

UNIT 1

IDIOMS

to no avail

be on the ball

catch someone in the act

get your act together

cost an arm and a leg

the ball is in somebody's court

have an ace up your sleeve

alive and kicking

get off someone's back

stab someone in the back

act your age

into thin air

to no avail - You do something to no avail when you do not get the desired result.
e.g. *I went to the shops to buy a shirt to no avail; the shops were closed.*

cost an arm and a leg - Something costs an arm and a leg when it is very expensive.
e.g. *These football tickets cost us an arm and a leg!*

get off someone's back - If you tell someone to get off your back you mean that you want them to stop criticising and pressuring you.
e.g. *If I bring my exercise book, the teacher will get off my back.*

on the ball - If you say that someone is on the ball, you mean they are clever, alert and knowledgeable.
e.g. *I rely on my secretary to be on the ball.*

the ball is in somebody's court - You say that the ball is in a certain person's court when he or she is responsible for the next move in a situation.
e.g. *If you finish your homework, you can come with me; the ball's in your court now.*

stab someone in the back - Someone stabs you in the back if they appear to be friendly when they are with you, but then say unpleasant or harmful things about you when you are not there.
e.g. *Although she was my best friend, she stabbed me in the back, so I didn't see her again.*

catch someone in the act - You catch someone in the act when you discover them while they are doing something wrong.
e.g. *After the party, I was trying to clear up the mess before anyone noticed it, but my mum came in and caught me in the act.*

have an ace up your sleeve - You have an ace up your sleeve when you have a secret or hidden advantage that you can use against an opponent.
e.g. *That job applicant has an ace up her sleeve. She's known the boss since she was at school.*

act your age - If you tell someone to act their age you are telling them to stop being childish or silly.
e.g. *Oh, act your age, Mary! Don't behave like a child.*

get your act together - You get your act together when you organise yourself, your time and your work efficiently.
e.g. *If we get our act together, we will finish 2 books by the end of the month.*

alive and kicking - Someone is alive and kicking when they are still alive and in a strong and healthy condition.
e.g. *He's still alive and kicking, although he is 80 years old now.*

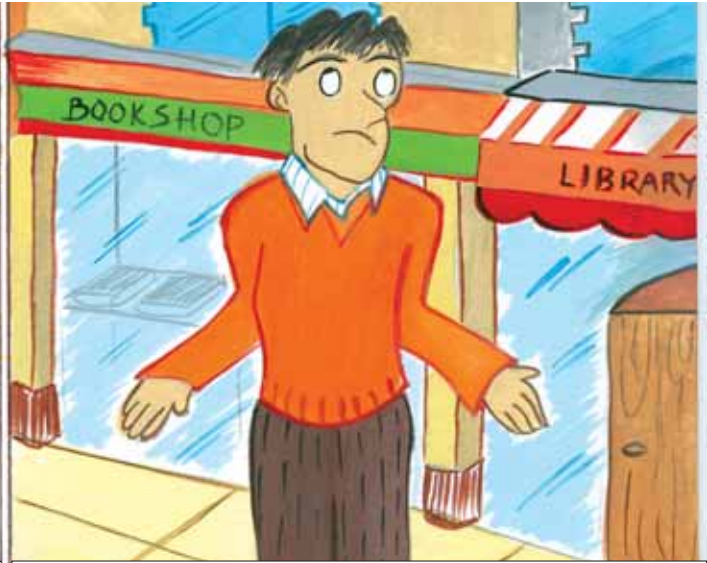
into thin air - Someone or something disappears into thin air if they seem to disappear suddenly and completely.
e.g. *Have you seen my bag? It seems to have disappeared into thin air.*

