

Recognising and using phrases and idioms

Theatre

UNIT AIMS

Skill: recognising and using phrases and idioms

Vocabulary: entertainment topic vocabulary

Exam practice: Advanced Paper 1 Part 1

Improve your Use of English skills: recognising and using phrases and idioms

What is recognising and using phrases and idioms?

Phrases and idioms are expressions using more than one word. It may be difficult to work out the meaning by looking at the individual words. For example, actors sometimes say 'Break a leg!' to mean 'Good luck!'. You need to recognise when an exam task is testing a phrase or an idiom and be able to provide or complete it accurately.

- 1 The example of what actors sometimes say shows that
- A actors can be particularly nasty to each other at work.
 - B when working out the meaning of idioms, we have to consider sarcasm.
 - C a group of words may have its own meaning when used in a certain context.

Why is recognising and using phrases and idioms important?

It's vital because they're so frequent in all forms of written and spoken English. You need to recognise and understand them when you come across them. If you fail to recognise that someone is using a phrase or idiom, you may misunderstand them.

- 2 The paragraph suggests that phrases and idioms are
- A more usually found in informal English.
 - B more usually found in formal English.
 - C found in both informal and formal English.

How do you recognise and use phrases and idioms?

You need to be familiar with a large number of phrases and idioms, knowing their meaning and when it's appropriate to use them. Compare them to similar phrases and idioms in your own language and note how they are similar or different to your own language. Being able to guess the meaning of new phrases and idioms is an essential skill. You need to be able to work out their meaning from the context.

- 3 The most important part of working out the meaning of an unknown phrase is
- A the context you hear or read it in.
 - B its similarity to a phrase in your first language.
 - C comparing it to other phrases you know in English.

How is recognising and using phrases and idioms important in Advanced?

Phrases and idioms are tested in a number of ways in Advanced. In Paper 1 Parts 1 & 2, you may need to complete a phrase or idiom. In Part 4, you may need to recognise a phrase or idiom in the first sentence or you may need to use a phrase or idiom that includes the given word in bold in the second sentence.

- 4 In Paper 1 Part 2, you may need to be able to
- A recognise a phrase or idiom, but not complete one.
 - B complete a phrase or idiom without recognising it.
 - C recognise and complete a phrase or idiom.



Recognising and using phrases and idioms

Get started

Look at the photo and answer the questions.

- 1 What is happening in this photo?
- 2 What behind-the-scenes jobs can you think of which are involved with the theatre?
- 3 Which is most important – the appearance of a production, the strength of the storyline, or the delivery of the performances? Why?
- 4 What does a theatrical production offer that a film doesn't?

Develop your vocabulary

1 Match each phrase with its definition.

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|--|
| 1 stage lighting | — | a humorous production with a dark side |
| 2 black comedy | — | b altering details for a more imaginative effect |
| 3 dress rehearsal | — | c how the actors and sets are illuminated on stage |
| 4 stage direction | — | d final practice of a play in costume before opening night |
| 5 creative licence | — | e instruction to actors, written into a script |

2 Choose the correct word to complete each sentence.

- 1 The audience kept on clapping, so the whole cast returned to the stage for a curtain **call / request**.
- 2 A successful acting performance often depends not only on the individual performer, but on the **collaborative / impulsive** effort between the actor and the director.
- 3 Michelle created the perfect **choir / choreography** to ensure the dancers wouldn't miss a step on opening night.
- 4 The reconstructed version of Shakespeare's famous Globe Theatre has a seating **capacity / capability** of 3,000.
- 5 Ben is a famous child actor who has lived his entire life in the **limelight / publicity**.

3 Write a word from the box in each gap to complete the review.

house ■ ovation ■ playwright ■ props ■ vehicle

Last night's production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* might have been spectacular enough to impress the (1) _____ himself. The production was initially written off as a (2) _____ for its stars, set to make money simply for having famous actors, who nonetheless turned in stunning performances. But where the production soared was in its use

of imaginative costume designs, elegant (3) _____, especially the trailing vines on the balcony where Juliet delivers her famous monologue, and the unusually tempered pace of the production. The performance played to a packed (4) _____ and received uproarious applause and a standing (5) _____ at the finale.

