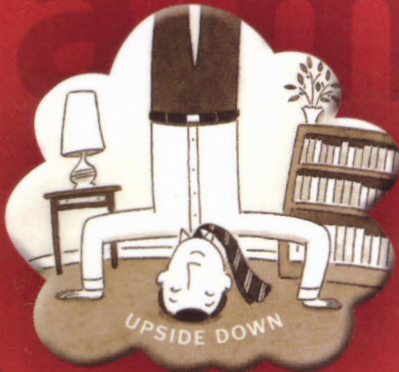
FIFTH EDITION

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Essential Idioms in English

Phrasal Verbs and Collocations

ROBERT J. DIXSON



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Idiomatic expressions have long played an important role in the English language. In fact, the use of idioms is so widespread that understanding these expressions is essential to successful communication, whether in listening, speaking, reading, or writing. The student may learn grammar and, with time, acquire adequate vocabulary, but without a working knowledge of such idioms as *above all*, *to get along*, *on the whole*, *to look up*, and so on, even the best speech will remain awkward and ordinary.

Teachers of English have long recognized that idiomatic expressions add grace and exactness to the language. The alert teacher will make their study an integral part of the teaching process. Even so, learning such expressions is never an easy task for the student learning English as a second or foreign language. Attempts to translate literally from the student's native tongue usually lead to roundabout expressions of meaning and, more often, to confusion.

For this reason, the idioms, phrasal verbs, and collocations included in this book have been selected because they are, for the most part, basic to good English—and the book is called, appropriately, *Essential Idioms in English*. Students are not burdened with a discussion of the origins of idioms, nor is there an attempt to define the exact nature of an idiom except to point out that as a phrase it has a meaning different from the meanings of its individual parts. (This essential characteristic is one reason why it is often difficult to translate an idiom from one language to another without incurring some change in meaning or usage.)

Our hope is that experienced ESL and EFL teachers will agree, for the most part, with the selection of idioms in this text. This edition has been updated to include current idioms, and older usages have been dropped. But every selection, no matter how careful, is necessarily arbitrary, because the range is so great. Our intent is to provide a useful learning and reference tool for students who want to speak appropriate, contemporary English.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

This new edition of a classic text retains its original three-section format: Beginning (Lessons 1–13), Intermediate (Lessons 14–27), and Advanced (Lessons 28–39). New idioms have of course been included, and outdated idioms have been removed throughout. Lessons in all sections review and build upon idioms introduced in earlier lessons. In some cases, notes that explain special usage or meaning are provided after the definitions, and related idiomatic forms are listed. The wide assortment of exercises provides variety in the activities from one section to another.

Essential Idioms has always included two-word, or phrasal, verbs in the general category of idioms. A *phrasal verb* is one whose meaning is altered by the addition of a *particle* (a preposition used with a verb to form an idiomatic expression.) *To look*, for example, may become *to look up* or *to look over*, each having its own special meaning. When a phrasal verb can be separated by a noun or pronoun, the symbol (S) for separable is inserted in the definition. Sentences illustrating both separable and nonseparable forms are included in the examples.

In this edition, students will also find *collocations* included in each section. Collocations are words that tend to be used together, not based on rules of grammar, but rather based on traditional patterns of usage by native speakers. Collocations can occur in a number of different patterns. Among the most common are adjective + noun (*shining star, heavy breathing*), verb + noun (*take a bus, deliver a baby*), and verb + adverb (*fully document*). The addition of collocations reflects the growing interest in these unique word patterns in second-language study.

As in the previous edition, this edition includes an Appendix that lists equivalent idioms in French and Spanish, and we have added Portuguese in this edition as well. We hope this will

make *Essential Idioms* especially useful to native speakers of these languages and will provide students with a surer grasp of English idioms and greater confidence in using them.

Finally, also new to this edition is a section on Dictionary Skills, which includes a brief set of activities designed to provide students with strategies for using one of their primary language-learning tools.

Overall, this classic text continues to provide an outstanding, comprehensive introduction to idiomatic English for learners at all levels.



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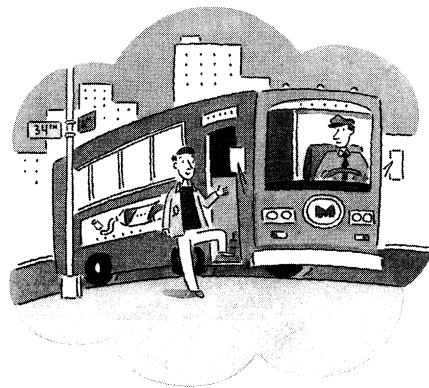
SECTION 1

Beginning

Lesson 1

to get in/to get on: to enter or to board a vehicle
To get in is used for cars; *to get on* is used for all other forms of transportation.

