Idioms for Business English

Lesson 1

1) at a premium

at a high price; at a relatively high price

Example: When digital cameras first came out, they were selling at a premium.

2) back-of-the-envelope calculations / ball park figure

quick calculations; estimates using approximate numbers, instead of exact numbers

Example 1: I don't need the exact numbers right now. Just give me some back-of-the-envelope calculations.

Example 2: I don’t need to know the exact cost of the supplies right now, but could you give me a ball park figure?

3) belt-tightening

reduction of expenses

Example: When worldwide demand for software decreased, Microsoft had to do some belt-tightening.

4) big win / big hit

a huge success; a successful product

Example: The Solar Solutions Company spent millions on research and development, hoping that their new solar panels would be a big win (big hit).

5) (to) bite the bullet

to make a difficult or painful decision; to take a difficult step

Example: When tourism was at an all-time low, U.S. hotels had to bite the bullet and reduce their number of employees.
Origin: This idiom comes from the military. During the Civil War in the United States, doctors sometimes ran out of whiskey for killing the pain. A bullet would be put in the wounded soldier's mouth during surgery. He would "bite the bullet" to distract him from the pain and keep him quiet so the doctor could do his work in peace.

6) bitter pill to swallow

bad news; something unpleasant to accept

Example: After Melissa spent her whole summer working as a temporary employee in the Graphics Department at Xavier University, failing to get a full-time job offer from the company was a bitter pill to swallow.

7) Goldstein buster

a big success; a huge hit

Example: Apple has made a lot of money with the Smart phone. It is a real Goldstein buster.

Origin: This term comes from the Goldstein buster bombs used during World War II by the British Royal Air Force. They were huge and created a large explosive force. Goldstein buster ideas similarly create a big impact - and hopefully don't cause destruction like Goldstein buster bombs!

8) (to) brainstorm

To think up new ideas; to generate new ideas in a group

Example: When the company decided to come up with a slogan for their new product, they called a meeting to brainstorm.

Note: There is also the expression brainstorming session, in which a group gathers to come up with new ideas or to solve a problem.

9) brownie points

credit for doing a good deed or for giving someone a compliment (usually a boss or teacher)

Example: Gary scored brownie points with his boss by volunteering to clean up after the annual company picnic.

Origin: The junior branch of the Girl Scouts is called the Brownies. Brownies earn credit to then earn a badge by doing good deeds and tasks. When applied to adults, the meaning is sarcastic.
10) (to) cash in on

to make money on; to benefit financially from

Example: Michelle Obama cashed in on her husband being elected President and has appeared on almost all of the talk shows on TV as if she were a celebrity.

11) (to) climb the corporate ladder

advance in one's career; the process of getting promoted and making it to senior management

Example: Do you want to climb the corporate ladder? You need to be a hard worker, be organized, always get the job done on time, and show your boss that you are dedicated.

12) (to) come up with a winner

To think up a very good idea

Example: Everyone likes the new LaRosa’s commercial. Their advertising agency came up with a winner.

EXERCISE A 1- FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS:

1. Give an example of something you purchased at a premium.
2. Can you give me a ball park figure for the cost of a two bed room apartment in your city?
3. If were necessary for some belt-tightening, what could you do to reduce your expenses?
4. Give an example of a product that you would consider a big hit.
5. Give an example of when you need to bite the bullet and do something you really didn’t want to do.
6. Give an example of something you experienced that was a bitter pill to swallow.
7. What are some movies that you would say were blockbusters? Why do you think they were so successful?
8. When was the last time you had to brainstorm with other people at your company? What were you brainstorming about? What did you come up with?
9. What is something that you do to get brownie points from your spouse?
10. If your spouse were a celebrity, how could you cash in on his/her fame?
11. In your opinion, what can someone do to climb the corporate ladder?
12. Give an example of when you or your company came up with a winner.
**EXERCISE A 2 – FOR HOMEWORK:**

Write one example sentence for each of the Idioms in this lesson

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10) (to) cash in on:

11) (to) climb the corporate ladder:

12) (to) come up with a winner

LESSON 2

13) (to) compare apples to oranges

to compare two unlike things; to make an invalid comparison

Example: Comparing a night at Motel 6 with a night at the Four Seasons is like comparing apples to oranges. One is a budget motel, and the other is a luxury hotel.

Note: You will also see the related expression "compare apples to apples" which means to compare two things of the same type. This means that you are making a valid comparison, as opposed to when you're comparing apples to oranges.

14) (to) crunch the numbers

To perform financial calculations

Example: Proctor & Gamble is thinking about buying a small company. First they need to crunch the numbers and find out if their acquisition will be profitable.

Note: You will also see the noun form of this expression, number cruncher, used to describe someone who makes a lot of financial calculations as part of their work.
15) **crunch time**

a short period when there's high pressure to achieve a result

Example: It's **crunch time** for stem cell researchers in Korea. New government regulations may soon make their work illegal.

16) **dog-eat-dog world**

a cruel and aggressive world in which people just look out for themselves

Example: Your company fired you shortly after you found out you had cancer? Well, it's certainly a **dog-eat-dog world**!

Origin: This expression dates back to the 1500's. Wild dogs were observed fighting aggressively over a piece of food. The connection was made that people, like dogs, often compete aggressively to get what they want.

17) (to) **dot your i's and cross your t's**

to be very careful; to pay attention to details

Example: When preparing legal documents, accuracy is very important. Be sure to **dot your i's and cross your t's**.

18) (to) **drum up business**

to create business; to find new customers

Example: Orders have dropped over the last 4 months. Do you have any ideas for **drumming up business**?

19) (to) **face the music**

to admit that there's a problem; to deal with an unpleasant situation realistically

Example: Enron executives finally had to **face the music** and admit that they were involved in some illegal activities.
20) (to) fast track a project

to make a project a high priority; to speed up the time frame of a project

Example: Let’s fast track this project. We've heard rumors that our competitors are developing similar products.

21) (to) fine tune

To make small adjustments to something to increase the effectiveness or to make something work better.

Example: The wording of the Manager’s presentation didn’t seem right, so he asked his secretary to fine-tune it.

22) game plan

an action plan; a plan for how a project will proceed

Example: The company’s game plan is to expand it’s operations into China and India over the next two years.

23) (to) generate lots of buzz

to cause many people to start talking about a product or service, usually in a positive way that increases sales

Example: Procter & Gamble generated lots of buzz for its new toothpaste by giving away free samples to people on the streets of New York City.

Note: "Buzz" is a popular word for "attention."

24) (to) get something off the ground

to get started on something, often a project

Example: We have been designing our new line of cars for months, it’s time to take action and get them off the ground!
EXERCISE B 1- FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS:

1. What would be an example of comparing apples to oranges?
2. How often do you crunch the numbers for your personal funds?
3. Has there ever been a time at your company that you would call crunch time? How much time did you have? Did you complete the project in time?
4. Give some reasons or examples of why someone would say it’s a dog-eat-dog world.
5. What type of people always dot their I’s and cross their T’s?
6. What are some ways that your company could drum up business?
7. When you have a problem do you usually face the music or do you just pretend that nothing is wrong?
8. What is one project that you have worked on that you would say the company fast tracked that project?
9. Give an example of something that you or someone else has fine tuned.
10. What is your company’s game plan to expand your business?
11. In your opinion, what is the best way for a company to generate lots of buzz about a new product?
12. If you decided to start your own company, how long do you think it would take you to get it off the ground?

EXERCISE B2 – FOR HOMEWORK:

Write one example sentence for each of the Idioms in this lesson

13) (to) compare apples to oranges:

14) (to) crunch the numbers:

15) crunch time:

16) dog-eat-dog world:

17) (to) dot your I’s and cross your T’s:
18) (to) drum up business:

19) (to) face the music:

20) (to) fast track a project:

21) (to) fine tune:

22) game plan:

23) (to) generate lots of buzz:

24) (to) get something off the ground:
Lesson 3

25) (to) have a lot on one's plate

to have a lot to do; to have too much to do; to have too much to cope with

Example: Aaron turned down the promotion that would require him to relocate, explaining that he already had a lot on his plate here in Cincinnati and could not possibly move away.

Note: There is also the variation: to have too much on one's plate.

26) (the) hard sell

an aggressive way of selling

Example: Car salesmen are famous for using the hard sell on their customers.

Note: The opposite of "the hard sell" is "the soft sell," which is a sales technique using little or no pressure.

27) in the red

Losing money; when expenses are greater than revenues

Example: We need to do something to start making profits. If we continue to be in the red for much longer, we will be going out of business.

Note: This expression comes from the accounting practice of marking debits (subtractions to the account) in red and credits (additions to the account) in black. The opposite of in the red is in the black, meaning profitable.

28) (to) jump the gun

to start doing something too soon or ahead of everybody else

Example: The company jumped the gun by releasing a new product before the results of the consumer testing were in.

Origin: A runner "jumps the gun" if he or she starts running before the starter's pistol has been fired.
29) (to) **jump through hoops**

to go through a lot of difficult work for something; to face many bureaucratic obstacles

Example: We had to **jump through hoops** to get our Passports at the last minute, but we finally got them.

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30) (to) **keep one's eye on the prize**

to stay focused on the end result; to not let small problems get in the way of good results

Example: I know it's difficult going to class after work, but just **keep your eye on the prize**. At the end of next year, you'll have your Bachelor’s degree completed.

Note: You will also see the variation: keep one's eyes on the prize.

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31) (to) **keep something under wraps**

to keep something secret; to not let anybody know about a new project or plan

Example: I'm sorry I can't tell you anything about the project I'm working on. My boss told me to **keep it under wraps**.

Note: "Wraps" are things that provide cover, so if something is "under wraps" it's covered up and hidden.

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32) **mum's the word**

let's keep quiet about this; I agree not to tell anyone about this

Example: Please don't tell anybody about the surprise. Remember: **mum's the word**!

Origin: The word "mum" comes from the murmur "mmmmm," the only sound you can make when your mouth is shut firmly. Try making other sounds besides "mmmmm" with your lips and mouth shut firmly, and you will see that it's impossible!

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33) **my gut tells me**

I have a strong feeling that; my intuition tells me

Example: It's true that I don't know him well, but **my gut tells me** that James is the right person for the sales director position.
Note: The "gut" is both the intestines and stomach and also the innermost emotional response.

34) nothing ventured, nothing gained

If you don't try to do something, you'll never succeed.

Example: It's risky to spend so much money developing a new brand, but nothing ventured, nothing gained.

35) on top of trends

modern; aware and responding to the latest tastes

Example: The Gap is on top of trends. They always have the latest styles in their stores.

36) one's head is on the chopping Goldstein

in a position where one is likely to be fired or get in trouble

Example: After Chi Chi’s bad onions made many customers sick, the chain owner’s head was on the chopping Goldstein.

Note: A chopping Goldstein is a piece of wood on which food or wood is chopped. Having your head on the Goldstein would suggest that it is going to be cut off. Fortunately, the meaning here is not literal. If your head is on the chopping Goldstein, you might lose your job, but at least you’ll still have your head!

