

**LESSON 1**

**BOB'S DAY AT WORK**

*Bob works as a manager in a furniture store. Peter, his boss, is not happy about sales. Bob's new advertising campaign hasn't helped. Peter decides to fire him.*

*Peter:* Bob, I hate to **break the news**, but our sales were down again last month.

*Bob:* Down again, Peter?

*Peter:* Yeah. These days, everybody's shopping at our competition, Honest Abe's Furniture Store.

*Bob:* But everything in there **costs an arm and a leg!**

*Peter:* That's true. They do charge **top dollar**.

*Bob:* And their salespeople are very strange. They really **give me the creeps!**

*Peter:* Well, they must be doing something right over there. Meanwhile, we're **about to go belly-up**.

*Bob:* I'm sorry to hear that. I thought my new advertising campaign would **save the day**.

*Peter:* **Let's face it:** your advertising campaign was a **real flop**.

*Bob:* Well then I'll **go back to the drawing board**.

*Peter:* It's too late for that. You're fired!

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*Bob:* What? You're **giving me the ax**?

*Peter:* Yes. I've already found a new manager. She's as **sharp as a tack**.

*Bob:* Can't we even **talk this over**? **After all**, I've been working here for 10 years!

*Peter:* There's **no point in** arguing, Bob. I've already **made up my mind**.

*Bob:* Oh well, **at least** I won't have to **put up with** your nonsense anymore! Good-bye to you and good-bye to this **dead-end job**.

*Peter:* Please leave before I **lose my temper**!



## IDIOMS – LESSON 1

**about to** – ready to; on the verge of

EXAMPLE 1: It's a good thing Bob left the furniture store when he did. Peter was so angry, he was **about to** throw a dining room chair at him.

EXAMPLE 2: I'm glad you're finally home. I was just **about to** have dinner without you.

**after all** – despite everything; when everything has been considered; the fact is

EXAMPLE 1: You'd better invite Ed to your party. **After all**, he's a good friend.

EXAMPLE 2: It doesn't matter what your boss thinks of you. **After all**, you're going to quit your job anyway.

**at least** – anyway; the *good* thing is that...

EXAMPLE 1: We've run out of coffee, but **at least** we still have tea.

EXAMPLE 2: Tracy can't afford to buy a car, but **at least** she has a good bicycle.

NOTE: The second definition of this phrase is "no less than": There were **at least** 300 people waiting in line to buy concert tickets.

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**(to) break the news** – to make something known

EXAMPLE 1: Samantha and Michael are getting married, but they haven't yet **broken the news** to their parents.

EXAMPLE 2: You'd better **break the news** to your father carefully. After all, you don't want him to have a heart attack!

**(to) cost an arm and a leg** – to be very expensive

EXAMPLE 1: A college education in America **costs an arm and a leg**.

EXAMPLE 2: All of the furniture at Honest Abe's **costs an arm and a leg!**

**dead-end job** – a job that won't lead to anything else

EXAMPLE 1: Diane realized that working as a cashier was a **dead-end job**.

EXAMPLE 2: Jim worked many **dead-end jobs** before finally deciding to start his own business.

**(let's) face it** – accept a difficult reality

EXAMPLE 1: **Let's face it**, if Ted spent more time studying, he wouldn't be failing so many of his classes!

EXAMPLE 2: **Let's face it**, if you don't have a college degree, it can be difficult to find a high-paying job.

**(to) give one the creeps** – to create a feeling of disgust or horror

EXAMPLE 1: Ted's friend Matt has seven earrings in each ear and an "I Love Mom" tattoo on his arm. He really **gives Nicole the creeps**.

EXAMPLE 2: There was a strange man following me around the grocery store. He was **giving me the creeps!**

**(to) go back to the drawing board** – to start a task over because the last try failed; to start again from the beginning

EXAMPLE 1: Frank's new business failed, so he had to **go back to the drawing board**.

EXAMPLE 2: The president didn't agree with our new ideas for the company, so we had to **go back to the drawing board**.

**(to) go belly-up** – to go bankrupt

EXAMPLE 1: Many people lost their jobs when Enron **went belly-up**.

EXAMPLE 2: My company lost \$3 million last year. We might go **belly-up**.

**(to) give someone the ax** – to fire someone

EXAMPLE 1: Mary used to talk to her friends on the phone all day at work, until one day her boss finally **gave her the ax**.

EXAMPLE 2: Poor Paul! He was **given the ax** two days before Christmas.

**(to) lose one's temper** – to become very angry

EXAMPLE 1: Bob always **loses his temper** when his kids start talking on the telephone during dinner.

EXAMPLE 2: When Ted handed in his essay two weeks late, his teacher really **lost her temper**.

**(to) make up one's mind** – to reach a decision; to decide

EXAMPLE 1: Stephanie couldn't **make up her mind** whether to attend Harvard or Stanford. Finally, she chose Stanford.

EXAMPLE 2: Do you want an omelette or fried eggs? You'll need to **make up your mind** quickly because the waitress is coming.

**no point in** – no reason to; it's not worth (doing something)

EXAMPLE 1: There's **no point in** worrying about things you can't change.

