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- [50 Important Idioms For Competitive Exams with Examples](#)



English Grammar MCQs

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1. **To win laurels** means To distinguish oneself
2. **At daggers drawn** means At enmity or fighting
3. **Blake and white** means Written

4. **By leaps and bounds** means Very fast
 5. **In cold blood** means deliberately
 6. **Laid up with** means Confined to bed
 7. **Ins and outs** means Full details
 8. **A black sheep** means Scoundrel means a bad person
 9. **A cock and bull story** means An absurd tale
 10. **A gala day** means A day of festivity means a holiday with rejoicing
 11. **A hard nut to crack** means A difficult person or problem to deal with
 12. **A turn coat** means One who changes one's opinion or party
 13. **A fool's paradise** means In a state of happiness founded on vain hopes
 14. **Beat a retreat** means To retire before the enemy
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15. **To be on the horns of a dilemma** means To have a choice b/w two equal evils
16. **To beat about the bush** means Approach a subject in a round about method
17. **Bury the hatchet** means To make peace
18. **By fits and starts** means Irregularly
19. **Capital punishment** means Death sentence
20. **By hook or by crook** means By fair or foul means
21. **Eat humble pie** means To face humiliation
22. **Hit below the belt** means To act unfairly
23. **In apple pie order** means In perfect order
24. **Leave one in lurch** means To desert in difficulty
25. **To make a clean breast of** means To confess fully one's faults
26. **To nip the evil in the bud** means To destroy an evil in early stage
27. **Pick holes in another's coat** means To find fault with another
28. **Scot free** means To go unpunished
29. **Smell a rat** means To have a reason to suspect
30. **Through thick and thin** means Through every difficulty
31. **True to one's salt** means Faithful to one's master
32. **To turn the corner** means To begin to improve

33. **With a grain of salt** means To accept a statement with doubt as to its complete true
34. **Worship the rising sun** means To respect one rising in power
35. **A Herculean task** means An extremely difficult or dangerous task
36. **A fish out of water** means In a wrong place
37. **A leap in the dark** means An act of which we can't force consequences
38. **A thorn in one's side** means A constant source of annoyance
39. **To be at one's beck and call** means Under one's absolute control
40. **Bread and Butter** means Means of subsistence
41. **Burn one's fingers** means To get into trouble
42. **Burn the candle at both ends** means Use up too much energy
43. **To throw up the sponge** means To acknowledge defeat
44. **A feather in one's cap** means Something to be proud of
45. **A red letter day** means An auspicious day
46. **Bag and baggage** means With all one's belongings
47. **To cut the Gordian knot** means To solve the difficulty
48. **Cut and dried** means Ready-made
49. **Feather one's own nest** means To make money by unfair means
50. **To fish in troubled water** means To do something under very unpromising circumstance
51. **To give oneself airs** means Affected manners
52. **To give the devil his due** means To allow even a bad man the credit due
53. **To hang by thread** means To be in a critical condition
54. **A henpecked husband** means A man habitually snubbed by his wife
55. **Hush money** means Money given as a bribe to hush or make one keep silent
56. **Kick up a row** means Make a great noise
57. **To let the cat out of the bag** means To reveal a secret
58. **Null and void** means Not valid means of no effect
59. **On the spur of the moment** means At once
60. **Pay one back in one's own coin** means To treat in the same way as one has been treated
61. **Put in cold storage** means To forget or neglect something
62. **Pull wires** means To manage the show by secret Influence
63. **Read b/w the lines** means To hit at the real meaning
64. **Sit on the fence** means To avoid taking sides; to remain neutral
65. **A square deal** means Justice
66. **Sword of Damocles** means Treating danger