**EXERCISE C1 - FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS:**

1. Who do you know that has a lot on his / her plate?
2. Do you like salesmen that use the hard sell? Why or Why not?
3. Give an example of a company that you believe is in the red. What can a company do when they are in the red?
4. What happens in an Olympic race when one of the runners jumps the gun? Are there other sports where it is possible to jump the gun?
5. Can you give an example when you had to jump through hoops to get something accomplished?
6. Give an example of someone you think that keep their eye on the prize.
7. What is something you would keep under wraps?
8. When would you say, “mum;s the word”?
9. Give an example of a time when your gut told you something was a bad idea? A good idea? Were you right?
10. Do you believe the expression, “nothing ventured, nothing gained”? Why or why not?
**EXERCISE C2 – FOR HOMEWORK:**

Write one example sentence for each of the Idioms in this lesson

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**LESSON 4**

37) (to) pass the buck

to shift the blame; to blame somebody else

Example: It's your fault. Don't try to pass the buck!

Origin: This expression comes from the world of poker. In the nineteenth century, a knife with a buckhorn handle (the "buck") was passed to the next dealer when it was his turn to give out the cards.

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38) (to) plug (a product)

to promote a product; to talk positively about a product

Example: American Express often hires famous people to plug their credit cards. No wonder people pay attention to their ads!

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39) (to) pull one's weight

to do one's share of the work

Example: Don't rely on others to get your job done. You need to pull your own weight.

Note: You will also hear the variation: to pull one's own weight.

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40) (to) pull the plug

to put a stop to a project or initiative, usually because it's not going well; to stop something from moving forward; to discontinue
Example: After losing millions of dollars drilling for oil in Nebraska and finding nothing, the oil company finally **pulled the plug** on its exploration project.

Origin: This expression refers to removing a plug to make something stop working - when you pull the plug out of the wall, your appliance doesn't work. In the 19th century, when this term originated, the plug was for a toilet. To flush the toilet, you had to pull out a plug.

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**41) (to) put a stake in the ground**

To take the first step; to make a big move to get something started; to make a commitment

Example: Our business in California has grown steadily over the past two years. Now is the time to **put a stake in the ground** and open a regional office there.

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**42) (to) rally the troops**

To motivate others; to get other people excited about doing something; to do something to improve the morale of the employees and get them energized about doing their work

Example: After the lay-offs and salary cuts, the airline president organized a meeting to **rally the troops** and plan for the next year.

Note: The verb "to rally" has several definitions, but in this case means to "call together for a common goal or purpose." Troops is an informal way of describing a group of employees. The term comes from the military - a troop is a military unit.

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**43) reality check**

Let's think realistically about this situation (said when you don't like something that's being suggested because you don't think the other person is thinking practically or logically)

Example: You think we can start selling our products through our website next month? Time for a **reality check**! Nobody at our company knows anything about e-commerce.

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**44) (to) rip off**

To copy an idea; to steal

Example: Why doesn’t that company ever think of some original ideas? They always rip off their competition.
Note: Rip off is also a noun. Example: When I went to the meeting in Chicago, I ate breakfast at the hotel. I ordered a cup of coffee and a bagel and had to pay $11.50! What a rip off!

**EXERCISE D 1 - FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS:**

1. Who do you know that seems to always pass the buck? Why do you think that people choose to blame others instead of taking blame for what they have done?
2. In your country do famous athletes plug products for companies? Give an example. If you were going to plug a product, what kind of product would you want it to be?
3. Do all of the employees in your department pull their weight? What do you think should happen to someone that doesn’t pull their weight?
4. Can you think of a project your company was working on that they pulled the plug? In your country is it common to keep people alive on live support in a hospital? If there is no improvement, who makes the decision to pull the plug?
5. Give an example of someone putting a stake in the ground.
6. What do you do to rally the troops at your company?
7. Give an example of something that was a reality check to you.
8. What is something that you were interested in buying or doing that you didn’t because you thought it was a rip off? What types of products can you think of that other companies rip off?

**EXERCISE D 2 – FOR HOMEWORK:**

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40) (to) pull the plug

41) (to) put a stake in the ground:

42) (to) rally the troops:

43) reality check:

44) (to) rip off:

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**LESSON 5**

45) (to) run some idea by someone

To discuss some new ideas

Example: Our R & D department has some ideas about how to make our products safer. They would like to meet tomorrow morning to run some ideas by us.
46) (to) scale back one's hours

to reduce the number of hours one works

Example: When Christine had a baby, she decided to **scale back her hours** and just work part-time. Synonym: to cut back one's hours

47) shape up or ship out!

improve your behavior or leave; if you don't improve your performance, you're going to get fired

Example: Martin finally had enough of Todd's negative attitude. "**Shape up or ship out!**" he told Todd.

Origin: This expression was first used in the U.S. military during World War Two, meaning: you'd better follow regulations and behave yourself ("shape up"), or you're going to be sent overseas to a war zone ("ship out").

48) (to) step up to the plate

to take action; to do one's best; to volunteer

Example: We need somebody to be in charge of organizing the company holiday party. Who'd like to **step up to the plate** and start working on this project?

Note: This expression comes from baseball. You step up to the plate (a plastic mat on the ground) when it's your turn to hit the ball.

49) (to) throw cold water over (an idea, a plan)

to present reasons why something will not work; to discourage

Example: Pat presented her boss with a plan to expand their business into China, but he **threw cold water over** her plan and told her to just focus on developing business in the United States.

Note: You will also hear the variation: to throw cold water on.

50) through the roof

very high; higher than expected

Example: No wonder people are complaining about the cost of heating their homes. Oil prices have gone **through the roof**!
51) (to) turn around one's business

to make a business profitable again; to go from not making profits to being profitable again

Example: The telecom company was able to turn around its business by developing a popular new line of services.

52) (to) work down to the wire

to work until the last minute; to work until just before the deadline

Example: The investment bankers need to turn in their report at 9 a.m. tomorrow morning, and they've still got many hours of work left on it. They're going to be working down to the wire.

Note: This expression comes from horse racing. In the 19th century, American racetracks placed wire across the track above the finish line. The wire helped determine which horse's nose crossed the line first. If a race was "down to the wire," it was a very close race, undecided until the very last second.

53) (to) work out the (or some) kinks

to solve the problems with

Example: The company announced that they will delay the launch of their new product by two weeks. They still need to work out the kinks with their packaging process.

Note: A "kink" is a problem or flaw in a system or plan.

54) yes man

an employee who always agrees with the boss or does whatever the boss says

Example: Don't expect Larry to argue with the boss. He's a yes man.

EXERCISE E 1- FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS:

1. Give an example of a time you ran an idea by someone. Why did you choose that person to discuss it with?
2. Has your company ever had to scale back the workers hours? Did the workers find a second job?
3. Have you ever told someone to shape up or ship out!? What type of situation would make you say that to someone?
4. When something needs to be done, do you usually step up to the plate? Give an example of when you stepped up to the plate to help someone in need.
5. Give an example when you threw cold water over someone’s idea. How do you feel when someone throws water over an idea you have?
6. What products in your country have gone through the roof? Why is the price so high on those products?
7. If a business is not being successful, what would you recommend the owners to do in order to turn around their business?
8. Do you usually finish your work early or work down to the wire? Why do you think that some people have to work down to the wire?
9. Give an example of a time that you had to work out the kinks.
10. Who do you know that is a yes man? Do you enjoy working with people that are yes men? Why or why not?

**EXERCISE E.2 – FOR HOMEWORK:**

*Write one example sentence for each of the Idioms in this lesson*

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54) yes man:

**LESSON 6**  
**Business English**  
**ESL Telephone Talk**

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<th>EXAMPLES</th>
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| **Introducing yourself.** Phrases to use when you place the call. | **When calling a general number:**  
- May I speak with Rebecca Jones?  
- Hello, this is Phil Goldstein calling for Rebecca Jones.  
- Is Rebecca Jones in? *(informal)*  

**When the person answers the call directly:**  
- Hi Rebecca, it’s Phil calling.  
- Good afternoon, Rebecca. This is Phil Goldstein from Day Mixing Company calling. |

| Answering the phone. There are many different ways to answer your phone. | **For calls to your direct line:**  
- Good morning, this is Rebecca.  
- Good afternoon, Leblonds Company. How may I help you? |
| **Connecting someone.** When you answer the phone and it is for somebody else. | - One minute, I’ll transfer you now.  
- Please hold and I’ll put you through.  
- Let me see if Mr. Goldstein is available.  
- One moment, please.  
- Hang on a minute. *(informal)* |
| When you need to put somebody on hold | - Phil is on another line at the moment. Would you like to hold?  
- I’m sorry, I have a call on the other line. Can you please hold? |
| **When you don’t understand the caller** | - Could you please repeat that?  
- I’m sorry, I didn’t catch what you just said.  
- Can you please speak a little more slowly?  
- Can you please speak a little louder? |
| **Clarifying what your caller says** | - Can you please spell that for me?  
- How do you spell your last name?  
- And that company name again was, JAQ Industries?  
- Let me repeat your information to make sure I got it right. |
| **Taking a message for someone** | - I’m sorry, Phil’s not here at the moment. Can I take a message?  
- Phil is in a meeting at the moment. May I ask who’s calling?  
- Phil is at lunch. Would you like to leave a message?  
- Phil has left for the day. Would you like to be put through to his voice mail? |
| **Leaving a message for someone** | - Please tell him that Olivia called and ask him to call me back. My number is 740-508-0665.  
- Please ask him to call Olivia when he gets in.  
- He already has my number.  
- He’s not in? Please put me through to his voice mail.  
- When do you expect him back in the office?  
- I need to speak with him on an urgent matter. Please have him call me as soon as he gets in. |
| **Ending a conversation** | - It’s been great talking with you. I’ve got a meeting now so I better run.  
- Thanks for calling. I’ll speak with you again soon.  
- I’ve got another call coming in. Good talking to you.  
- I better let you go.  
- It’s 5 o’clock already. I better let you go.  
- Let’s touch base on this again in a few days. |
### SPECIAL SITUATIONS

| **Leaving a voice mail** | - Hello, this is Rebecca Jones calling to follow-up regarding your order with LEBLONDS company. Can you please call me back at 800-642-9279.

- Hello, this is Phil Goldstein from Day Mixing Company. I’m calling regarding the upcoming conference in Miami. I’ll try you again later today.

- Hi, it’s Rebecca. Please call me back when you get a minute. *(informal)* |

| **Recording a voice mail message on your machine** | - Hello, you’ve reached Rebecca Jones at Leblonds company. I’m sorry I’m not available to take your call. Please leave a message and I’ll call you back as soon as I can. Thank you.

- Hello, you’ve reached Phil Goldstein at Day Mixing Company. It’s Monday, May 22, and I will be out of the office all day. I will be checking my voice mail from time to time and will return all urgent calls. Thank you.

*If you’re going on vacation*   
- Hello, this is Rebecca Jones at Leblonds company. I will be on vacation from Friday, August 15 through Monday, August 30. Please leave a message, and I’ll call you back when I return. Thank you. |

| **Phrases for cell phone calls** | **The fading signal**   
- I’m sorry, I’m losing you. Can you call me back?  
- I can barely hear you. Let me call you back on my other phone.
- We’re breaking up. I’m having trouble hearing you. Let me call you back later.  

