

Business body idioms pairwork dictation

Student A

*Work with someone who has the other worksheet, without showing them to each other. Choose one idiom below and read out **just the part in bold** to your partner. They will pick one of the meanings that they have mixed up on their worksheet, and you should try to decide if it is the right one. You can then read out the whole example sentence to check.*

1. He was **caught red-handed** changing the company's accounts to boost the share price and so had no choice but to resign.
2. If you have a moment, I would like to **pick your brains** about my new project, as you worked on something similar last year.
3. I should've studied English more when I **had time on my hands** when I was a university student.
4. We were **glad to see the back of** Total Quality Management in our company, but the next management trend will be just around the corner!
5. There's something odd about the new CEO, but I **can't quite put my finger on it**.
6. The workers are **up in arms** about a pay rise offer of only 2% percent in a time of rising profits and inflation.
7. I **got off on the wrong foot** with my new company in Manchester when I told everyone I was a Chelsea fan on my first day.
8. Bernie Madoff couldn't **pull the wool over their eyes** forever, and his Ponzi scheme fraud went the way of all the others and collapsed.

Part Two

*Now listen to your partner read out **just the parts in bold** (the idiom) in their first example. Look at the definitions below and read out the one that you think best matches the meaning of the idiom that they said and see if they agree with you. If you need to, ask them to read out the whole example sentence so that you can check, then continue with the next example. When you have decided for sure, write the idioms next to the explanations below.*

- i) Immune to or not notice criticism
- j) Make sure people are alert and can't feel too settled
- k) Looking at something from the opposite point of view, e.g. looking at the negative consequences
- l) Something that is a generalisation or simplification but often holds true
- m) Make it clear that you are not too closely involved in something
- n) React to circumstances without knowing what will happen in advance
- o) Clap/ give a round of applause
- p) An instinctive (not logical) idea or prediction

Student B

Part One

*Listen to your partner read out **just the parts in bold** (the idiom) in their first example. Look at the definitions below and read out the one that you think best matches the meaning of the idiom that they said and see if they agree with you. If you need to, ask them to read out the whole example sentence so that you can check, then continue with the next example. When you have decided for sure, write the idioms next to the explanations below.*

- a) Not able to define or understand something exactly
- b) Fool people
- c) See someone committing a crime or doing something wrong
- d) Have plenty of leisure
- e) Make a bad start
- f) Very unhappy about or protesting
- g) See if you have any good ideas that can help me
- h) It's gone, and we are happy about that

Part Two

*Work with someone who has the other worksheet, without showing them to each other. Choose one idiom below and read out **just the part in bold** to your partner. They will pick one of the meanings that they have mixed up on their worksheet, and you should try to decide if it is the right one. You can then read out the whole example sentence to check.*

- 9. I didn't have any time to prepare for the meeting and had no idea what the client's response to our products would be, so I just **played it by ear**.
- 10. I think working abroad would be a great learning experience, but **on the other hand** it would probably interrupt my long term career plans.
- 11. Now, here is our guest speaker for the day, Steve Jobs. Let's all **give him a big hand**.
- 12. My favourite business **rule of thumb** is that if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.
- 13. Some big companies have separate teams working on competing products in the same segment to **keep everyone on their toes**.
- 14. You have to be **thick skinned** to be a PR consultant, and you take things too much to heart to be suited to a job like that.
- 15. The business plan seems perfect on paper, but I **have a gut feeling** that it will all go horribly wrong.
- 16. Despite its high profits since they took it over, the conglomerate's top management are keeping the consumer loans division **at arm's length** in case it becomes a victim of the bad publicity or sudden drop in profits that that part of the finance sector is prone to.

Answer key

1. He was **caught red-handed** changing the company's accounts to boost the share price and so had no choice but to resign – See someone committing a crime or doing something wrong
2. If you have a moment, I would like to **pick your brains** about my new project, as you worked on something similar last year – See if you have any good ideas that can help me
3. I should've studied English more when I **had time on my hands** when I was a university student – Have plenty of leisure
4. We were **glad to see the back of** Total Quality Management in our company, but the next management trend will be just around the corner! – It's gone, and we are happy about that
5. There's something odd about the new CEO, but I **can't quite put my finger on it** – Not able to define or understand something exactly
6. The workers are **up in arms** about a pay rise offer of only 2% percent in a time of rising profits and inflation – Very unhappy about or protesting
7. I **got off on the wrong foot** with my new company in Manchester when I told everyone I was a Chelsea fan on my first day – Make a bad start
8. Bernie Madoff couldn't **pull the wool over their eyes** forever, and his Ponzi scheme fraud went the way of all the others and collapsed – Fool people
9. I didn't have any time to prepare for the meeting and had no idea what the client's response to our products would be, so I just **played it by ear** – React to circumstances without knowing what will happen in advance
10. I think working abroad would be a great learning experience, but **on the other hand** it would probably interrupt my long term career plans – Looking at something from the opposite point of view, e.g. looking at the negative consequences
11. Now, here is our guest speaker for the day, Steve Jobs. Let's all **give him a big hand** – Clap/ give a round of applause
12. My favourite business **rule of thumb** is that if it seems too good to be true, it probably is – Something that is a generalisation or simplification but often holds true
13. Some big companies have separate teams working on competing products in the same segment to **keep everyone on their toes** – Make sure people are alert and can't feel too settled
14. You have to be **thick skinned** to be a PR consultant, and you take things too much to heart to be suited to a job like that – Immune to or not notice criticism
15. The business plan seems perfect on paper, but I **have a gut feeling** that it will all go horribly wrong – An instinctive (not logical) idea or prediction
16. Despite its high profits since they took it over, the conglomerate's top management are keeping the consumer loans division **at arm's length** in case it becomes a victim of the bad publicity or sudden drop in profits that that part of the finance sector is prone to – Make it clear that you are not too closely involved in something