67. **To take up the gauntlet** means To accept the challenge
68. **To eat one's heart out** means To suffer silently, bitterly
69. **B/t the devil and the deep sea** means B/w two dangers equally harmful
70. **A sweet tooth** means A liking for sweetmeat
71. **A dark horse** means An unknown person
72. **A bottleneck** means Anything that cause delays
73. **To put one's foot down** means To show determination
74. **A wet blanket** means A grumbling, depressing person
75. **To add insult to injury** means To intensify a person
76. **To be born with a silver spoon** means To be born in a rich family
Spoon in one's mouth means
77. **A bolt from the blue** means An expected disaster
78. **To blow one's own trumpet** means To boast
79. **A bone of contention** means Cause of quarrel
80. **To burn one's fingers** means To suffer
81. **To beat black & blue** means To beat mercilessly
82. **To cast an aspersion** means To bring discredit
83. **To cry over spilt milk** means To feel sorry for what has happened
84. **To cut a sorry figure** means To make a poor impression
85. **To die in harness** means To die while doing one's duty
86. **To end in smoke** means To fail
87. **To go to the dogs** means To be ruined
88. **To hang in the balance** means To remain undecided
89. **To hit the nail on the head** means To do the right thing at the right time
90. **To hold water** means To sound logical
91. **To live no stone unturned** means To try one's level best
92. **To live from hand to mouth** means To live with great difficulty
93. **To make up one's mind** means To decide
94. **To see eye to eye with** means Agree
95. **To play ducks and drakes** means Waste
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96. **To put the cart before the horse** means To do a thing in a wrong way
97. **To have too many irons in the fire** means To have too many things in hand
98. **To read b/w the lines** means To try to understand the hidden meaning
99. **To turn over a new leaf** means To change for the better
100. **To take the bull by the horns** means To face difficulties boldly

50 Common Idioms for CSS, PMS and all Competitive Exams

The idioms and expressions below are some of the most repeated and important in various Exams in Pakistan i.e CSS & PMS etc. Besides, the example sentences show how idioms are used in context.

1. **As easy as pie** means “very easy” (same as “a piece of cake”)
Example: He said it is a difficult problem, but I don’t agree. It seems as easy as pie to me!
2. **Be sick and tired of** means “I hate” (also “can’t stand”)
Example: I’m sick and tired of doing nothing but work. Let’s go out tonight and have fun.
3. **Bend over backwards** means “try very hard” (maybe too much!)
Example: He bent over backwards to please his new wife, but she never seemed satisfied.
4. **Bite off more than one can chew** means “take responsibility for more than one can manage”
Example: John is so far behind in his studies. Besides classes, he plays sports and works at a part-time job. It seems he has bitten off more than he can chew.
5. **Broke** means “to have no money”

Example: I have to borrow some money from my Dad. Right now, I'm broke.

6. **Change one's mind** means "decide to do something different from what had been decided earlier"

Example: I was planning to work late tonight, but I changed my mind. I'll do extra work on the weekend instead.

7. **Cut it out!** Means "stop doing something bad"

Example: That noise is really annoying. Cut it out!

8. **Drop someone a line** means "send a letter or email to someone"

Example: It was good to meet you and I hope we can see each other again. Drop me a line when you have time.

9. **Figure something out** means "come to understand a problem"

Example: I don't understand how to do this problem. Take a look at it. Maybe you can figure it out.

10. **Fill in for someone** means "do their work while they are away"

Example: While I was away from the store, my brother filled in for me.

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1. **In ages** means "for a very long time"

Example: Have you seen Joe recently? I haven't seen him in ages.

12. **Give someone a hand** means "help"

Example: I want to move this desk to the next room. Can you give me a hand?

1. **Hit the hay** means "go to bed" (also "hit the sack")

Example: It's after 12 o'clock. I think it's time to hit the hay.