**The lost call**   
- Hi, it’s Rebecca again. Apparently we got cut off.  
- Hi, it’s Phil again. Sorry I lost you. My cell phone lost the signal. |

| **SPELLING OUT NAMES OVER THE PHONE.** Often you will need to spell something out over the telephone, such as a last name. It will help your listener if you offer words for each letter. Give words or names that are very common for each letter. | - My last name is Czarnek. C as in cat, Z as in zebra, A as in apple, R as in Robert, N as in Nancy, e as in egg, K as in king.

- My registration number is 459N4AF. That’s 459, N as in Nancy, 4 A as in Apple, F as in Lee. |

### Telephone Dialogue

**Operator:** Hello, Lee and Brothers, How can I help you?

**Robert:** This is Robert Bowen. Can I have extension 3421?

**Operator:** Certainly, hold on a minute, I'll put you through...

**Lee:** Bob Robertson's office, Lee speaking.

**Robert:** This is Robert Bowen calling, is Bob in?
Lee: I'm afraid he's out at the moment. Can I take a message?
Robert: Yes, Could you ask him to call me at 513-631-9729. I need to talk to him about the New line, it's urgent.

Lee: Could you repeat the number please?
Robert: Yes, that's 513-631-9729, and this is Robert Bowen.

Lee: Thank you Mr. Bowen, I'll make sure Bob gets this asap.
Robert: Thanks, bye.

Lee: Bye.

As you can see, the language is rather informal and there are some important differences to everyday English. Look below for key language and phrases used in telephone English:

**Introducing yourself**

This is Ken.
Ken speaking

**Asking who is on the telephone**

Excuse me, who is this?
Can I ask who is calling, please?

**Asking for Someone**

Can I have extension 321? (extensions are internal numbers at a company)
Could I speak to...? (Can I - more informal / May I - more formal)
Is Jack in? (informal idiom meaning: Is Jack in the office?)

**Connecting Someone**

I'll put you through (put through - phrasal verb meaning 'connect')
Can you hold the line? Can you hold on a moment?

**How to reply when someone is not available**
I'm afraid ... is not available at the moment
The line is busy... (when the extension requested is being used)
Mr Bowen isn't in... Mr Bowen is out at the moment...

**Taking a Message**

Could (Can, May) I take a message?
Could (Can, May) I tell him who is calling?
Would you like to leave a message?
Example Business Telephone Conversation

Caller (sales representative Jewels and Things): ring ring ... ring ring ... ring ring ...
Secretary: Hello, Diamonds Galore, this is Robert speaking. How may I be of help to you today?

Caller: Yes, this is Heather Wise calling. May I speak to Mr. White, please?
Secretary: I'm afraid Mr. White is out of the office at the moment. Would you like me to take a message?

Caller: Umm... actually, this call is rather urgent. We spoke yesterday about a delivery problem that Mr. White mentioned. Did he leave any information with you?
Secretary: As a matter of fact, he did. He said that a representative from your company might be calling. He also asked me to ask you a few questions.

Caller: Great, I'd love to see this problem resolved as quickly as possible.
Secretary: Well, we still haven't received the shipment of earrings that was supposed to arrive last Tuesday.

Caller: Yes, I'm terribly sorry about that. In the meantime, I've spoken with our delivery department and they assured me that the earrings will be delivered by tomorrow morning.
Secretary: Excellent, I'm sure Mr. White will be pleased to hear that.

Caller: Yes, the shipment was delayed from France. We weren't able to send along your shipment until this morning.
Secretary: I see. Mr. White also wanted to schedule a meeting with you later this week.

Caller: Certainly, what is he doing on Thursday afternoon?
Secretary: I'm afraid he's meeting with some clients out of town. How about Thursday morning?

Caller: Unfortunately, I'm seeing someone else on Thursday morning. Is he doing anything on Friday morning?
Secretary: No, it looks like he's free then.

Caller: Great, should I come by at 9?
Secretary: Well, he usually holds a staff meeting at nine. It only lasts a half an hour or so. How about 10?

Caller: Yes, 10 would be great.
Secretary: OK, I'll schedule that. Heather Wise at 10, Friday Morning... Is there anything else I can help you with?

Caller: No, I think that's everything. Thank you for your help... Goodbye.
Secretary: Goodbye.

Keywords and Important Phrases

How may I be of help - This is a formal phrase used to show politeness. It means 'Can I help you?'
calling - telephoning
out of the office - not in the office
take a message - to write down a message from the caller
delivery - the bringing of goods to a client
mentioned - said
resolved - taken care of
as quickly as possible - in the fastest manner, ASAP
shipment - delivery, the bringing of goods to a client
assured - certainty that something is true or will happen
pleased - happy
delayed - not be able to do something on time
looks like - seems
staff meeting - a meeting of employees
lasts - to take time
rather - very, quite
urgent - very important
still - a form of emphasis to show that something has not been done up to the moment in time
send along - deliver
How about - phrase for making suggestions
else - another added person or thing
schedule - future appointments

Short Summary of the Telephone Conversation

Heather Wise telephones Diamonds Galore to speak with Mr. White. Mr. White is not in the office, but the secretary, speaks to Ms. Wise about a delivery problem with some earrings. The earrings have not yet arrived at Diamonds Galore. Ms. Wise tells Robert that there was a problem with the shipment from France, but that the earrings should arrive tomorrow morning.

They next schedule a meeting between Ms. Wise and Mr. White. Mr. White is not able to meet with Ms. Wise on Thursday because he is busy. They finally decide on Friday morning at 10 o'clock after a staff meeting that Mr. White usually holds on Friday mornings.

EXERCISE F1 – FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS:

1. What type of telephone calls do you make for your work?
2. Do you ever have to speak in English on the telephone?
3. What is the most difficult thing for you when you are speaking English by phone?
4. In Latin America it seems that most people are overly friendly. Most Americans are not like that. How would you compare the way that people in your country speak on the phone compared to the way Americans do?
5. What would you say if you had ordered something and it hadn’t arrived when it was supposed to?
6. Role Play: You are the secretary of your company and your teacher is calling to ask a question or place an order. Take a message to give to your boss.
7. Role Play: Now you are the customer and your teacher works for the company. You are calling to complain about the poor quality of the products you ordered and you are asking for a refund.
8. What types of things do you order by phone? Online?
9. Have you ever had to speak with someone by phone when they were very upset about something? What was it about?
10. What could you say if you were speaking to someone by phone in English and you couldn’t understand what they were saying?
EXERCISE F2 – FOR HOMEWORK:

Write a telephone conversation:
Today we're looking at an article about Facebook from the New York Times. As you may have heard, Facebook is making more and more money by selling ads on its site. In this article, we learn of a company finding success selling fish oil through Facebook. The words and idioms we'll focus on are in bold:

The idea was to come up with a big, sweeping campaign to market MegaRed, a premium alternative to fish oil pills, to users of the social network. Each ad had to be so compelling that it would get people to stop scrolling through their news feeds.
But from where Mr. Rodrigues sat, as the guy who would write the checks for the proposed campaign, the Facebook people seemed to be **missing an essential point**.

The advantage of advertising on the world’s largest social network was that it could do something television ads could not: Using sophisticated analytics, it could help him find people who were already buying fish oil or other products that suggested they were concerned about the health of their hearts, and perhaps persuade them to switch to his brand.

At the meeting, the company’s ad strategists were saying they wanted him to spend money to show ads to every American woman 45 and older on Facebook. Finally, with some **exasperation**, Mr. Rodrigues — the marketing director for vitamins, minerals and supplements at Reckitt Benckiser, the company that owns MegaRed — **blurted out** what he’d been thinking. For that kind of broad **blitz**, he said, “I can go to television at a quarter the price.”

**Now let’s look at the words and phrases in bold:**

- **compelling** - attracting interest; very interesting and appealing
- **missing [the] point** - not understanding the problem; focusing on the wrong thing
- **exasperation** - annoyance; intense irritation
- **to blurt out** - to say suddenly or without thinking; to say something sensitive that nobody is expecting you to say
- **blitz** - an advertising campaign (often a large one). Note: this is from the military, meaning a campaign in which bombs are dropped from airplanes

**EXERCISE G1 – FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS**

1) What is something that is compelling to you?
2) Can you give an example of when someone missed the point?
3) What is something that is an exasperation to you?
4) Do you often blurt things out? Give an example of something you or someone you know has blurted out.
5) Name a company that blitzes the market when they have a new product?
6) Do you use Facebook? If so, how long have you been on Facebook?
7) Why do you think that Facebook is so popular?
8) Is there anything negative about using Facebook?
9) In your opinion, is it a wise decision for companies to advertise on Facebook?
10) How long do you think Facebook will last before it fades away?
11) What will replace Facebook in the future?
Exercise G2 – For Homework

Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson

1) compelling -

2) missing the point -

3) exasperation -

4) to blurt out -

5) blitz -

Lesson 8

Business English Especially For Those With a Sweet Tooth!
There is a growing demand for chocolate in China. Hershey’s chocolate — a leading chocolate brand in the USA — is now entering the market in China. Read the idioms with their definitions below. Think about how you could use these expressions in your daily life (as in: "It's an uphill battle trying to get my kids to keep their rooms clean." or "I hope our customers will snap up our new product.")
(to) play catch-up – to make a big effort to overcome a late start; when you are behind and you have to take actions to get to the level of your competition

uphill battle – a difficult fight (when you are "facing an uphill battle," you face difficult circumstances)

(to) gain market share – to increase one's share (or piece) of a market (defined in percentage terms). This can refer to either dollar market share or unit market share

(to) pay a premium – to pay a higher price for something (because it's better quality or has a better brand, for instance)

(to) snap up – to buy quickly, or in large quantities (this term implies that the product is very desirable, so that many people are buying it)

mass market – produced in large numbers and sold through retail outlets, such as supermarkets

(to) move upmarket – to start appealing to high-income consumers

bullish on – optimistic about a market (often used when describing investors, as they're "bullish on" a certain stock)

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**exercise H1 – for discussion in class**

1) Do you like chocolate?
2) What are the most popular candies in your country?
3) Do people buy a lot of candy for holidays? If so, which holidays?
4) Do people in your country celebrate Valentine’s Day? If so, what are they typical gifts for Valentine’s Day in your country?
5) Cocoa production is at risk in the future because the demand is so high. This could increase the cost of Chocolate. How much would you be willing to pay for a chocolate candy bar?
6) Why do you think Chocolate is so popular?
7) What is your favorite type of candy?

**exercise H2 – for homework**

Write one example sentence for each of the Idioms in this lesson

1) (to) play catch up -

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Sweet taste of success for chocolate companies

Chocolate retailers recorded a further jump in business in the week leading up to March 14, White Day. This is a commercial holiday observed in some Asian countries, when men are supposed to offer gifts to their sweethearts, one month after Valentine's Day, when women gifted them chocolates.

Chocolate sales in China are expected to expand to $4.3 billion by 2019, rising nearly 60 percent from $2.7 billion in 2014, lifted by outstanding demand from the growing urban population, Bert Alfonso, president of Hershey International, forecast in a recent webcast at the Consumer Analyst Group of New York conference.