- It's easiest to *get in* the car from the driver's side. The door on the other side doesn't work well.
- I always *get on* the bus to work at 34th Street.



to get out of/to get off: to leave or to descend from a vehicle
To get out of is used for cars; *to get off* is used for all other forms of transportation.

- Why don't we stop and *get out of* the car for a while?
- Helen *got off* the train at the 42nd Street terminal.

to put on: to place on oneself (usually said of clothes) (S)*

- Mary *put on* her coat and left the room.
- *Put* your hat *on* before you leave the house.

to take off: to remove (usually said of clothes) (S)

- John *took off* his jacket as he entered the office.
- *Take* your sweater *off*. The room is very warm.

*The symbol (S) indicates that an idiom is *separable*—that a noun or noun phrase may be placed between the verb and the special preposition (called a *particle*). In these cases, examples of both separable and inseparable forms are given. See the index, page 271, for further details.

to turn on: to start or cause to function (also: **to switch on**) (S)

- Please *turn on* the light; it's too dark in here.
- Do you know who *turned* the air conditioning *on*?

to turn off: to cause to stop functioning (also: **to switch off, to shut off**) (S)
Turn on and turn off, as well as their related forms, are used for things that flow, such as electricity, water, gas, etc.

- Please *turn off* the light when you leave the room.
- Are you really listening to the radio, or should I *turn* it *off*?

right away: very soon; immediately (also: **at once**)

- Dad says that dinner will be ready *right away*, so we'd better wash our hands and set the table.
- Tell Will to come to my office *right away*. I must see him immediately.
- Stop playing that loud music *at once*!

to pick up: to lift with one's fingers or hands (S); to retrieve or collect (S);
to learn (S)

- Harry *picked up* the newspaper that was on the front doorstep.
- Lucia was so busy that she forgot to *pick* her son *up* from school.
- Margot *picks up* math easily, but she is not good at reading.

sooner or later: eventually, after a period of time

- If you study English seriously, *sooner or later* you'll become fluent.
- I'm too tired to do my homework now; I'm sure I'll do it *sooner or later*.

to get up: to arise, to rise from a bed; to make someone arise (**S**)

For the last definition a noun phrase must separate the verb and particle.

- Carla *gets up* at seven o'clock every morning.
- At what time should we *get* the children *up* tomorrow?

to come up with: to find, to discover

- After worrying for days, I finally *came up with* a solution to my problem.
- Even though Kwan doesn't have a job, he always *comes up with* enough money to pay his bills.

at first: in the beginning, originally

- *At first* English was difficult for him, but later he made great progress.
- I thought *at first* that it was Sheila calling, but then I realized that it was Beth.

EXERCISES

A Choose the appropriate idiomatic expression to substitute for the italicized word or words in each sentence below.

1. His alarm clock is always set for six o'clock. He *arises* at the same time every day.
 - a. turns off
 - b. gets up
 - c. puts on
2. It's 4 P.M. now, and this important letter must be mailed today. Can you take it to the post office *immediately*?
 - a. at first
 - b. right away
 - c. sooner or later

3. Be sure to *switch off* the light before you leave the house.
 - a. to turn off
 - b. to take off
 - c. to get off
4. Pat *placed* her new hat on her head while looking in the mirror.
 - a. picked up
 - b. put on
 - c. gets on
5. *Remove* your jacket and sit down for a few minutes.
 - a. Turn on
 - b. Get on
 - c. Take off
6. I want to stay single for a while, but I hope to get married *eventually*.
 - a. sooner or later
 - b. right away
 - c. at first
7. *In the beginning* I thought that golf was boring, but I like it now.
 - a. To get on
 - b. At once
 - c. At first
8. He *boarded* the bus at Broadway and 79th Street.
 - a. got off
 - b. got on
 - c. picked up

9. John *took* the pencil and began to write a note.
- a. turned on
 - b. got off
 - c. picked up
10. Eli finally *found* a great topic for his history report.
- a. got up
 - b. came up with
 - c. put on



Fill in each blank with the appropriate form of an idiomatic expression from this lesson.

Every morning, Jean's alarm clock makes a loud ringing noise. She _____ the alarm clock immediately after it rings, but she doesn't get out of bed _____. She waits a few minutes before she _____.

Jean would like to stay in bed all morning, but she has to get up. Then she _____ the bedroom light and goes to her closet. She _____ her pajamas and _____ her work clothes.