Develop your Use of English skills: recognising and using phrases and idioms

1 Choose the correct word to complete each sentence.

- If you don't get your **focus** / **act** together, you'll never get a good role.
- On top of being the leading role, it also pays **big** / **large** money.
- Jeffrey is suffering from writer's **block** / **stop** and can't finish the **script** for the play.
- With weeks of touring with her theatre company still yet to come, **Julie** felt there was no end in **sight** / **mind**.
- Never in a **hundred** / **million** years did I think I'd achieve such fame as an actor!
- If there are any snags with the production, I'll be there at the drop of a **shoe** / **hat**.
- We don't go to the theatre often, only once in a **red** / **blue** moon.
- Her performance was revolutionary; she really broke the **shell** / **mould**.
- After getting the **green** / **bright** light from the financial backers, the show got under way.
- The characters **audiences** admire are those that seem **larger** / **greater** than life.

2 Write a word from the box in each gap to complete the sentences.

arms ■ course ■ milk ■ nerves ■ nick ■ piece ■ pieces ■ rain ■ sailing ■ skinned

- The whole theatre company was up in _____ when it turned out they wouldn't be paid for three months.
- Jessica did some breathing exercises to steady her _____ before going on stage.
- If you're disappointed with my performance, just say your _____ and then leave!
- So you missed a few dance steps in the performance. Don't worry about it – there's no point crying over spilt _____.
- Even though the production was badly reviewed, the theatre owner let it run its _____.
- If you've memorised your lines and practised all your moves, your performance in the play ought to be plain _____.
- Nancy fell to _____ after reading the scathing remarks critics made about her.
- We didn't realise there was a curtain call after we left the stage, so we only got back on to bow in the _____ of time.
- Come _____ or shine, this production will go ahead as planned.
- You've got to be thick-_____ to deal with negative criticism.

3 Choose the correct word to complete each sentence.

- After the playwright rewrote the script, the story began to take _____.
a set b form c shape d part
- Anyone who criticises the lead is simply asking for _____.
a trouble b pain c difficulty d discomfort
- Don't worry, you'll do splendidly tonight – just go out there and break a _____.
a limp b leg c mould d step
- Sophie was feeling a bit _____ on her luck after not getting the part, so Frank bought her lunch.
a down b under c below d behind
- The play is simply a vehicle for its stars and falls _____ of having a decent plot.
a fast b short c quick d thin
- Anna's friend knew the casting director, so she pulled a few _____ to arrange an audition.
a ropes b wires c threads d strings

4 Choose the correct definition for each phrase in bold.

- Terrence focused on minor details so much he couldn't **see the wood for the trees**.
a see the big picture b see the finer elements
- Such detailed stage directions exist because some actors can't **put two and two together**.
a do maths easily b figure out something simple
- The famous actor showed up **out of the blue** and demanded to be in the play.
a with the utmost respect b without prior notice
- Martin went to acting school to learn **the tools of the trade**.
a how to pick up acting skills b how to build stage props
- If you think the character should be played more aggressively, **stick to your guns** and maybe the director will come round.
a follow your principles b make a threatening scene
- We'd like to stage performances every night, but **the powers that be** won't allow it.
a those who are in charge b the audience

5 Each of the words in bold is in the wrong sentence. Write the correct word on the line.

- Nobody expected Fred to make it as a dancer as he'd always seemed to have two **worse** feet. _____
- There's often a very **clean** line between black comedy and tragedy. _____
- There's nothing like home **straight** home after touring with a theatre company for months. _____
- Let's throw out this script and start with a **second** slate. _____
- I know the play was a tragedy, but I got the giggles **halfway** through and couldn't keep a **fine** face! _____
- After the strange and dramatic ending, the audience sat in **sweet** silence. _____
- The theatre was located in a strange place off the **good** track in the heart of the countryside. _____
- Some questioned his motives for taking the role, but Henry assured them he acted in **beaten** faith. _____
- She's never taken acting classes; it just comes as **dead** nature. _____
- Things went from bad to **left** when the bumbling actor knocked over a large prop. _____