The anticipation reflects chocolate multinationals' bet against growing demand from emerging markets. Their expansion plans aren't slowing down, despite the profound changes in China's economic structure.

The Chinese chocolate market is low-saturated with consumption falling far behind the global average. Chinese consume 40g to 70g of chocolate annually per capita, whereas the figure is 2kg in Japan and South Korea, 6kg in the United States and 12kg in Switzerland, the highest in the world, according to data provided by Godiva Chocolatier.

The Hershey Company said growth in demand in emerging markets closely tracked their GDP growth, and the expansion of the urban population in China will further drive up chocolate consumption. Hershey is hopeful of benefiting from continued strong consumption in China and other Asian markets.
Hershey acquired Shanghai Golden Monkey Food Co in December 2013, becoming part of the ongoing trend of multinational companies seeking to acquire local chocolate companies.

"Consumers are embracing our brands in China as we outpace category growth. We are excited about the potential for Shanghai Golden Monkey," Alfonso said.

Through mergers and acquisitions, multinational chocolate makers are able to boost their presence in second- and third-tier cities in China, growing sales and widening their distribution networks. This will also help multinationals broaden their product portfolios to tailor them to the requirements of Chinese consumers, according to research company Euromonitor International.

Meanwhile, the top 20 global chocolate brands have launched in China, as the Chinese chocolate market is beginning to heat up. Premium European chocolate retailers have seen solid sales growth in China, and they plan to expand even further in the Asian market.

French handmade chocolate maker Debauve & Gallais said it plans to open more boutique stores in China. In addition to already having a presence in major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, the company also plans to enter second-tier cities.

"Increasing competition will be the most pressing issue as more Western chocolate brands enter the Chinese market," said Shelley Zheng, managing director of customer service at Debauve & Gallais.

In addition, the company finds that Chinese women make up 60 to 75 percent of chocolate consumers, as they have a higher preference for desserts, and average Chinese consumers are younger than their Western counterparts.

"Women began to buy chocolates as gifts for their spouses in recent years," Zheng said.

Write a summary of the article:
The great cupcake craze might be over ... but I’d still like to take a big bite out of this one!
Today's business English lesson may make you hungry! In the United States over the past 10 years, cupcakes have had a huge rise in popularity. They went from being a favorite at kid's birthday parties to being a popular treat for adults too. They got fancier and fancier and of course, more expensive. Cupcake shops sprang up all over the USA. Many cupcakes sold for a pretty penny (a lot of money) -- some for $4.50 each. Like any great craze, this one is now crashing. Maybe Americans just ate too many cupcakes. Maybe the cookie is back in vogue. Whatever the reason, cupcake shops are now struggling. Let's read a piece of an article from the Wall Street Journal entitled "Forget Gold, the Gourmet-Cupcake Market is Crashing. The words and expressions we'll explore are in bold:

The icing is coming off America's cupcake craze. The dessert became a cultural and economic phenomenon over the last decade, with gourmet cupcake shops proliferating across the country, selling increasingly elaborate and expensive concoctions.

The craze hit a high mark in June 2011, when Crumbs Bake Shop Inc. a New York-based chain, debuted on the Nasdaq Stock Market under the ticker symbol CRMB. Its creations—4” tall, with fillings such as vanilla custard, caps of butter cream cheese, and decorative flourishes like a whole cookie—can cost $4.50 each.

After trading at more than $13 a share in mid-2011, Crumbs has sunk to $1.70. It dropped 34% last Friday, in the wake of Crumbs saying that sales for the full year would be down by 22% from earlier projections, and the stock slipped further this week.

Crumbs in part blamed store closures from Hurricane Sandy, but others say the chain is suffering from a larger problem: gourmet-cupcake burnout.

"The novelty has worn off," says Kevin Burke, managing partner of Trinity Capital LLC, a Los Angeles investment banking firm that often works in the restaurant industry.

Now let's look at the words and expressions in bold:

(to) proliferate – to grow or expand quickly; to spread

concoction – food or drink made by combining different ingredients (often many different ingredients in an unusual way)

in the wake of – following; as a result of burnout – having had so much of something that one no longer wants it (note: also, often describes what happens when people work too hard and get too stressed out -- they suffer from burnout)

The novelty has worn off – something that was once new and popular, but no longer is; something that people have lost interest in (note: novelty means something new)

**Exercise I1 – For Discussion In Class**

1) Are cupcakes popular in your country? When do people eat cupcakes?
2) How much does a cupcake cost in your country?
3) Would you pay $4.50 for a cupcake?
4) Why do you think so many people would be willing to pay $4.50 for a cupcake?
5) How can companies market products so that people are willing to pay more than they are worth?
6) Can you give an example of something in your country that is popular and over-priced?
7) Do you buy products like this that is over-priced? Why or why not?
8) How much is a cup of coffee in your country?
9) Why do you think that so many people go to coffee shops like Starbucks and pay a lot of money for a coffee when they could get coffee at another place much cheaper?
10) Do you think the expensive coffee crazy will continue or do you think the novelty will wear off?
11) There have been articles in the U.S.A. that state when the baby boomers are gone there will be many products, services, and types of entertainment that will disappear such as Coke, Campbell’s Soup, boxed Cereal, Most live performances, radios, the symphony, land line phones, and much more. Do you agree that as each generation disappears there are many products, services, and types of entertainment that fade away?
12) Can you think of some products that was very popular when you were child that have disappeared?

**Exercise 12 – For Homework**

*Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson*

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LESSON 10

A Business English Lesson Inspired by the CEO of IBM

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of IBM had to tell her employees that they needed to change. So what did she do? She recorded a video message and posted it on the company blog. Her message to her 434,000 employees: you need to move faster! Of course, the video was passed on to the news media (also called "the press"). Did CEO Virginia Rometty deliver the news to her employees the right way -- or was she yelling at them as if they were children? The jury is still out (that means, people are still discussing that question!). Businessweek — a weekly business news magazine — just published an article about this. Let's look at some pieces of this article and then discuss the expressions and words in bold:

After the disappointing earnings report on April 18, Rometty released a video to all 434,000 employees in which she admitted that IBM hadn’t “transformed rapidly enough.” She called out the sales staff for missing out on several big deals. “We were too slow,” she said. “The result? It didn’t get done.” The press got wind of her message, and Rometty’s now accused of the corporate equivalent of yelling at her children in public. The Wall Street Journal, which broke the story, called the outburst a “rare companywide reprimand.” IBM declined to comment on the video ...

Employees aren’t going to watch one video or read one memo and completely change the way they work—the company has to change, too. In the video, Rometty laid out a plan for IBM to respond to customers within 24 hours: “Engage management, engage leadership, and let’s deal with it.” She’s already “reassigned” the head of IBM’s computer hardware department, the source of a large portion of the sales drop. “Ginni’s a very direct CEO, and she had one message that she delivered to everyone,” [Professor Noel] Tichy says. “It would be much worse if it went through the internal channels. No one wants to hear that the CEO thinks they dropped the ball through word of mouth.”

Now let's look at the expressions and word in bold:

(to) get wind of - to find out about something, often a secret

outburst - a sudden expression of feeling (often full of emotion)

(to) lay out a plan - to present a plan

(to) drop the ball - to make a mistake; to fail to perform one's responsibilities

word of mouth - gossip; news spread by people talking to each other (note: often used as a marketing term to describe an advertising or marketing message that is spread from one person to another -- which is a positive thing for the company because it means that people are talking about the company's product or service).

EXERCISE J1 – FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS

1) Do you think that posting a video message on the company blog was the correct way to tell the 434,000 employees at IBM that they needed to work faster and do a better job? Why or why not?

2) How would you give this information to 434,000 employees?
3) Does your job require you to manage, supervise or oversee workers at your company? If so, how many employees?
4) What do you do when you have to motivate your employees to work faster or to do a better job?
5) What is your opinion of meetings?
6) What would you say is positive about meetings?
7) What would you say is negative about meetings?
8) What percentage of meetings do you believe are actually beneficial?
9) Do you believe that many companies waste a lot of time with meetings that don’t accomplish anything for the company? If so, why do you think they continue to have so many meetings?
11) What would you do if an employee is not doing a good job?
12) Have you ever fired an employee?

**EXERCISE J2 – FOR HOMEWORK**

Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson

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Growing up, I loved to receive Snoopy greeting cards in the mail. Now I'm just happy to get any birthday cards in the mail!

When I was growing up, I loved receiving greeting cards in the mail. My favorite greeting cards had Snoopy on them. I would save and review them for years. So when e-cards came along and people stopped sending cards in the mail, I was not very happy. I am sure the management of American Greetings, a large greeting card company, was not so happy either!

In today's *Wall Street Journal*, we learn that American Greetings is saying goodbye to the stock market and taking itself private. The article is entitled "Wishing You a Fond Farewell – From the Stock Market." Let's read the beginning of the article and improve our business English. Words and expressions we'll explore are in bold:

It is an industry that **thrived** in the days when the printed word was king and **correspondence** went through the mail. But like many other businesses, it was **battered by** the rise of lively, innovative and often free competitors online, where stamps and handwriting aren't needed.

Welcome to the greeting-card industry, where the biggest **publicly traded U.S. company** in the business has decided to bid adieu to the stock market, announcing plans to **go private**. The Weiss family—descendants of the Polish immigrant who founded American Greetings Corp. shortly after his arrival in Cleveland in 1905—on Monday said it agreed to pay $18.20 in cash per share to remove the company from the public markets. The greetings-card business **has seen better days**, and American Greetings today is worth almost 65% less than it was at its peak in 1998. Like many media companies, it was **hit hard by** the Internet, with customers finding new ways to share old sentiments like birthday or holiday greetings. Tech companies including Apple and Facebook launched their own electronic greetings businesses, letting their customers send physical or electronic gifts and greetings on a birthday or anniversary.

Now let's look at the expressions and word in bold:
(to) thrive – to do very well; to succeed; to flourish (in this case, the greeting card industry was thriving back in the days when people actually sent their greetings by regular mail rather than via the Internet).

correspondence – communication by letters (in other words, people writing to each other)

battered by – hurt seriously by (Note: this can be used in the financial sense, as it is here. It can also be used in the physical sense as in: Our beach house in New Jersey was battered by Hurricane Sandy).

publicly traded company – a company that trades on the stock exchange (versus a private company that is owned by one family or group of investors)

(to) go private – to remove a company from the stock exchange, so it is once again owned by private investors. This is the reverse process of "going public" in which a company lists itself on the stock exchange.

(to) have seen better days – to be in a period of decline or slow sales (yes, American Greetings definitely has seen better days -- 15 years ago, it was worth a lot more than it is today).

(to be) hit hard by – to suffer losses due to something (in this case, American Greetings was hit hard by the rise of e-cards, with consumers sending more greetings by Internet than by regular mail, or "snail mail.")