2. **In the black** means “the business is making money, it is profitable”
Example: Our business is really improving. We’ve been in the black all year.
3. **In the red** means “the business is losing money, it is unprofitable”
Example: Business is really going poorly these days. We’ve been in the red for the past three months.
4. **In the nick of time** means “not too late, but very close!”
Example: I got to the drugstore just in the nick of time. It’s a good thing because I really need this medicine!
5. **Keep one’s chin up** means “remain brave and keep on trying”
Example: I know things have been difficult for you recently, but keep your chin up. It will get better soon.
6. **Know something like the back of your hand** means “know something very, very well”
Example: If you get lost, just ask me for directions. I know this part of town like the back of my hand
7. **Once in a while** means “sometimes, not very often”
Example: Have you been to the new movie theatre? No, only see movies once in a while. I usually stay home and watch TV.
8. **Sharp** means “exactly at that time”
Example: i’ll meet you at 9 o’clock sharp. If you’re late, we’ll be in trouble!
9. **Sleep on it** means “think about something before making a decision”
Example: That sounds like a good deal, but I’d like to sleep on it before I give you my final decision.
10. **Take it easy** means “relax”

Example: I don't have any special plans for the summer. I think i'll just take it easy.

11. **To get the ball rolling** means “start something, especially something big”

Example: We need to get this project started as soon as possible. I'm hoping you will help me get the ball rolling.

12. **Up to the minute** means “the most recent information”

Example: I wish I knew more about what is happening in the capital city. We need more up to the minute news.

13. **Twenty-four/seven** means “every minute of every day, all the time”

Example: You can access our web site 24/7. It's very convenient!

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1. **All of a sudden** means “unexpectedly”, used to describe something that happens very quickly

Example: He had just gone to bed when all of a sudden the phone rang.

2. **Be all ears** means “eager and ready to listen”

Example: Go ahead and speak. I'm all ears!

3. **Be fed up** with means “to hate something now, even though I may have liked it before”

Example: I'm fed up with my job! I think I should start looking for a new one.

4. **To bug** means “to bother someone”. (American English)

Example: Hey, stop tapping your fingers. It's really bugging me!

5. **A cinch** means something that is very easy to do

Example: I didn't think I could run five kilometers, but with the right preparation, it was a cinch.

6. **Cost an arm and a leg** means "very expensive"

Example: I'd really like a new car, but they all cost an arm and a leg.

7. **To cram** means "to study hard a few days before a test"

Example: If you had studied hard for the past four months, you wouldn't have to cram so much this weekend.

8. **Fresh out of something** means "to have no more of something"

Example: I have to go buy some more milk. It seems we're fresh out now.

9. **To get it (often negative)** means "to understand"

Example: What did the teacher say? I didn't get it. Did you?

10. **Got a minute?** Means "Do you have time right now?"

Example: Hey, Joe, got a minute? I have something to show you.

36. **Give someone a hand** means "help someone"

Example: Could you give me a hand moving this table? It's quite heavy.

1. **Grab a bite to eat** means "quickly go get something to eat"

Example: I'm going to go grab a bite. I'll be back in a few minutes.

2. **Drive someone up a wall (or "drive someone crazy")** means "to make someone very angry"

Example: My neighbour practices the piano every night, but he's terrible.

It's driving me up the wall!

3. **To hang on** means "to wait"

Example: Hang on a few minutes. I have to make a phone call and then i'll be able to join you for lunch.

4. **Hard-headed** means "stubborn" or "unwilling to change an opinion or idea"

Example: I can't work with Joe any more. He's so hard headed!

5. **Having a change of heart** means "change a previous decision"

Example: I thought I would change jobs, but now that my boss is treating me with more respect, i've had a change of heart.

6. **Having mixed feelings about something** means "to be uncertain"

Example: I have mixed feelings about Joe. He's a very good teacher, but he has a very strange sense of humor!

7. **Head out for** means "to start on a long trip" (but it could be within a big city)

Example: We're heading out for the countryside to pick some apples. Would you like to join us?

8. **How come?** Means "Why?"

Example: How come we don't go to the movies anymore? I guess we're too busy to enjoy ourselves these days.