6 Write a word from the box in each gap to complete the text.

balance ■ consideration ■ discussions ■ handle ■ par ■ scenes ■ shoulders ■ wavelength

Some theatrical productions are so elaborate, you might think it would take a miracle to produce them. The glory of a successful production is usually bestowed upon the play's director, but you must take into (1) _____ the collaborative effort that took place behind the (2) _____. The set and props must be constructed, lighting must be positioned, costumes must be designed, and sound must be mixed. The success of all this depends on lighting and sound engineers, costume designers and others who are all on the same (3) _____. If even one of them takes creative licence that clashes with the director's intentions, the director may fly off the (4) _____ and heated (5) _____ are sure to follow. If such disputes are never resolved, the performance is likely to be below (6) _____. Making sure everyone works well together rests on the (7) _____ of the play's director, who must put extra effort into striking a (8) _____ between all of these elements.

7 Match each situation with an idiomatic phrase.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 She managed to become famous while still keeping a private life. | a the pen is mightier than the sword |
| 2 I deeply regret not auditioning for what could have been the role of a lifetime! | b don't look a gift horse in the mouth |
| 3 You argue too much about small details that are not very important. | c have the best of both worlds |
| 4 Don't use violence to try and right the wrongs in life – write about it! | d split hairs |
| 5 The director obviously sought you out because you're talented, so don't question his motives. | e be kicking yourself |

8 Rewrite each sentence in exercise 7 using the appropriate idiomatic phrase.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

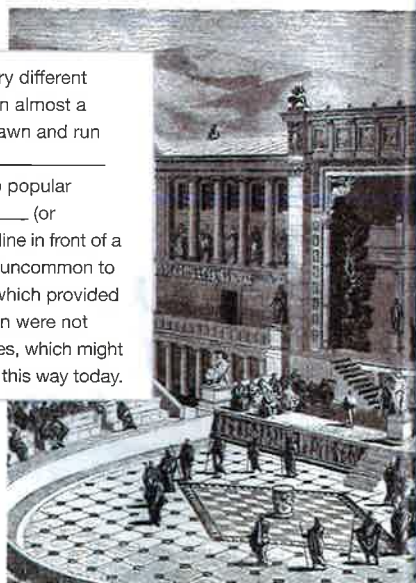
9 Underline the mistake in each sentence and write the correct word.

- 1 We're going to break off tradition this holiday season and not play the *Nutcracker Suite*.
- 2 She's been rehearsing for weeks and she knows the role inside in.
- 3 The actor showed a worrying pattern for behaviour by repeatedly missing rehearsals.
- 4 You've got to have your wits round you on stage to deal with unexpected events.
- 5 The director assured the theatre manager that all would be done for good time.

10 Choose the correct words to complete the text.

Theatre is rooted in ancient Greece, but performances then were very different from those of today. In those times, patrons attended productions on almost a daily (1) _____ and during festivals, theatres would open at dawn and run into the night. Many Greek plays survive today as masterpieces, (2) _____ the impression that all Greek plays were equally brilliant. Contrary to popular (3) _____, though, not all scripts were worth the (4) _____ (or parchment, or papyrus) they were written on. Often, audiences would dine in front of a production, and if a performance (5) _____ outrage, it was not uncommon to toss food at the actors. Luckily, actors often used theatrical masks, which provided some protection! It was only men who used them, though, as women were not allowed on stage. Female roles were played by men in wigs and dresses, which might (6) _____ some people as odd if Greek theatre were performed this way today.

- | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| 1 a route | b basis | c source | d origin |
| 2 a putting | b allowing | c making | d giving |
| 3 a thought | b idea | c belief | d notion |
| 4 a paper | b note | c document | d page |
| 5 a lit | b sparked | c burned | d flashed |
| 6 a hit | b strike | c slap | d punch |



11 Decide whether each pair of sentences has a similar (S) or an opposite (O) meaning.

- 1 Katie acted on a whim and auditioned for a part in the play.
Katie planned for months for her audition for a part in the play.
- 2 The stage props and lighting were smart and well organised.
There was no rhyme or reason as to how the stage props and lighting were set up.
- 3 The lead actor was a little slow on the uptake when memorising his lines.
It took the actor a long time to learn his times because he's not a fast learner.
- 4 After Alex became famous, the attention went to his head.
Even though he was famous, Alex was the same as ever.
- 5 After the young actress stole her part, Sue gave her a taste of her own medicine.
Sue took revenge on the young actress for stealing her part.

