

Ideal for
self-study

Oxford Word Skills

Idioms and Phrasal Verbs

Advanced

Ruth Gairns and Stuart Redman

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and Phrasal Advanced

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Introduction

Idioms and Phrasal Verbs

Idioms and Phrasal Verbs forms part of the *Oxford Word Skills* vocabulary series. It is a series of two books for students to learn, practise, and revise everyday English idioms and phrasal verbs.

Intermediate:	intermediate and upper-intermediate (CEF levels B1 and B2)
Advanced:	advanced (CEF levels C1 and C2)

There are over 1,000 new idioms and phrasal verbs in each level, and all of the material can be used in the classroom or for self-study.

How are the books organized?

Each book contains 60 units of vocabulary presentation and practice. Units are one to three pages long, depending on the topic. New vocabulary is presented in manageable quantities for learners, with practice exercises following immediately, usually on the same page. The units are grouped together thematically in modules of four to nine units. At the end of each module there are further practice exercises in the review units, so that learners can revise and test themselves on the vocabulary learned.

At the back of each book you will find:

- an answer key for all the exercises
 - an answer key for the review units
 - a list of the spotlight boxes
 - a list of all the idioms and phrasal verbs taught, with a unit reference to where each item appears
 - a separate list of key words with unit references
- a page featuring the histories behind some of the idioms in the book (👁️ look on the website www.oup.com/elt/wordskills for more).

What are idioms and phrasal verbs?

Why teach them together?

Idioms are usually defined as groups of words whose meaning is different from the individual words. So, *under the weather* has nothing to do with the literal meaning of 'the weather'; it means 'feeling ill'. If you *sweep something under the carpet*, you try to keep something secret; and if you *put someone in the picture*, you give them the information they need to understand a situation. As these examples illustrate, in some idioms the meaning can be almost impossible to guess out of context, while others are more transparent.

Phrasal verbs consist of two and occasionally three words: a base verb and at least one particle (preposition or adverb). Many phrasal verbs are idiomatic; in other words, the meaning of the verb and particle is different from the base verb on its own. For example, the meanings of *give up* and *give in* are quite different from the meaning of *give*. As with idioms, some phrasal verbs are more transparent than others, e.g. *stand up* and the most

common meaning of *stand* are very similar in meaning, as are *sit down* and *sit*. In other words, phrasal verbs can be seen as a type of idiom, although they are often singled out for specific attention in language-teaching materials.

Putting idioms and phrasal verbs together has a linguistic rationale, but perhaps an even greater pedagogic one. A relatively short passage of text – a practical necessity in most language-teaching materials – does not normally produce nine or ten naturally occurring phrasal verbs, but it can easily yield that number if the target language includes both phrasal verbs and idioms. This makes it easier to present the target language in continuous text rather than disconnected sentences, and gives learners more opportunity to see the expressions being used naturally, and to use them themselves in a realistic way.

Which idioms and phrasal verbs are included?

When people think of idioms, they tend to think of the more imaginative and colourful examples: *kick the bucket*, *have a bone to pick with someone*, *full of beans*, *be barking up the wrong tree*, etc. These vivid expressions can be extremely difficult to understand, so they are often the ones that teachers are called upon to explain in the classroom. It is also undeniably true that idioms – especially the more vivid ones – hold a particular fascination for some learners. However, there are thousands of idioms, less exotic and often more transparent than the ones above, which are of a higher frequency and probably greater value to the vast majority of learners. Here are some typical examples:

bear sth in mind, *get your own way*, *by far*, *come in handy*, *fair enough*, *a happy medium*, *have your doubts about sth*, *hours on end*, *I thought as much*, *if all else fails*, *in all probability*, *last but not least*, *leave it at that*, *life's too short*, *little by little*, *no wonder*, *not necessarily*, *odds and ends*, *on the surface*, *play a part in sth*, *rightly or wrongly*, *so what?*, *take it personally*, *that's life*, *the sooner the better*, *to put it mildly*, *two years running*, *use your head*, *you'll be lucky*.

Some of these will appear so mundane that they often pass unnoticed as idioms. In some cases the meaning may be quite easy to guess, especially in context, but the same concept may be expressed in a different way in the learner's mother tongue, so these expressions need to be learnt and are equally deserving of our attention.

In both books, we have concentrated on high-frequency idioms and phrasal verbs which are likely to be of greatest value to learners in everyday English. To this end, you will find some vivid and colourful examples, but the majority are closer to the list above.