9. **Keep in touch (or "stay in touch")** means "do not stop communicating - send letters or call sometimes"

Example: Don't forget to keep in touch. I want to know how you're doing while you're away.

10. **Be kidding** means "to joke or tease someone in a playful way"

Example: No, I don't really have three wives – I was just kidding!

47. **Look down on** means “think someone or something is not good enough”

Example: We shouldn't look down on people just because they don't have as much money as we do.

1. **Make ends meet (often used negatively)** means “to have enough money to buy everything we need”

Example: Even though I make more money than last year, we just can't seem to make ends meet.

2. **Miss the boat** means “to miss an opportunity”

Example: The sale ends today at noon. If we don't hurry, we're going to miss the boat!

3. **Next to nothing** means “to cost very little”

Example: I went to the new discount store and bought these new shoes for only five dollars. That's next to nothing!

Some more Important Idioms for CSS, PMS and all Competitive Exams

1. **Carry out** means “Accomplish, bring to a conclusion “

Example: They carried out the mission successfully.

Shakespeare had this term in King Lear (5:1): “And hardly shall I carry out my side, her husband being alive

Carry out also means “Put in practice or effect”

Example: We will carry out the new policy.

Please carry out my instructions.

2. Taken over means “Assume control, management, or possession of”

Example: The pilot told his copilot to take over the controls.

There’s a secret bid to take over our company. [Late 1800s]

3. Bring about means “Cause to happen, occur or exist”

Example: She hopes to bring about a change in his attitude.

4. Beat out

Knock into shape by beating

Example: She managed to beat out all the dents in the fender. [c. 1600]

Surpass or defeat someone, be chosen over someone

He got to the head of the line, beating out all the others.

5. Beat out of

Cheat someone of something

Example: He was always trying to beat the conductor out of the full train fare.

6. Bear with

Put up with, make allowance for

Example: He’ll just have to bear with them until they decide.

Nicholas Udall used this term in Ralph Roister Doister (c. 1553):

“The heart of a man should more honour win by bearing with a woman.”

It may also be used as an imperative.

Bear with me—I’m getting to the point.

7. To fall back on something / fall back upon means “Rely on, have recourse to”

Example: I fall back on old friends in time of need.

When he lost his job he had to fall back upon his savings

8. To fall through means “Fail, miscarry”

Example: The proposed amendment fell through.

I hope our plans won’t fall through. [Late 1700s]

9. Vested interests means “A personal stake in something”

Example: She has a vested interest in keeping the house in her name.

This term, first recorded in 1818, uses vested in the sense of “established” or “secured.”

10. Turn to account means “Use for one’s benefit”

Example: He turned the delay to good account, using the time to finish correspondence.

This idiom, first recorded in 1878, uses account in the sense of “a reckoning.”

11. Go Banana means “become crazy or angry.”

Example: He has never had a product that people went so bananas over.”

12. To beat the air / beat the wind means “Continue to make futile attempts, fight to no purpose”

Example: The candidates for office were so much alike that we thought our vote amounted to beating the air.

These phrases call up a vivid image of someone flailing away at nothing. [Late 1300s]

13. To foul of, (foul play) means “Unfair or treacherous action, especially involving violence”

Example: The police suspected he had met with foul play.

This term originally was and still is applied to unfair conduct in a sport or game and was being used figuratively by the late 1500s.

Shakespeare used it in *The Tempest* (1:2):

“What foul play had we that we came from thence?”

14. To keep open house means “To entertain friends at all times, to be hospitable”

Example: Ali is not too rich but yet so generous therefore he always keep open his house.

15. To have a finger in the pie means “Have an interest in or meddle in something”

Example: When they nominated me for the board, I’m sure Bill had a finger in

the pie.

Another form of this idiom is

To have a finger in every pie means to have an interest in or be involved in everything

Example: She does a great deal for the town; she has a finger in every pie. The precise origin of this metaphor, which presumably eludes either to tasting every pie or being involved in their concoction, has been lost. [Late 1500s]

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