

## Using reference resources

At advanced level, your aim will be not only to understand idioms, but also to use them accurately and appropriately. This book will help you achieve these aims. There are also other resources which you should use too.

### A Dictionaries

To help you study idioms, you need a good learner's dictionary, ideally one which focuses on idioms. The *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary* gives you examples of how idioms are used, and also gives information on their use, e.g. whether they are used humorously, or informally, or in a more literary context. It also highlights the most important idioms to learn. You can access this dictionary online at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org>. The best learner's dictionaries are corpus-based, i.e. they focus on idioms that people actually use and give authentic examples of their use. *English Idioms in Use Advanced* and the *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary* are based on the *Cambridge International Corpus*, which is a collection of over one billion words of real spoken and written English. Here is an example of how idioms are presented in the *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary*:

**like it or lump it** *informal*

if you tell someone to like it or lump it, you mean they must accept a situation they do not like, because they cannot change it • *The fact remains, that's all we're going to pay him and he can like it or lump it.* • *Like it or lump it, romantic fiction is read regularly by thousands.*

### B The Internet

You can use the Internet to find out more about the meanings and origins of idioms, and to see more examples of their use.

- Go to <http://www.phrases.org.uk/> to discover the meanings and origins of many idioms. This site also provides examples of how the idioms are used, and you can even discuss the origins of other phrases not listed there.
- You can access the *British National Corpus* at <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/> Type in an idiom and you will be given up to fifty authentic examples of its use.
- Use a search engine, e.g. <http://www.google.co.uk/>, to find further examples of idioms in use. Type in an idiom in double inverted commas (e.g. "like it or lump it") to get a list of sites including that idiom.

### C Vocabulary notebooks

Always make good, detailed notes about idioms in your vocabulary notebook. Include an example of the idiom in context, as well as its meaning. Add any notes about its usage, e.g. *informal* or *literary*. Doing a quick drawing of an idiom may help you to learn it.

Each time they asked him a question he was like a deer caught in the headlights.  
 The speaker unfortunately looked like a deer caught in the headlights during most of the discussion.  
 = looked very frightened, unable to move or think.  
 sometimes rabbit instead of deer



## Exercises

- 3.1** Answer these questions. Use the information in A to help you.
- 1 What two things does a good idioms dictionary do, as well as explain the meaning of idioms?
  - 2 How much language and what kind of language is in the *Cambridge International Corpus*?
  - 3 What does the dictionary say about the usage of *like it or lump it*?
- 3.2** Use the *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary* (book or online) to match each idiom on the left with the label used in the dictionary on the right. Can you explain the meaning of the idioms?
- |                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1 get off your backside | informal      |
| 2 know no bounds        | formal        |
| 3 the shit hits the fan | very informal |
| 4 know sth inside out   | old-fashioned |
| 5 curl your lip         | taboo         |
| 6 kith and kin          | humorous      |
| 7 know your place       | literary      |
- 3.3** Complete each sentence with an idiom from 3.2. You may need to change the form of the verb.
- 1 Henry will help you deal with these forms. He ..... the system  
.....
  - 2 There is a growing interest in genealogy, as people increasingly want to discover all they can about their .....
  - 3 Joey can be so lazy. I wish he'd .....
  - 4 Don't worry. I'll behave properly when I meet your boss. I  
.....!
  - 5 If Greg finds out what you've done, .....
  - 6 Don't you dare ..... at me, young lady!
  - 7 The old woman's kindness to us all .....
- 3.4** Search for "like it or lump it" in each of the three sites in B on the opposite page. What information does each site give you?
- 3.5** Underline the eight idioms in this newspaper article. What do you think each idiom means? Use a dictionary to help you.

### SPORTS MINISTER HOPPING MAD

John Hamilton has made a name for himself by running a tight ship at the Ministry of Sport. So it was no surprise to his staff that he reportedly 'went spare' when he learnt what had been going on behind his back. Two of his leading advisors had been feathering their own nests with

government money intended for young people's sports organisations. 'Such behaviour is quite beyond the pale,' said Hamilton, 'and the two people concerned have already been given the sack'.



**FOLLOW  
UP**

Choose three idioms from 3.5. Use any of the websites in B to help you decide on a usage note, comment or drawing that would help you learn these idioms.