Lesson 2

to dress up: to wear formal clothes, to dress very nicely

- We should definitely *dress up* to go to the theater.
- You don't have to *dress up* for Mike's party.

at last: finally, after a long time

- We waited for hours and then the train arrived *at last*.
- Now that I am sixteen, *at last* I can drive my parents' car.

as usual: as is the general case, as is typical

- George is late for class *as usual*. This seems to happen every day.
- *As usual*, Dora received first prize in the swimming contest. It's the third consecutive year that she has won.

to find out: get information about, to determine (S)

This idiom is separable only when a pronoun is used, as in the second example.

- Will you please try to *find out* what time the airplane arrives?
- I'll call right now to *find it out*.

to look at: give one's attention to; to watch

- The teacher told us to *look at* the board and not at our books.
- I like to walk along a country road at night and *look at* the stars.

to look for: to try to find, to search for

An adverb phrase such as *all over* can be put between the verb and preposition, as in the second example. However, the idiom cannot be separated by a noun or pronoun.

- He's spent over an hour *looking for* the pen that he lost.

- There you are! We've *looked* all over for you.

all right: acceptable, fine; yes, okay

This idiom can also be spelled *alright* in informal usage.

- He said that it would be *all right* to wait in her office until she returned.
- Do you want me to turn off the TV? *Alright*, if you insist.

all along: all the time, from the beginning (without change)

- She knew *all along* that we'd never agree with his plan.
- Did you know *all along* that I'd give you a birthday present, or were you surprised?

little by little: gradually, slowly (also: **step by step**)

- Karen's health seems to be improving *little by little*.
- If you study regularly each day, *step by step* your vocabulary will increase.

to tire out: to make very weary due to difficult conditions or hard effort
(also: **to wear out**) (S)

- The hot weather *tired out* the runners in the marathon.
- Does studying for final exams *wear you out*? It makes me feel *worn out*!

to spend time: to do an activity over a period of time (S)

- Adrian would rather *spend time* watching TV than doing homework.
- I *spent* too much *time* getting ready this morning, so I was late for work.

never mind: don't be concerned about it; ignore what was just said

- When he spilled his drink on my coat, I said, "*Never mind*. It needs to be cleaned anyway."
- So you weren't listening to me again. *Never mind*; it wasn't important.

EXERCISES



Choose the appropriate idiomatic expression to substitute for the italicized word or words in each sentence below. Idioms from previous lessons are indicated by number.

1. Emily is *trying to find* the purse that she lost yesterday.
 - a. finding out
 - b. looking at
 - c. looking for
2. *As is typical*, Doug is late for the meeting.
 - a. At last
 - b. All along
 - c. As usual
3. Were you able *to determine* what his occupation is?
 - a. to find out
 - b. to pick up (Lesson 1)
 - c. to spend time
4. I am *very weary* after all that physical exercise today.
 - a. turned off (Lesson 1)
 - b. tired out
 - c. never mind
5. Samuel was upset earlier, but he is *fine* now.
 - a. tired out
 - b. as usual
 - c. all right

6. John's mother knew that he wasn't telling the truth *from the beginning*.
 - a. all along
 - b. all right
 - c. little by little
7. *Eventually*, Mario will be able to speak English better than he does now.
 - a. Never mind
 - b. Sooner or later (Lesson 1)
 - c. At last
8. Is it *okay* for Mary to borrow our car for a few hours?
 - a. right away (Lesson 1)
 - b. all right
 - c. step by step
9. Would you please *give your attention to* me while I'm talking?
 - a. dress up
 - b. look at
 - c. wear out
10. They waited for forty-five minutes until *finally* the server brought their food.
 - a. at last
 - b. little by little
 - c. at first (Lesson 1)

B Fill in each blank with the appropriate form of an idiomatic expression from this lesson.

BOB: Jim, should we _____ for the party tonight?

JIM: No, casual clothes are fine. I'm _____ my shoes.
Have you seen them?

BOB: No. Did you check that closet by the front door?

JIM: Of course I did! Gosh, my legs hurt. I'm really
_____ from playing so much soccer today.

BOB: What did you say?

JIM: Oh, _____. It wasn't important.

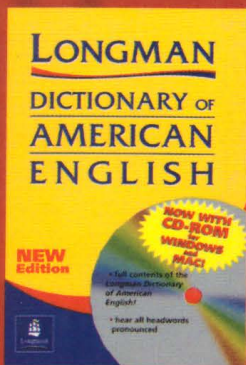
BOB: Sorry, I was _____ the newspaper. There's
another article about the robbery.

JIM: Have the police _____ who stole the million
dollars?

BOB: No, they haven't. But they have _____ a lot of
_____ looking for him.

JIM: Hey, I just found my shoes! They were in that closet
_____!

BOB: I told you so!



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