EXAMPLE 2: There's **no point in** going on a picnic if it's going to rain.

**(to) put up with** – to endure without complaint

EXAMPLE 1: For many years, Barbara **put up with** her husband's annoying behavior. Finally, she decided to leave him.

EXAMPLE 2: I don't know how Len **puts up with** his mean boss every day.

**real flop or flop** – a failure

EXAMPLE 1: The Broadway play closed after just 4 days – it was a **real flop!**

EXAMPLE 2: The company was in trouble after its new product **flopped**.

**(to) save the day** – to prevent a disaster or misfortune

EXAMPLE 1: The Christmas tree was on fire, but Ted threw water on it and **saved the day**.

EXAMPLE 2: We forgot to buy champagne for our New Year's party, but Sonia brought some and really **saved the day!**

**(as) sharp as a tack** – very intelligent

EXAMPLE 1: Jay scored 100% on his science test. He's as **sharp as a tack**.

EXAMPLE 2: Anna got a scholarship to Yale. She's as **sharp as a tack**.

**(to) talk over** – to discuss

EXAMPLE 1: Dave and I spent hours **talking over** the details of the plan.

EXAMPLE 2: Before you make any big decisions, give me a call and we'll **talk things over**.

**top dollar** – the highest end of a price range; a lot of money

EXAMPLE 1: Nicole paid **top dollar** for a shirt at Banana Republic.

EXAMPLE 2: Wait until those jeans go on sale. Why pay **top dollar?**

 **PRACTICE THE IDIOMS**

**Fill in the blank with the missing word:**

- 1) I can't believe you bought a couch at Honest Abe's. Everything in that store costs an arm and a \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) foot                      b) leg                      c) hand
- 2) After Bob found out that his advertising campaign failed, he wanted to go back to the drawing \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) board                      b) table                      c) room
- 3) When somebody isn't listening to you, there's no \_\_\_\_\_ in trying to argue with them.  
a) edge                      b) tip                      c) point
- 4) José is really smart. He's as sharp as a \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) tack                      b) nail                      c) screw
- 5) The salespeople at Honest Abe's always look angry and never speak to anybody. No wonder they \_\_\_\_\_ Bob the creeps.  
a) take                      b) give                      c) allow
- 6) Bob got fired. He isn't looking forward to \_\_\_\_\_ the news to his family.  
a) breaking                      b) cracking                      c) saying
- 7) Bob thought his new advertisements would bring in lots of customers and save the \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) morning                      b) night                      c) day
- 8) Fortunately, Bob no longer has to put \_\_\_\_\_ with his stupid boss at the furniture store.  
a) over                      b) in                      c) up



**LESSON 2**

**BOB RETURNS HOME WITH  
BAD NEWS**

*Bob tells his wife Susan that he lost his job.  
Susan suggests that he start his own business.*

*Susan:* **What's the matter**, dear?

*Bob:* Susan, I **got canned** today at work.

*Susan:* But Bob, you were Peter's **right-hand man**!

*Bob:* Yes, and he **stabbed me in the back**.

*Susan:* **Keep your chin up**. Maybe he'll **change his mind** and take you back.

*Bob:* **When pigs fly!** Once he **makes up his mind**, he never changes it. Besides, I **told him off**.

*Susan:* **Look on the bright side**: you won't have to **set eyes** on Peter ever again.

*Bob:* **Thank goodness** for that!

*Susan:* **Hang in there**. I'm sure you won't be **out of work** for long.

*Bob:* In the meantime, we'll have to **live from hand to mouth**.

*Susan:* Don't get too **stressed out**, Bob. We'll **make ends meet**.

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*Bob:* I can always get a job at McDonald's as a **last resort**.

*Susan:* I don't think they're hiring right now.

*Bob:* If **worse comes to worst**, we can sell our home and move into a tent.

*Susan:* Let's **think big!** Maybe you can start your own business.

*Bob:* **Easier said than done!**



## IDIOMS – LESSON 2

**(to) change one's mind** – to change one's opinion or decision

EXAMPLE 1: Brandon wasn't going to take a vacation this year, but then he **changed his mind** and went to Bora Bora for two weeks.

EXAMPLE 2: Why aren't you applying to medical school this year? Did you **change your mind** about becoming a doctor?

**easier said than done** – more difficult than you think

EXAMPLE 1: You want to climb Mount Everest? **Easier said than done!**

EXAMPLE 2: Moving into a new home is **easier said than done**.

**(to) get canned** [slang] – to lose one's job; to get fired

EXAMPLE 1: After Chris **got canned**, it took him a year to find a new job.

EXAMPLE 2: Lisa is a lousy secretary. She deserves to **get canned!**

SYNONYMS: to get sacked; to be given the ax

**(to) hang in there** – to persevere; to not give up

EXAMPLE 1: I know you're four games behind, but you can still win the tennis match. Just **hang in there!**

EXAMPLE 2: **Hang in there**, Don! Your invention will soon be a success.

**if worse comes to worst** – in the worst case; if absolutely necessary

EXAMPLE 1: Ted's car isn't running well. **If worse comes to worst**, he can take the bus to school.