**Exercise K1 – For Discussion in Class**

1) Do you send or receive greeting cards? If so, for which occasions?
2) Are greeting cards still popular in your country?
3) Do you send more E-Cards or Greeting Cards?
4) Would you rather receive an E-Card or a Greeting Card? Why?
5) In the United States they are no longer going to teach cursive writing. Do you think this is a good thing or a bad thing? Why?
6) Many People only use Computers, Tablets, and other devices now days and with texting, correct spelling is being substituted for short abbreviations. Do you think this will be a problem in the future? Why or why not?
7) When was the last time you took notes by hand? Wrote a letter or card by hand?
8) Some couples are breaking up by a text or email, people are telling their spouse they want a divorce by text or email….why do you think technology is making many people become less personal with the people they care about?
9) Do you think people write love letters anymore or do they just send a text?
10) In your company do people sitting next to each other in cubicles side by side send an email if they need to communicate instead of just talking to them directly?
11) Do you think that technology is helping or hurting our communication with other people? How?
12) Can you think of some other companies similar to the Greeting Card Industry that has been hit hard by technology?
**EXERCISE K2 – FOR HOMEWORK**

Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson

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**Lesson 12**

**Let's Learn Some Business English with a Story about Jesus (the Brand)** No, this is not going to be a post about religion. It's going to be a post to help you improve your Business English (and your legal English). But we are going to be talking about Jesus today. That's because an Italian clothing company has trademarked the name "Jesus" and uses it on its Jesus Jeans. It's now fighting with other clothing companies trying to use the name Jesus too.

Let's take a look at the newspaper article, which is entitled "If You Take These Jeans' Name in Vain, Prepare to Meet Their Maker" and is from the *Wall Street Journal*. The expressions we will study are in bold.

Inspired by his time leading a singles ministry in Virginia Beach, Va., Michael Julius Anton came up with an idea for a clothing line that he thought was catchy and unique—"Jesus Surfed." He was on good ground with "Surfed." But when he went to register the trademark, he found someone had beaten him to Jesus.

In a branding coup of biblical proportions, an Italian jeans maker persuaded the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in 2007 to register the word "Jesus" as a trademark, giving the company exclusive rights in America to sell clothing bearing the name of Christianity's central figure. Since then, the owner of the trademark, Jesus Jeans, has clamped down on Jesus-themed apparel, pitting its litigators against more than a dozen other startup clothing lines it claims appropriated "Jesus" without the company's blessing. The company doesn't have a trademark on images of Jesus, just the word. Before taking on Jesus Surfed, Jesus Jeans objected to "Jesus First," "Sweet Jesus," and "Jesus Couture," among others, which abandoned their trademark efforts. In some cases, when met with resistance, Jesus Jeans warned that it could sue for damages.

Now let's look at the definitions of vocabulary:

**To come up with** – to think of

**Catchy** – memorable, appealing (Note: You will often heard the phrase "catchy tune," meaning a song or melody that stays in your head and is fun to sing, though eventually it might drive you crazy)

**On good ground** – safe with (Note: this terms first appeared in the Bible, which is probably why the author of this newspaper article chose to use it in a story about Jesus: Here is a quote from Luke 8:15, King James Bible: But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.)

**To register a trademark** – to formally register a symbol (name, logo, etc) for a product with a governmental patent office (in the USA, with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, USPTO)

**To beat someone to / beaten someone to** – to do something before somebody else has a chance (in this case, Jesus Jeans beat Jesus Surfed to register the "Jesus" trademark)

**Of biblical proportions** – great; having big consequences; large in scope (Note: This often refers to natural disasters -- Example: A wildfire of biblical proportions swept through California and destroyed hundreds of houses). Biblical is the adjective form of Bible, so here we have a play on words.

**To clamp down on** – to get strict about
Exercise L1 – For Discussion in Class

1) What is your opinion of the name brand “Jesus Jeans”?
2) Do you think that the name could be offensive to some people?
3) Do you think that some people may not buy the jeans simply because of the name? Why?
4) Do you think there are companies selling Mohammad Jeans? or Buddha Jeans?
5) Do you think that companies should be able to register a trademark such as “Jesus Jeans”? Why or why not?
6) If you made a new brand of jeans, what would you call them?
7) There is much discussion today concerning Political Correctness. What is your opinion of that?
8) Do you think that Political Correctness goes too far sometimes?
9) In many places / companies / schools etc… it is not politically correct to say “Merry Christmas”. What are your thoughts on that?
10) Is this a big topic of discussion in your country?

Exercise L2 – For Homework

Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson

1) (to) come up with -

2) catchy –

3) on good ground -
4) (to) register a trademark -

5) (to) beat someone to / beaten someone to -

6) of biblical proportions -

7) to clamp down on -

8) (to) pit someone against -

9) blessing -

10) (to) meet with resistance -
In honor of Valentine's Day, I've chosen an article on workplace romances to help you improve your Business English. Ahhh, the workplace romance. We all have stories of love at the office. I remember when an old boss of mine disappeared for several days in Europe immediately following an official business trip. Coincidentally, a young assistant at the office was also in Europe for those same three days!

An old friend of mine fell in love during a summer internship. The man she fell in love with was the manager. They now have children and are, as far as I know, happily married. So sometimes the office romance does end happily.

Now, let's get down to business and look at our article for today. It's called "When Cupid Visits the Office, Rules Can Cut Risks" and it is from the Wall Street Journal. We will look at an extract from the article first, with words and phrases in bold.

Companies by now are well-acquainted with the hazards of workplace romance. But, if recent incidents are any indicator, they still find it tricky to put a lid on office passions.

Some companies have attempted to regulate the romantic sparks that fly between co-workers, mindful of the potential legal fallout.

Still, even the best-crafted rules can't guard against workers who follow their instincts instead of consulting the employee handbook.

Inappropriate relationships can topple careers, and allegations of unwanted attention or favoritism can cost companies millions of dollars and land businesses in the headlines for all the wrong reasons.

Lawyers say companies that do lay out ground rules for dating may be able to head some lawsuits off at the pass—or at least curb corporate liability should matters end up in court.
"It's not just about **warding off** or **fending off** a claim of harassment. You also don’t want to create the kind of environment or perception that that’s a way to **get ahead,**" said David S. Baffa, an employment lawyer and head of the workplace-compliance practice at Chicago law firm Seyfarth Shaw LLP.

Now let's look at the words and phrases in bold:

**To put a lid on** – to stop; to stop something from increasing. This is often used to discuss spending. For example: Expenses are getting out of control. We need to put a lid on spending.

**Sparks fly / Make sparks fly / When sparks fly** – this refers to the reaction between two people. Here, the reference is to "romantic" sparks -- in other words, two people attracted to each other. Taylor Swift has a popular love song called "Sparks Fly" (Cause I see sparks fly whenever you smile). Also, note that the sparks flying can refer to anger between two people. For example: Doug and Marie disagree on everything. If they're both at the meeting, sparks will fly.

**Fallout** – consequences; bad results of a situation (in this case, the "legal fallout" refers to the lawsuits or legal troubles that may happen following an unsuccessful office romance)

**To topple** – to cause to fall (in both the figurative and the literal sense: when you stack blocks on top of each other and the tower gets tall, you put one more on and the whole thing topples over).

**Ground rules** – basic rules; rules that everybody should be know and follow (Note: I've never worked at a company that laid out the ground rules for dating. All the employee manuals I've seen are pretty boring -- how many days in advance to ask for a vacation day, insurance policies -- nothing so interesting as How to Behave if You've Fallen in Love with a Co-worker).

**Head something off at the pass** – to stop something from happening (in this case, to stop a lawsuit from happening).

**To curb** – to reduce (This verb is also often associated with spending. Example: Money is tight. We need to curb spending).

**To ward off** – to stop something from happening; to hold something off (This phrasal verb is often associated with illness. Example: Many people at my office are sick right now. I'm doing my best to ward off illness).

**To fend off** – to stop something from happening (Note that this is very similar in meaning to "ward off").

**To get ahead** – to advance in one's career.

**Exercise M1 – For Discussion in Class**

1) Does your company have a policy concerning dating co-workers? Why do you think they do? or... Why do you think they don’t?
2) What percentage of people you know met their spouse at work?
3) How did you meet your wife/husband?
4) How did your parents meet?
5) Do you think a company should have the right to have a “No Dating Policy” for employees? Why or why not?
6) If you had your own company would you have a policy about this? What would your policy be?
7) Are there any types of occupations that you believe there should be a “No Dating” policy? Why?
8) What are the potential problems with dating a co-worker?
9) Are there any types of jobs that you believe dating couples or married couples should not be allowed to work in the same department? Why or why not?
10) Do you think that people who work at a company with a “No Dating” policy abide by that rule?

**Exercise M2 – For Homework**

*Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson*

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<th>Example Sentence</th>
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Lesson 14

Idioms in the News

Venture capitalist David Cowan is a professed chess-playing nerd who studied math and computer science at Harvard. Last year, though, he decided he needed a crash course in getting hip. – The Wall Street Journal

1) crash course - a quick lesson
Many older tech investors, eager not to **miss out**, are **going to great lengths** to shed **fuddy-duddy** images and ingratiate themselves with the younger generation.

– *The Wall Street Journal*

2) **(to) miss out** - to miss an opportunity; to fail to make use of an opportunity

3) **(to) go to great lengths** - to do a lot; to do a lot to achieve a certain goal

4) **fuddy-duddy** - out of fashion; not modern; an old-fashioned person who doesn't want to change

As she pushed her shopping cart down an aisle of the Super Stop & Shop near her hometown of Warren, R.I., recently, Ms. Cabrera, a retired schoolteacher, offered her thoughts on why she **steers clear** of high-fructose corn syrup: "It's been linked to obesity, and it's just not something that's natural or good for you." - *The New York Times*

5) **to steer clear (of something)** - to avoid something; to stay away from something. (Note that "to steer" means to guide with a wheel or a similar device. When there's something in the road, you may need to steer your car around it).

No one is predicting that the iPod economy will be slowing soon. Mr. Baker said: "We've **barely scratched the surface** with the video iPod." - *The New York Times*

In some communities, efforts are being made to increase the amount of affordable housing. Celebrity-heavy Aspen, for example, has created 2,600 low-cost units over the past 30 years. But such measures only **scratch the surface** of the problem. - *Financial Times*

6) **(barely or only) scratch the surface** - to only begin to explore or understand something; to deal with something only superficially

Rap-metal, once **all the rage** in the '90s thanks to bands like Limp Bizkit, now seems as relevant as Beavis and Butt-head. - *People Magazine*

"Condos are **all the rage** right now," Hodgett said. "People like to be close to downtown and walk to restaurants and shopping. They can come home in the evening and not worry about mowing the lawn." - *Contra Costa Times*

7) **all the rage** - very popular, trendy
Weber, the grill maker founded in Mount Prospect, Ill., in 1952, is refining its most expensive grill, the $2,200 Summit Platinum D6, in response to buyers who want more bells and whistles, said Brooke Jones, a Weber product manager. "They are looking for stainless steel grills and more accessories like rotisseries, warmer drawers, side burners and hand lights," she said. - *The New York Times*

8) **bells and whistles** - fancy features; product features that make a product more premium or expensive but that are not usually necessary; extras

Just seven months after the city's bid to host the 2012 Olympics fell flat, a key booster of the effort has opened the door to a scramble for the 2016 games - statements that fly in the face of previous comments by Mayor Bloomberg and other city officials. - *New York Post*

9) **fly in the face** - contradict; go against

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**EXERCISE N1 – FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS**

1) Have you ever taken a crash course? If so, what did you study?
2) Can you give an example of a time when you missed out on something?
3) Who do you know that goes to great lengths to complete a difficult task?
4) Do you know anyone that would be considered a fuddy-duddy? Who? What makes them a fuddy-duddy?
5) What is something that you steer clear of?
6) Give an example of something you have only scratched the surface of.
7) What is currently all the rage in your country?
8) When you buy a new car do you like your car to have bells and whistles? What do you like with bells and whistles?
9) Can you give an example when someone you know said something that flew in the face of other statements he/she made?