One final note on selection. Dictionaries do not always agree on what constitutes an idiom: *hold the line* is listed as an idiom in one dictionary, but a collocation in another. The same is true for *under the influence*, *be on sb's side*, *at risk from sth*, *come to no harm*, etc. Equally, a phrase listed as an idiom in one dictionary may have a separate headword entry in another, e.g. *lost cause*, *lame duck*. Our criterion for inclusion in this series is that an item has to be listed as an idiom in at least one of the following ELT dictionaries (and they are almost always in more than one):

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

Oxford Wordpower Dictionary

Oxford Idioms Dictionary for learners of English

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners

Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary

Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary

How can teachers use the material in the classroom?

New idioms and phrasal verbs are presented through different types of text, including dialogues, tables, and visuals. The meaning of the new vocabulary is explained in an accompanying glossary unless it is illustrated in visuals or diagrams. Important or additional information is included in the 'spotlight' boxes.

Here is a procedure you could follow:

- Students study the presentation for five to ten minutes (longer if necessary).
- You answer any queries the students may have about the items, and provide a pronunciation model of the items for your students to repeat.
- Students do the first exercise, which they can check for themselves using the answer key, or you can go over the answers with the whole class.

- When you are satisfied, you can ask students to go on to further exercises, while you monitor them as they work individually or in pairs, and assist where necessary.
- When they have completed the written exercises, students can often test themselves on the new vocabulary. The material has been designed so that students can cover the new vocabulary and look at the meaning, or vice-versa. This is a simple, quick, and easy way for learners to test themselves over and over again, so there is no pressure on you to keep searching for different exercises.
- After a period of time has elapsed, perhaps a couple of days or a week, you can use the review exercises for further consolidation and testing.


- You will often notice the heading ABOUT YOU or ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY. This indicates a personalized exercise which gives learners an opportunity to use the new vocabulary within the context of their own lives. Students can write answers to these in their notebooks, but they make ideal pair-work activities for learners to practise their spoken English while using the new vocabulary. If you use these as speaking activities,

students could then write their answers (or their partner's answers) as follow-up.



To extend page 162, which gives the histories behind a number of idioms in this book, go to the website www.oup.com/elt/wordskills to find a regular feature. You and your students should find this interesting.

How can students study alone?

- Choose the topics that interest you. You don't need to do the units in any particular order.
 - Each page will probably take you about 20–25 minutes. Firstly, spend at least ten minutes studying the presentation, which may be a text, a dialogue, a table, etc. Use the glossaries to help you understand the meaning of new items. Practise saying the idioms and phrasal verbs a few times to help you remember them.
 - Keep a notebook where you can write down the new idioms and phrasal verbs with the meaning and an example sentence to help you remember them. If you are using a bilingual dictionary, you could also add a translation.
 - Do the exercises in pencil: then you can rub them out, and do them again in a few days' time. Check your answers in the answer key on pages 163–79. At the end of many units you will find a section called ABOUT YOU or ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY. This gives you an opportunity to use the vocabulary more freely to write in your notebook about yourself, your country, etc.
 - You can usually **test yourself** on the new vocabulary. Look at the idioms and phrasal verbs in the glossaries and tables, and cover the meanings. See if you can remember the meanings. You can do this when you have finished the exercises, or several days later as a way of revising the idioms and phrasal verbs.
 - You can use the further practice exercises in the review sections which follow each module. Either do them immediately after a unit, or do them a few days later as a form of revision.
 - We think it is probably better for you to do one unit at a time on a regular basis, e.g. two or three times a week, rather than study irregularly but try to do a lot of units at the same time.
- If you haven't got a good dictionary in English, we recommend *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. You may also be interested in two specialist dictionaries: *Oxford Idioms Dictionary for learners of English* and *Oxford Phrasal Verbs Dictionary for learners of English*.
-  Go to the website www.oup.com/elt/wordskills to find a regular feature on the origins of a number of idioms in the book.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used:

N	noun	sth	something
V	verb	sb	somebody
ADJ	adjective	etc.	You use 'etc.' at the end of a list to show there are other things, but you aren't going to say them all.
ADV	adverb		
PL	plural		
OPP	opposite		
SYN	synonym	i.e.	that is
INF	informal	e.g.	for example
FML	formal		