Illustrated Idioms

A. Fill in the gaps in the sentences below with the correct Idiom from unit 1.



1. I can't believe these shoes have broken already; they cost an arm and a leg !



4. I have scoured books and magazines for any information on this subject, but so far to no avail . .



2. I wouldn't have hired my brother if he wasn't completely on the ball



5. If I could just pay this last instalment, the bank manager might finally get off my back



3. Bob knew his colleague would take any opportunity to stab him in the back , so he was careful to watch what he said.



6. I told them we were interested in buying, but at a lower price; so the ball's in their court now.



7. I bet he's got an ace up his sleeve..... ; he wouldn't let anybody beat him that easily.



10. The robber was trying to escape with the money, but I caught him in the act..... !



8. We're going to have to get our act together..... if we want to finish this job by the end of the week.



11. Why don't you put those computer games away and act your age..... for once?



9. My keys seem to have disappeared into thin air.....



12. No, he's not dead! He's alive and kicking..., and from what I hear, still going to the gym regularly.

Illustrated Idioms

B. Choose the correct answer A, B, C or D.

13. Everyone thought Bill's proposal would win, but Anna had and was able to show us some more persuasive data.
a. caught him in the act
b. an ace up her sleeve
c. the ball in her court
d. acted her age
14. You can't have a tantrum every time you don't get your own way; you must and learn to compromise!
a. have an ace up your sleeve
b. act your age
c. be alive and kicking
d. be on the ball
15. Mum is never going to until I've cleaned my room.
a. catch me in the act
b. get my act together
c. get off my back
d. stab me in the back
16. I've tried talking to him, but ; he won't listen to anybody.
a. he's alive and kicking
b. he's on the ball
c. the ball's in his court
d. to no avail
17. Tim is a loyal friend; he would never !
a. stab you in the back
b. have an ace up his sleeve
c. act his age
d. get off your back
18. I'd love to buy that pair of trousers, but and I can't justify it.
a. to no avail
b. they cost an arm and a leg
c. the ball's in my court
d. they vanished into thin air
19. "I haven't seen Mr. Brown for weeks!"
"Don't worry, I'm sure he's and just on holiday or something like that."
a. disappeared into thin air
b. got off your back
c. alive and kicking
d. to no avail
20. I'm afraid that unless Mary and starts working harder she won't pass her exams this term.
a. is alive and kicking
b. disappears into thin air
c. has the ball in her court
d. gets her act together
21. "Tony seems to know everything about what's going on in the world." "Yes, he's certainly when it comes to current affairs."
a. acting his age
b. on the ball
c. caught in the act
d. getting off your back
22. "How can you be broke?" "I'm not sure, but each month my pay just seems to"
a. disappear into thin air
b. cost an arm and a leg
c. stab me in the back
d. get off my back
23. I'll tell you how I know that my housemate is using my hairbrush! I one morning!
a. caught him in the act
b. got on his back
c. stabbed him in the back
d. got my act together
24. You've called a few times, now You'll have to wait for him to get in touch if he wants to see you again.
a. act your age
b. you've caught him in the act
c. the ball's in his court
d. you have an ace up your sleeve

C. Match the Definitions with the correct Idiom. There are 3 extra Idioms that do not match with any Definition.

- 25. To be clever, alert and knowledgeable.
- 26. To be very expensive.
- 27. To appear friendly but then say harmful things when someone is not present.
- 28. To have a secret or hidden advantage you can use against an opponent.
- 29. To do something without getting the desired result.
- 30. To be still living and in good condition.
- 31. To discover someone when they are doing something wrong.
- 32. To organise yourself and your time efficiently.
- 33. To stop criticising or pressuring someone.
- 34. To disappear suddenly and completely.
- 35. To be responsible for making the next move in a situation.
- 36. To stop being childish or silly.