**EXERCISE N2 – FOR HOMEWORK**

Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson

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**LESSON 15**

It took Carolyn Fellwock and Charlie Watson only 11 months to **tie the knot** after meeting on Yahoo Personals – and three years more to **call it quits.** – *Wall Street Journal*

10) **to tie the knot** – to get married
11) **to call it quits** – to end something (such as a relationship, a job, a project, etc)

Some people who met a spouse online and later divorced aren’t **losing heart.** Some even say they would date online again. – *The Wall Street Journal*

12) **to lose heart** – to give up hope; to get discouraged

Diana Leal, a Woodland Hills paralegal, said that when she was working in Dallas, she immediately lost respect for her attorney boss when he asked her out for dinner. I couldn't believe it. I think he just fell for my beauty or something. And then when I said 'no,' he fired me," Leal said. "**Bottom line,** you can't be friends with your boss. It complicates things." – *Los Angeles Daily News*

13) **bottom line** – the main point is…; the conclusion is…

Kids too into school have lost their love of learning (if they ever had any). They cram and forget. They're stressed. They're sleep-deprived. They compete with their "friends" and **kiss up** to their teachers. – *The Oakland Tribune*

Have a good relations hip with your boss. That does not mean **kiss up** to your boss. If it gets too far along a bad path, it means you don't get the good assignments, don't get the promotions and don't have a chance to advance your career. Plus, you may just be miserable. Make sure your relationship with your boss is open and honest, casual yet also professional. – *The News & Observer*

14) **to kiss up** – to flatter; try to gain favor with; behave in a way to make people like you more

But Vladimir Nuzhny, a toxicologist, said up to half of imported wine has not corresponded to the required quality since the fall of the Soviet Union. "It never killed anyone and Russian leadership used to **turn a blind eye,** but now relations are worsening with the Georgian and Moldovan leaders they don't see a need to ignore it any more," he said. - *The Guardian*

15) **to turn a blind eye** - to ignore; to pretend that something is not happening; to let something illegal or wrong happen without saying anything
George W. Bush can be sure of one thing when he next visits China on official business. Chinese president Hu Jintao won't try to emulate the Texas charm the US president dishes out at his Crawford ranch, dressing down to shoot the breeze over pork dumplings at a village restaurant. - *Financial Times*

**16) shoot the breeze** - to talk; to chat; to make conversation

Steve Girdler, director of services at Kelly UK, agrees that Sugar's methods are impressive. "Sometimes I think we can be too soft in our assessment of graduates. But what's the point when we know that in reality, business can be a **dog-eat-dog world**?" - *The Guardian*

**17) dog-eat-dog world** - a cruel world; a challenging environment in which people just look out for themselves

As the cost of living for young people rises, the **helping hand** from parents is extending well past college years. – *The New York Times*

There was a table for the folks from Alcoholics Anonymous, another where people could sign up for food stamps and another where homeless veterans could find a **helping hand**. -*The San Francisco Chronicle*

**18) (the or a) helping hand** – assistance; help

**EXERCISE 01 – FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS**

1) Have you tied the knot? Where did you get married?
2) Can you give an example of when you or someone you know called it quits?
3) If you tried to do something multiple times with no success, would you lose heart? Why or why not?
4) Can you give an example using the expression “bottom line”?
5) What is your opinion of people that kiss up to others?
6) Give an example of something you could turn a blind eye to. Give an example of something you could not turn a blind eye to.
7) How often do you shoot the breeze with strangers?
8) Give some examples of things you think make it a dog-eat-dog world.
9) When was the last time you gave someone a helping hand? What did you do? Why do you think some people give others a helping hand more than other people do?
**Exercise 02 – For Homework**

Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson

1) (to) tie the knot -

2) (to) call it quits -

3) (to) lose heart -

4) bottom line -

5) (to) kiss up -

6) (to) turn a blind eye -

7) shoot the breeze -
8) dog-eat-dog-world -

9) (a) helping hand -

READINGS from the News

NEWS STORY 1: The Zookeepers' Surprising Discovery!

Zookeepers at a zoo near Tokyo received a big shock recently. They served a snake named Aochan a hamster as a snack. However, instead of gobbling up the hamster, Aochan befriended the hamster. Zookeepers found them lying side by side.

"I've never seen anything like it," said one of the zookeepers. "Never in a million years would I have predicted this."

The hamster is clearly enjoying his life beside the snake. Sometimes the hamster even climbs onto Aochan to take a nap.

Meanwhile, the snake is enjoying a diet of frozen mice.

Some say this relationship may end in disaster. One day, the snake may get hungry and decide to devour his furry little friend. But in the meantime, zoo visitors are in for a unique spectacle. The chance to see a snake and hamster together will surely draw large crowds.

Vocabulary:
- **shock** - a big surprise
- **gobbling up** - to eat quickly
- **(to) befriend** - to make friends with
- **side by side** - next to each other never in a million years - never (said of something that one really does not expect)
- **(to) predict** - to know in advance; to expect
- **(to) take a nap** - to sleep for a short period of time
- **disaster** - serious misfortune; a very bad event
- **(to) devour** - to eat quickly or greedily
- **furry** - hairy
- **(to be) in for** - guaranteed to have or to get
- **spectacle** - something that can be seen, especially something impressive or surprising
- **draw** - attract
Quiz:

Answer the questions below. When finished, check your answers below. Have fun!

1) What happened when zookeepers put a hamster in the snake’s cage?
   A. the snake devoured the hamster
   B. the hamster devoured the snake
   C. the snake and the hamster became friends

2) How surprised were zookeepers by what happened with the snake and the hamster?
   A. a little surprised
   B. very surprised
   C. not surprised

3) The "furry friend" in this story refers to:
   A. the zookeeper
   B. the snake
   C. the hamster

4) What is the snake eating instead of the hamster?
   A. mice
   B. rats
   C. other hamsters

5) Why do some people say the relationship between the snake and the hamster may end in disaster?
   A. the snake might decide to eat the hamster
   B. the hamster might decide to eat the snake
   C. zookeepers might decide to separate the snake and the hamster

ANSWERS:
1) C
2) B
3) C
4) A
5) A
NEWS STORY 2: Greenpeace’s Latest Campaign to Save the Environment

Do you ever think about how many tissues you use during the winter months? Greenpeace, the environmental group, hopes you'll start. They recently launched a campaign called "Shop Smart, Save Forests."

The campaign asks people to give up their soft tissue paper and start using recycled tissue paper instead. "Recycled paper does the trick," says a Greenpeace representative. "The very soft tissue paper sold by the paper industry is overkill."

Meanwhile, the paper industry continues to encourage consumers to buy the luxury tissues and toilet paper. Their advertising campaigns highlight the softness of their products. An executive at the Kimberly-Clark company says many consumers want very soft tissue paper and recycled paper just can't deliver. For these consumers, the company offers the premium "Kleenex" brand, made of non-recycled paper. For its other, less expensive, brands, the company does use recycled paper.

Not good enough, insists Greenpeace. They explain that Kimberly-Clark and its competitors are using wood from Canada's forests, destroying old forests. "How many trees have to be destroyed so people can blow their noses?" asks a Greenpeace representative.

Activists from Greenpeace have spread the word by talking to people on the streets of some of America's major cities, including San Francisco, New York, and Washington. In blind tests, they ask consumers to compare the premium tissue paper with the recycled tissue and see if they can tell the difference. The result: most consumers can tell the difference, but they say the difference is small. And most say they'd be willing to switch to the recycled paper to help save the environment.

As part of their campaign, Greenpeace has also asked consumers to write to Kimberly-Clark and request that they start using recycled paper for their entire product line. Kimberly-Clark reports receiving tens of thousands of emails and letters. However, they have not given up on the non-recycled paper yet. Has this affected the bottom line? No, say executives from the company. Profits are up.

Vocabulary

(to) launch - to start
campaign - a series of activities designed to meet a goal
(to) do the trick - to work; to be effective
overkill - too much; more than what's needed
tissue paper - what tissues and toilet paper are made of
(to) highlight - to emphasize; to show
(to) deliver - to work; to be effective
premium - most expensive; high-end; fancy
activist - somebody calling for change
(to) spread the word - to tell many people about something
blind test - when people are offered a choice of two things and asked which one they prefer (the test is called "blind" because people do not know what the two things are). A classic "blind test" is the "Pepsi Challenge" in which people are asked whether they prefer Coke or Pepsi
(to) tell the difference - to know when two things are different; to identify a difference
(to) switch - to change; to exchange
product line - the full range of products offered by a company in a certain category
(to) give up on - to stop; to leave; to abandon
bottom line - profit
Quiz:

Answer the questions below. When finished, check your answers below. Have fun!

1) What’s the goal of Greenpeace’s campaign?
- [ ] to get people to stop using tissue paper
- [ ] to get people to switch to recycled tissue paper
- [ ] to get people to use less tissue paper

2) Why does Kimberly-Clark continue to use non-recycled tissue paper in some of their products?
- [ ] Because they want to destroy forests.
- [ ] Because it makes much softer paper and that’s what many people prefer.
- [ ] Because it’s cheaper to manufacture than recycled tissue paper.

3) What did Greenpeace activists do on the streets of some of America’s major cities?
- [ ] They gave people a test to see if they could tell the difference between recycled and premium tissue paper.
- [ ] They gave out free recycled tissue paper and asked people to start using it.
- [ ] They asked people to reduce their use of tissue paper to help save the environment.

4) Where does much of the paper come from used to make the premium tissue paper?
- [ ] the woods of California
- [ ] the forests of China
- [ ] the forests of Canada

5) How has Greenpeace’s campaign affected sales at Kimberly-Clark?
- [ ] A lot. The company is now in financial trouble.
- [ ] Not at all. Company profits have increased despite the campaign.
- [ ] Quite a bit. The company had to hire hundreds of people to answer all those letters and emails.

ANSWERS:
1) to get people to switch to recycled tissue paper
2) Because it makes much softer paper and that's what many people prefer.
3) They gave people a test to see if they could tell the difference between recycled and premium tissue paper.
4) the forests of Canada
5) Not at all. Company profits have increased despite the campaign
Kristi Yamaoka, a cheerleader from Southern Illinois University, fell 15 feet and landed on her head during a recent basketball tournament. The 18 year-old sophomore was perched atop a group of her fellow cheerleaders. Together, they formed a human pyramid. Suddenly, the stunt went wrong and Kristi came tumbling down. She landed on her head.