EXAMPLE 2: I know you're running out of money. **If worse comes to worst**, you can always sell some of your jewelry.



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**(to) keep one's chin up** – to stay positive

EXAMPLE 1: Even when he was unemployed and homeless, Bill managed to **keep his chin up**.

EXAMPLE 2: **Keep your chin up!** You'll find your lost dog soon.

**last resort** – if there are no other alternatives left; the last solution for getting out of a difficulty

EXAMPLE 1: David was locked out of his house. He knew that as a **last resort**, he could always break a window.

EXAMPLE 2: I don't like taking medicine. I'll only take it as a **last resort**.

**(to) live from hand to mouth** – to barely have enough money to survive

EXAMPLE 1: Jenny was earning \$5 an hour working at the store. She was really **living from hand to mouth**.

EXAMPLE 2: George is really poor. He **lives from hand to mouth**.

**(to) look on the bright side** – to be optimistic; to think about the positive part or aspect of a situation

EXAMPLE 1: Leo was upset that his soccer game was canceled. His mother said, "**Look on the bright side**, now you can stay home and watch TV."

EXAMPLE 2: You lost your job? **Look on the bright side**, now you'll have more free time!

**(to) make ends meet** – to manage one's money so as to have enough to live on; to be okay financially

EXAMPLE 1: Kimberly wasn't able to **make ends meet** so she had to ask her parents to pay her rent.

EXAMPLE 2: If you can't **make ends meet**, you'll need to start spending less.

**(to) make up one's mind** – *see Lesson 1*

**out of work** – unemployed; not working

EXAMPLE 1: Gary was **out of work** for a year before finding a new job.

EXAMPLE 2: Bob is **out of work**. Do you know anybody who might want to hire him?

**right-hand man** – the most helpful assistant or employee

EXAMPLE 1: Juan's **right-hand man** helps him make all of his decisions.

EXAMPLE 2: When Jack Thompson retired as president of his company, his **right-hand man** took over.

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**(to) set eyes on** – to look at; to see for the first time

EXAMPLE 1: Ted was in love from the moment he **set eyes on** Amber.

EXAMPLE 2: Susan knew from the moment she **set eyes on** Ted's friend Lucas that he would be trouble.

**(to) stab someone in the back** – to betray someone

EXAMPLE 1: Jill and Heather were friends, until Heather **stabbed Jill in the back** by stealing her boyfriend.

EXAMPLE 2: You're firing me after all I've done for this company? You're really **stabbing me in the back!**

**(to be) stressed out** – under severe strain; very anxious

EXAMPLE 1: Al is so **stressed out** about his job that he can't sleep at night.

EXAMPLE 2: You've been so **stressed out** lately. You really need to take a long vacation!

**(to) tell off** – to scold; to tell someone in strong words what one really thinks

EXAMPLE 1: When Ted showed up for chemistry class a half an hour late, his teacher really **told him off**.

EXAMPLE 2: Patty is going to **tell off** the plumber because the pipes he said he fixed are still leaking.

**thank goodness** – I'm grateful; I'm relieved

EXAMPLE 1: When Ted came home at 4 a.m. last Sunday, his mother said, "**Thank goodness** you're home! I was so worried about you."

EXAMPLE 2: **Thank goodness** you didn't go to California on Monday. It rained there every day this week.

**(to) think big** – to set high goals

EXAMPLE 1: Why run for Governor of New York? **Think big**: run for President of the United States!

EXAMPLE 2: Ken and Sandra hope to sell their house for \$3 million dollars. They always **think big**.

**What's the matter?** – What's the problem?

EXAMPLE 1: **What's the matter**, Bob? You don't look very happy.

EXAMPLE 2: Oscar looks very pale. **What's the matter** with him?

**When pigs fly!** [slang] – never

EXAMPLE 1: Will Ted teach Nicole how to play the guitar? **When pigs fly!**

EXAMPLE 2: Sure, I'll give you my new laptop. **When pigs fly!**

SYNONYMS: when hell freezes over; never in a million years

 **PRACTICE THE IDIOMS**

**Fill in the blank with the missing word:**

- 1) What's the \_\_\_\_\_? You look upset.  
a) situation            b) issue            c) matter
- 2) I know I can trust you. You would never stab me in the \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) leg            b) back            c) arm
- 3) If Bob and Susan run out of money, they can always borrow money from Susan's sister as a \_\_\_\_\_ resort.  
a) final            b) first            c) last
- 4) You look really stressed \_\_\_\_\_. Why don't you sit down, relax, and have a cup of tea?  
a) about            b) in            c) out
- 5) Bob, everything will be fine. You just need to keep your chin \_\_\_\_\_ and remember that tomorrow is another day.  
a) up            b) down            c) above
- 6) I just can't make up my \_\_\_\_\_ whether to order chicken or fish.  
a) head            b) brain            c) mind
- 7) Nicole accidentally stepped on Ted's guitar. Ted got really angry and told her \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) off            b) out            c) away
- 8) Your husband left you for his psychologist? Hang \_\_\_\_\_ there! I'm sure he'll realize she's crazy and then come back to you.  
a) up            b) in            c) out