25.	j
26.	d
27.	o
28.	f
29.	n
30.	i
31.	b
32.	a
33.	c
34.	l
35.	e
36.	h

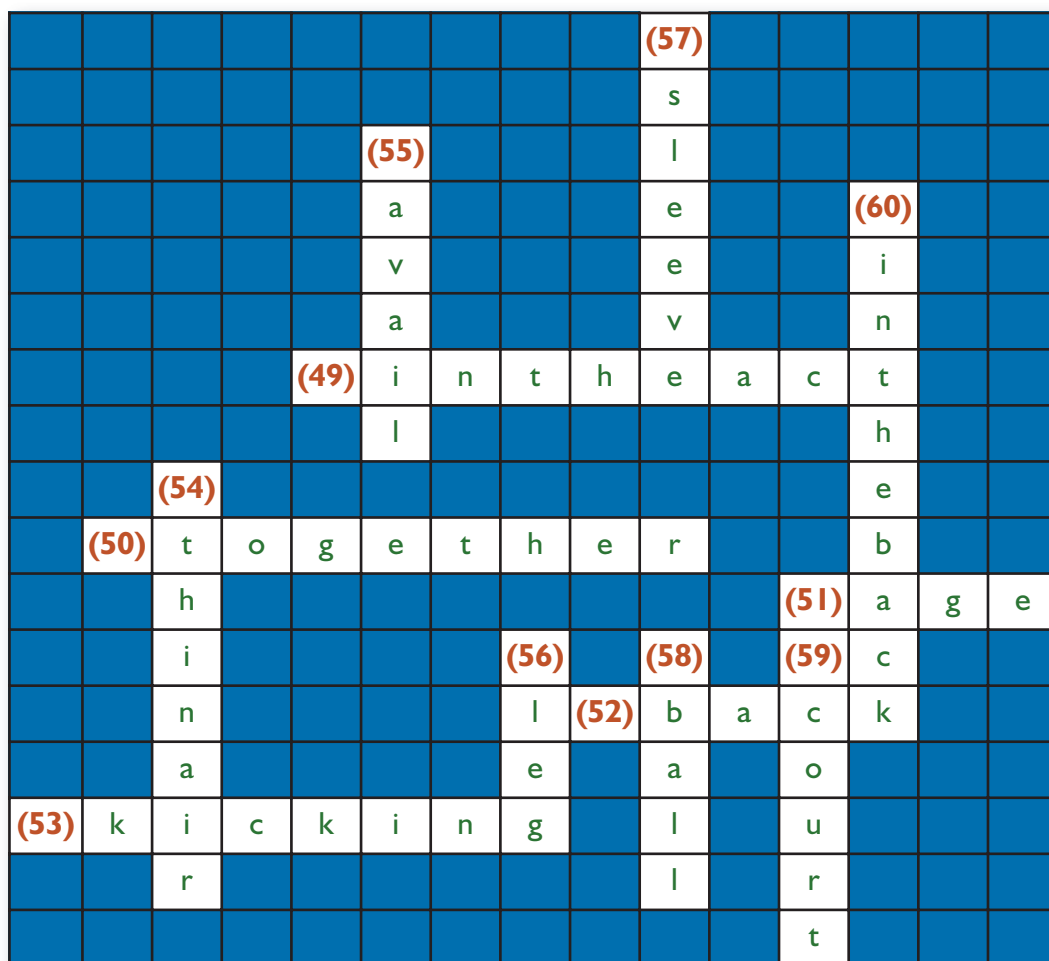
- a. get your act together
- b. catch someone in the act
- c. get off someone's back
- d. cost an arm and a leg
- e. the ball's in my court
- f. have an ace up your sleeve
- g. for better or worse
- h. act my age
- i. alive and kicking
- j. be on the ball
- k. have all the cards
- l. into thin air
- m. mind your own business
- n. to no avail
- o. stab someone in the back

D. Fill in the gaps with the correct Idiom.

1.
 "So, are you completely certain that it was Nicole who (37) stabbed you in the back... ?"
 "Unfortunately, yes. I really thought she was my friend but I (38) caught her in the act..... so I know it was her. I was waiting to meet with the professor, standing outside the door, and I heard her telling him that I was copying her. I was so embarrassed that I wished I could vanish (39) into thin air... , but I couldn't leave because I had already arranged to meet with the professor."
 "What did he say when you met him?"
 "Well, he told me that I was a young adult at college now and that I needed to (40) act my age.. . He told me that I had better (41) get my act together... quickly or he would see that I was disciplined. I tried to tell him that it was not true, and that I was doing my own work, but (42) to no avail.. . He said he was disappointed because he had thought that I was (43) on the ball.....; that I was bright, enthusiastic. This made me feel sad."
 "What are you going to do? After all, (44) the ball's in your court..... now."
 "There's not much I can do really. But I do have one (45) ace up my sleeve..... , because I've been helping Nicole, actually. And if anyone was copying, she was the one copying me. So, I will just not help her anymore, and he will see that my work stays the same and hers will probably get a lot worse."
 "Are you going to tell her you overheard what she told the professor?"
 "No. I'd prefer not to. But I'm afraid, if I don't, that she'll keep bugging me to help her."
 "Well if you just keep telling her no, I'm sure she'll eventually (46) get off your back.. and stop asking."
2.
 "I haven't seen Sophie and Todd for ages; I wonder what's up with them. Have you heard from them lately?"
 "Yes, I saw them last week. They're fine; still (47) alive and kicking.... . You know they bought that new house, right? Well, it (48) cost an arm and a leg..... and I think they're just staying in and trying to save money for a while."
 "Oh, of course! That would explain it."

Illustrated Idioms

E. Do the CrossWord Puzzle, finding the correct IDIOM from Unit I.



ACROSS

- 49. You know your sister ate the last of the candy. You caught her
- 50. You are getting messier and messier. You'd better get your act
- 51. He is acting like a spoiled child. He should act his
- 52. I'm tired of you nagging me! Get off my !
- 53. That actress was a star when my father was a child. It's amazing she's still alive and

DOWN

- 54. That cake seems to have disappeared into !
- 55. You can't seem to solve the problem. Everything you try is to no
- 56. That car is beautiful, but it's not cheap you know. It costs an arm and a !
- 57. He may not look like much of an athlete, but wait and see. He has an ace up his
- 58. Tom is a clever boy. He is always right on the
- 59. I made my offer. Now, the ball is in your
- 60. I thought you were my friend! How could you stab me ?