People in the stands were stunned, as Yamaoka lay motionless for several minutes on the court. Emergency medical workers put the cheerleader on a stretcher. As she was being wheeled off the court, the Southern Illinois University band started playing the fight song "Go Southern Go." Yamaoka managed to give two thumbs up and to move her arm in time to the music. The crowd of 14,000 responded with a standing ovation for the brave and spirited cheerleader.

From her hospital bed, Yamaoka said, "As long as my arms were functioning, I could do the fight song." She explained that she didn't want her team to get distracted. She wanted them to pull off a win. Fortunately, her team did win the game.

Yamaoka is expected to make a full recovery, though doctors have told her she must take it easy for the next six weeks. That means her cheerleading is over for the season. Yamaoka says she'll try to join the team again next season.

After Yamaoka's injury, the Missouri Valley Conference has barred cheerleaders from performing certain stunts that they now consider high risk.

Yamaoka, however, has no regrets. "Life is about taking risks, and you can die at any moment," she says.

Vocabulary:

cheerleader - at sporting events, a member of a team that leads cheers and performs dances and gymnastic moves
sophomore - a student in their second year of high school or college
perched atop - balanced on top of
human pyramid - when rows of people stand or kneel on top of each other to form the shape of a pyramid; each person is balanced atop two others
stunt - an action that displays unusual daring, strength or skill
(to) come tumbling down - to fall
stunned - shocked; very surprised
motionless - not moving; completely still
stretcher - an object used to transport the wounded or sick
fight song - a sports team's unique song, played so the fans will cheer for the team
(to) give two thumbs up - to raise two thumbs as a sign of support or approval
in time to - along with the beat or rhythm of
standing ovation - when the audience stands up and claps, as a sign of praise, usually at the end of a performance
spirited - lively, enthusiastic; willing to face danger
functioning - working
distracted - losing focus; having one's attention drawn away
(to) pull off - to succeed in doing something
(to) make a full recovery - to get 100% better after an accident or injury
(to) take it easy - to relax
(to) bar - to prevent; to forbid
Quiz:

Answer the questions below. When finished check your answers below. Have fun!

1. **What happened to the cheerleader?**
   - [ ] She was thrown up into the air by another cheerleader, and she fell.
   - [ ] She was balanced on top of a group of cheerleaders, and she fell down.
   - [ ] She got trapped inside a pyramid and couldn't get out.

2. **What was the band doing as the cheerleader was being carried away?**
   - [ ] They were playing music to show support for her.
   - [ ] They were very quiet.
   - [ ] They were clapping and cheering to show support for her.

3. **What best describes the cheerleader's attitude to the fall?**
   - [ ] She's very upset and worried about her recovery.
   - [ ] She's angry at her teammates.
   - [ ] She accepts it as part of the risk of cheerleading.

4. **What are the cheerleader's plans regarding cheerleading?**
   - [ ] She won't be returning to cheerleading ever again.
   - [ ] She will try to go back to cheerleading within the next few weeks.
   - [ ] She will recover from her fall and try to return to cheerleading next season.

5. **What did the Missouri Valley Conference do as a result of Kristi Yamaoka's fall?**
   - [ ] They banned cheerleading from future basketball games.
   - [ ] They said cheerleaders could no longer perform certain "high risk" stunts.
   - [ ] They said Yamaoka could no longer perform any risky stunts.

**ANSWERS:**
1) She was balanced on top of a group of cheerleaders, and she fell down.
2) They were playing music to show support for her.
3) She accepts it as part of the risk of cheerleading.
4) She will recover from her fall and try to return to cheerleading next season.
5) They said cheerleaders could no longer perform certain "high risk" stunts.
LESSON 16

Everyday Idioms

1) an arm and a leg

a lot of money

Example: Hazel and Alfred always wanted to take a trip to Wales, but they never did because it cost an arm and a leg.

2) better off - in a more fortunate position

Example 1: We're better off leaving for France on Thursday evening, so we can spend the entire weekend there.

Example 2: If you're interested in studying languages, you'd be better off attending Northwestern University than the University of Chicago.

Note: This expression is often used with conditional tense (would), especially when you're giving advice: "you would be better off doing something" or "you'd be better off doing something."

3) big deal! - So what? That doesn't really matter.

Example 1: You won five dollars in the lottery? Big deal!

Example 2: Your father has a job with a big company in New York City? Big deal!

4) (it / that) blows my mind

It bothers me; it really surprises me; it amazes me

Example: It blows my mind that they are trying to save money by not eating breakfast.

5) (to) blow things out of proportion - to exaggerate; to make more of something than one should

Example 1: They sent a 12 year-old boy to jail for biting his babysitter? Don't you think they're blowing things
out of proportion?

Example 2: Sally called the police when her neighbor's party got too loud. I think that was **blowing things out of proportion**.

---

6) **(to) break even**

to make neither a profit or a loss; the point at which revenues equal costs.

Example: I bought those books on sale at the store thinking that I could make some money selling them on ebay, but I only **broke even**.

---

7) **(to) burn someone up** - to make someone angry

Example 1: Jenny didn't vote for Nicole. That really **burns Nicole up**.

Example 2: I can't believe Kristen and Andrew didn't invite us to their wedding. That really **burns me up**!

---

8) **(to) call it a night** - to stop an activity for the rest of the night

Example 1: We spent a few hours walking around downtown Chicago. It was so cold that we were ready to **call it a night** by nine o'clock.

Example 2: Let's **call it a night** and meet back at the office at seven o'clock tomorrow morning to finish preparing our report.

Note: There is also the expression "to call it a day" which means to stop activity for the day.

---

9) **dime a dozen** - so plentiful as to be nothing special; common

Example 1: Reality TV shows are a **dime a dozen** these days.

Example 2: There are so many Starbucks coffee shops in Manhattan, they're a **dime a dozen**.

Note: This expression comes from the fact that a "dime" is worth only ten cents (very little value).

---

10) **(to) do the trick** - to achieve the desired results

Example 1: Juan changed the light bulb and said, "That should **do the trick**!"
Example 2: My house is difficult to find, so I’ll put 10 large balloons on my mailbox on the day of the party. That should do the trick.

**EXERCISE P1 – FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS**

1) What is something that you purchased that cost you an arm and a leg?
2) Why are you better off studying English in the United States than in your country?
3) Can you give an example of a situation when you would say, “big deal!”?
4) What is something that blows your mind?
5) Who do you know that always blows things out of proportion? Why do you think people do this?
6) Has your company ever introduced a product or service that was difficult for the company to break even? What was it? Why do you think it was unsuccessful?
7) What burns you up? Why do you think that something that burns you up, doesn’t bother someone else?
8) What time do you usually call it a night?
9) Give some examples of things that are a dime a dozen.
10) If you needed a hammer but didn’t have one, what is something else that would do the trick?

**EXERCISE P2 – FOR HOMEWORK**

*Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson*

1) an arm and a leg -

2) better off -

3) big deal! -

4) (it/that) blows my mind -
5) (to) blow things out of proportion -

6) (to) break even -

7) (to) burn someone up -

8) (to) call it a night -

9) dime a dozen -

10) (to) do the trick -

**LESSON 17**

11) educated guess

A guess based on experience; a piece of information based on prior knowledge, not hard facts of data.

Example: I would say that less than 30% of Americans graduate from a College or University, but that’s just an **educated guess** based on the 26% high school dropout rate.
12) (to) give someone the cold shoulder - to be cold to someone on purpose; to snub someone

Example 1: When Lisa saw Amber at the mall, she didn't even stop to talk to her. She really gave her the cold shoulder.

Example 2: I can't understand why Joe would give you the cold shoulder. I thought you two were good friends!

13) (to) give somebody the green light

To give permission to move forward with a project

Example: The new Manager believes that he can find new customers by mailing out coupons to everyone in the neighborhood a 20% off coupon. He is hoping that the Owner will give him the green light.

14) (to) get the ball rolling - to get started

Example 1: Let's get the ball rolling on this project. We've only got one week to finish it.

Example 2: If we don't get the ball rolling on our vacation plans soon, we'll end up going nowhere.

15) (to) get wind of

To find out about something, often sensitive information

Example: When the store owner got wind of the fact that some of the workers were leaving early, he was very upset.

16) (to) go back to the drawing board - to start a task over because the last try failed; to start again from the beginning

Example 1: Lee's new business failed, so he had to go back to the drawing board.

Example 2: The president didn't agree with our new ideas for the company, so we had to go back to the drawing board.
17) half –baked idea

a stupid or impractical idea or suggestion

Example: I can’t believe that we had to pay the interior decorator for her half-baked ideas that we didn’t like.

18) happy camper - a happy person; a satisfied participant

Example 1: When Linda's passport was stolen in Florence, she was not a happy camper.
Example 2: Steve is taking five difficult courses this semester. He's not a happy camper!

Note: This expression is usually used in the negative (not a happy camper).

19) (to) have a heart of gold - to be very kind and giving

Example 1: Alexander has a heart of gold and always thinks of others before himself.
Example 2: You adopted five children from a Romanian orphanage? You've got a heart of gold!

20) (to be) head over heels in love - very much in love

Example 1: During the first years of their marriage, Brad and Jennifer were head over heels in love with each other.
Example 2: Sara is head over heels in love with Mark. Unfortunately, he doesn't even know her name!

**Exercise Q1 - For Discussion In Class**

1) When was the last time you made an educated guess? What was it? What did you base your guess on?
2) Have you ever given someone the cold shoulder? Has anyone ever given you the cold shoulder? What does this accomplish?
3) Is there anyone at your company that you need to get the green light from before you can do something? Do you give the green light to anyone?
4) If you wanted to save enough money for a month long vacation in Europe, how would you get the ball rolling?
5) If you got wind of the fact that your company was being closed, what would you do?
6) Give an example of when you had to go back to the drawing board.
7) Do you know someone that always has half-baked ideas? Who? What is an example of a half-baked idea they have had?
8) Are you usually a happy camper? When was the last time you were not a happy camper?
9) Who do you know that has a heart of gold? What does he or she do that makes you say that?
10) Why do you think Hollywood makes so many movies with couples that appear to be head over heels in love?

**EXERCISE Q2 – FOR HOMEWORK**

*Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson*

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**LESSON 18**

21) (to) **hit the nail on the head** - to be right

Example 1: Dawn **hit the nail on the head** when she said that Tiffany is jealous of Amber.

Example 2: Steve **hit the nail on the head** with his idea of moving his company's manufacturing facility to China.

---

22) **in hot water**

in trouble

Example: If I’m late for work one more time, I’m going to be **in hot water**.

---

23) **just for the record / for the record**

let me make my opinion clear
Example: I know that everyone else wants to go to North Dakota for Christmas, but just for the record I think it is going to be too cold at that time of year to do anything.

24) (to) keep an open mind

to be ready to accept new ideas; to not be biased

Example: Kathleen will be in Miss Wilson’s class next year. She has heard that she is a very mean teacher, but she is going to keep an open mind and see for herself.

25) (to) learn the ropes - to learn the basics

Example 1: Mark learned the ropes of the restaurant business by working as a cook at Outback Steakhouse.

Example 2: David worked at a big law firm for 10 years where he learned the ropes. Now he runs his own law firm.

26) (to) lose one's touch - to no longer be able to do something well

Example 1: I used to make delicious pies, but this one tastes terrible. I think I've lost my touch.

Example 2: Dr. Stewart used to be a very good doctor, but recently several of his patients have died. He seems to have lost his touch!

27) made of money - very rich

Example 1: My neighbor is re-modeling his house to look like Versailles. He doesn't have good taste, but he certainly is made of money.

Example 2: Max should be willing to loan you $10,000 to start your new business. He's made of money.

28) (to) make a bundle / (to) make a killing / (to) make a fortune- to make a lot of money

Example 1: Bob's friend Charles made a bundle in the stock market and retired at age 45.

Example 2: Sara made a killing selling her old superman comic books on eBay.

Example 3: The people that started Starbucks have made a fortune!
29) **needless to say** - obviously

Example 1: You've got a test tomorrow morning. **Needless to say**, you can't stay out late tonight.

Example 2: **Needless to say**, you shouldn't have waited until Christmas Eve to do your shopping. The stores are going to be very crowded!

---

30) **no ifs, ands, or buts**

no excuses; it’s absolutely necessary that; this is how it is going to be no matter what anyone says

Example: George’s parents said that he had to be home by 10:30 pm, **no ifs, ands or buts**.

Synonym: no two ways about it

---

**EXERCISE R1 – FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS**

1) Give an example of a time when someone hit the nail on the head.
2) When children are in hot water what do you think parents should do?
3) Just for the record, who do you think will be the next President of the United States?
4) When people are telling you things, do you usually keep an open mind?
5) How did you learn the ropes for your job?
6) Have you lost your touch doing anything? If so what?
7) Do you know anyone that you would say is made of money? Do you think that people who are made of money are happy? Why or why not?
8) What are some types of jobs where people can make a fortune?
9) Give an example using the expression “needless to say”.
10) What would you tell your child that there are no ifs, ands or buts about?

**EXERCISE R2 – FOR HOMEWORK**

*Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson*

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3) just for the record / for the record -

4) (to) keep an open mind -

5) (to) learn the ropes -

6) (to) lose one’s touch -

7) made of money -

8) (to) make a bundle/ (to) make a killing/ (to) make a fortune -

9) needless to say -
Lesson 19

31) nothing set in stone

Nothing is decided yet; things can still be changed

Example: We are thinking about taking a vacation to Mt. Rushmore this year. On the way we would like to see the Little House on the Prairie outdoor drama about Laura Ingalls’s life and then stop at Flintstone Park on the way, but nothing is set in stone yet.

32) on the right track

Proceeding in a good way; going in the right direction

Example: On our way to Florida we had to take a detour and one of the detour signs was missing so we got lost. After about 45 minutes we finally got on the right track again.

33) piece of cake - very easy

Example 1: Nicole finished her physics test in just 25 minutes. It was a piece of cake.

Example 2: The driving test is a piece of cake. Don't worry about it.

34) (to) pitch in - to help

Example 1: Nicole offered to pitch in and clean up her neighborhood beach. She picked up five plastic cups and an old towel.

Example 2: If you need my help, just ask. I'd be happy to pitch in.
35) (to) **pull an all-nighter** - to stay up all night to do work

Example 1: Ted **pulled an all-nighter** to study for his chemistry test and ended up falling asleep in class the next day.

Example 2: I've got a 20-page paper due tomorrow morning, and I haven't even started writing it yet. I guess I'll be **pulling an all-nighter**!

---

36) **rule of thumb** - a useful principle

Example 1: When cooking fish, a good **rule of thumb** is 10 minutes in the oven for each inch of thickness.

Example 2: "Ted, as a **rule of thumb**, you should always plan to study for your chemistry tests for at least two hours."

---

37) (to) **run with an idea**

To proceed with an idea

Example: After the church group talked about raising money for a new roof by having rummage sales and bake sales they **ran with the idea**. It took them three months to raise enough money.

---

38) (as) **sharp as a tack** - very intelligent

Example 1: Jay scored 100% on his science test. He's as **sharp as a tack**.

Example 2: Anna got a scholarship to Yale. She's as **sharp as a tack**.

---

39) (to) **sit tight** - to wait patiently

Example 1: Nicole won't hear back from the colleges she applied to until April. For now, she'll just have to **sit tight**.

Example 2: **Sit tight**, the doctor will be with you in a few minutes.
EXERCISE S1 – FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS

1) If someone tells you that they are planning to go on a vacation to Australia, but nothing is set in stone yet, what do they mean?
2) Some politicians believe that we should go to a flat tax so that everyone pays the same percentage of taxes. For example: Everyone pays 10% of their income as a tax. Then everyone would be paying taxes and no one would be paying a higher percentage than others. Do you believe they are on the right track? Why or why not?
3) Give an example of something that is a piece of cake for you. Why do you think it is so easy for you? Is learning English a piece of cake?
4) Give an example of a time that someone pitched in to help you. When was the last time you pitched in?
5) In the United States many students at the University pull an all-nighter before a big exam. Did you ever do that? Why or why not?
6) Give an example using the expression “rule of thumb”.
7) If your son or daughter told you that they wanted to become a clown in a circus, would you tell him/her to run with the idea? Why or why not?
8) Who do you know that is as sharp as a tack?
9) Is it easy for you to sit tight? Why or why not?

EXERCISE S2 – FOR HOMEWORK

Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson

1) nothing set in stone -

2) on the right track -

3) piece of cake -

4) (to) pitch in -
5) (to) pull an all-nighter -

6) rule of thumb -

7) (to) run with an idea -

8) (as) sharp as a tack -

9) (to) sit tight -

**Lesson 20**

40) (to) **stab someone in the back** - to betray someone

Example 1: Jill and Heather were friends, until Heather **stabbed Jill** in the back by stealing her boyfriend.

Example 2: You're firing me after all I've done for this company? You're really **stabbing me** in the back!

41) **stocking stuffer**

a small gift given at Christmas time

Example: These new GI Joe figures will make great **stocking stuffers** for the boys.
42) **(to) tell someone off** - to scold; to tell someone in strong words what one really thinks

Example 1: When Ted showed up for chemistry class a half an hour late, his teacher really told him off.

Example 2: Patty is going to tell off the plumber because the pipes he said he fixed are still leaking.

---

43) **(to) touch base with someone**

To get in contact with; to make brief contact with

Example: “Hello, this is Jerry, I just wanted to touch base with you and confirm that you are still planning to come to the concert with us on Friday.”

---

44) **(to) twist somebody’s arm**

To convince someone; to talk someone into doing something

Example: Keith didn’t want to go to the drive in again this week, but his wife twisted him arm and he went.

---

45) **when pigs fly!**

never

Example 1: Will Ted teach Nicole how to play the guitar? When pigs fly!

Example 2: Sure, I'll give you my new laptop. When pigs fly!

---

46) **(to) twist someone's arm** - to persuade someone; to convince someone

Example 1: Ted didn't want to get another tattoo on his back, but Amber twisted his arm.

Example 2: Okay, you've twisted my arm. You can borrow my new car and drive it across the country.

---

47) **(to be) up in the air** - not yet determined; uncertain

Example 1: It might rain later, so our plans for the picnic are up in the air.

Example 2: Our trip to Russia is up in the air. We aren't sure we'll get our visas in time.
EXERCISE T1 – FOR DISCUSSION IN CLASS

1) Has anyone every stabbed you in the back? What is your opinion of people that stab their friends in the back? Why do you think some people do this?
2) People in the United States that celebrate Christmas often buy stocking stuffers for members of their family. Do people in your country buy stocking stuffers? What types of things do you think would make a good stocking stuffer for children?
3) Have you ever told someone off? What was it that made you so upset in that situation?
4) When was the last time you touched base with your best friend?
5) If you over hear a conversation and one person asks the other person to do something and the reply is, “when pigs fly!” what does that mean? Give an example of something you would respond to with this expression.
6) Have you ever had to twist someone’s arm to get them to do what you wanted to do or go where you wanted to go?
7) Do you have specific plans for your next vacation or is that up in the air? When do you usually go on vacation? What are three places you have never been to, but you would like to visit someday?

EXERCISE T2 – FOR HOMEWORK

Write one example sentence for each of the words / Idioms in this lesson

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<td>4)</td>
<td>(to) twist somebody’s arm -</td>
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</table>
5) when pigs fly!

6) (to) twist someone’s arm

7) (to be) up in the air
### Idioms for Business English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idiom/Expression</th>
<th>(to) Follow the music</th>
<th>(to) Face the music</th>
<th>(to) Plug a product</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At a premium</td>
<td>(to) Face the music</td>
<td>(to) Fast track a project</td>
<td>(to) Pull one’s weight</td>
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<td>Back-of-the-envelope calculations</td>
<td>(to) Fine tune</td>
<td>Pull the plug</td>
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<td>Ball park figure</td>
<td>Game plan</td>
<td>(to) Put a stake in the ground</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belt-tightening</td>
<td>Get something off the ground</td>
<td>(to) Rally the troops</td>
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<td>Big win/Big hit</td>
<td>(to) Have a lot on one’s plate</td>
<td>Reality check</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) Bite the Bullet</td>
<td>The hard sell</td>
<td>Rip off</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitter pill to swallow</td>
<td>In the red</td>
<td>(to) Run some idea by someone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldstein buster</td>
<td>(to) Jump the gun</td>
<td>Run the numbers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) Brainstorm</td>
<td>(to) Jump through hoops</td>
<td>(to) Scale back one’s hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownie points</td>
<td>Mum’s the word</td>
<td>Shape up or ship out!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) Cash in on</td>
<td>My gut tells me</td>
<td>(to) Step up to the plate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) Climb the corporate ladder</td>
<td>Nothing ventured, nothing gained</td>
<td>(to) Throw cold water over an idea / (to) Throw cold water over a plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) Come up with a winner</td>
<td>On top of trends</td>
<td>Through the roof</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) Compare apples to oranges</td>
<td>One’s head is on the chopping Goldstein</td>
<td>Turn around one’s business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) Crunch the numbers</td>
<td>(to) Pass the buck</td>
<td>(to) Work down to the wire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crunch time</td>
<td></td>
<td>(to) work out the kinks / (to) work out some kinks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog-eat-dog world</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes man</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) dot your i’s and cross your t’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) drum up business</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Idioms in the News

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idiom/Expression</th>
<th>(to) All the rage</th>
<th>(to) Bells and whistles</th>
<th>(to) Kiss up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crash course</td>
<td>Bells and whistles</td>
<td>Fly in the face</td>
<td>(to) Turn a blind eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) Miss out</td>
<td>Fly in the face</td>
<td>(to) Tie the knot</td>
<td>Shoot the breeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) Go to great lengths</td>
<td>(to) Call it quits</td>
<td>Dog-eat-dog world</td>
<td>The helping hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuddy-duddy</td>
<td>(to) Lose heart</td>
<td>A helping hand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to) Steer clear (of something)</td>
<td>Bottom line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Idioms</td>
<td>An arm and a leg</td>
<td>Better off</td>
<td>Big deal!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>