12 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given.

- 1 If there are any problems, I can be there right away.
MOMENT'S
I can be there _____ if there are any problems.
- 2 Mark got lucky when he got the lead role.
STROKE
It was a _____ when Mark got the leading role.
- 3 The plot was so confusing, I couldn't follow it.
MUD
Because the plot was about as _____, I couldn't follow it.
- 4 After the play finishes, I plan to relax and enjoy time off.
FEET
I'm going to _____ up after the play finishes.
- 5 Does the plot remind you of anything?
BELL
Does the plot _____ by any chance?

13 Write one word in each gap to complete the text.

Along with London's West End theatres, New York's Broadway theatres are thought to be the pinnacle of theatrical production in the English-speaking world. For most American actors, landing a role in one of these productions is far (1) _____ their wildest dreams, as working on Broadway represents the highest (2) _____ in any theatrical actor's career. Naturally, all actors must keep their options (3) _____ when seeking theatrical work. For those just about to (4) _____ the plunge, it might be wise to first pursue a role in what's known as the Off-Broadway theatres, or even better, Off-Off-Broadway theatres. These two types of theatre are defined by seating capacity – the former being 100 to 499 seats, the latter under 100. While the productions are smaller, performances in these theatres can still (5) _____ respect from the theatrical community. An actor can use the venues to get their craft down to a fine (6) _____ and eventually turn in performances eliciting reviews (7) _____ of praise from critics who attend. Conversely, there's less need for an actor to worry too much about a bad performance. As it's only an Off-Off-Broadway production, it's not the (8) _____ of the world.

Exam focus:

recognising and using phrases and idioms in *Advanced*

- 1 Look at the exam practice section on page 13 and tick the answer choices that probably involve phrases or idioms.

Gap 1 —
Gap 2 —
Gap 3 —
Gap 4 —
Gap 5 —
Gap 6 —
Gap 7 —
Gap 8 —

- 2 Read the statements and decide if they are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 The text requires topic-related knowledge of phrases to answer some gaps. —
2 For the example, answer choice C might be correct if the word 'on' followed the gap. —
3 The phrase in Gap 4 refers to something the actors do. —
4 The phrase in Gap 6 literally refers to a house. —
5 Most of the answer choices in Gap 7 have a positive connotation. —

- 3 Match each Part of *Advanced* Paper 1 with a statement. More than one statement may be chosen in some cases.

- Part 1: — a You may have to complete a phrase or idiom with one word.
Part 2: — b You may have to complete a phrase or idiom with multiple words.
Part 3: — c You need no real knowledge of phrases or idioms here.
Part 4: — d You may have to complete phrases or idioms without answer choices.
e You may need to know the meaning of entire phrases or idioms.
f You may have to complete a phrase or idiom with a transformed word.

Skills tip

In *Advanced* Paper 1 Part 1, should you

- a expect most of the answers to form idioms? Yes / No
b choose a word for an idiom based on the literal meaning of that word? Yes / No

Exam practice:

Advanced Paper 1 Part 1

For questions 1–8, read the text below and decide which answer (A, B, C or D) best fits each gap. There is an example at the beginning (0).

Example:

0 **A** sparkles **B** glows **C** beams **D** illuminates

BLACK light theatre

Black light theatre is just as it sounds, that is, a black light (0) ___ an otherwise dark stage using ultraviolet light. Actors perform wearing fluorescent costumes that reflect light, and any stage (1) ___ the set designer wishes to remain unseen are painted black.

Less technological variations of this type of stage (2) ___ have been used for millennia; actors in ancient theatres would sometimes all dress in black and play on a dark stage. Its modern form was (3) ___ in the 1960s, after an outstanding performance at the 1962 Edinburgh Theatre Festival led to a (4) ___ ovation. Soon after, the (5) ___ behind the production, Jiri Srnec, began staging performances in his native Czech Republic to (6) ___ houses. There are numerous black light theatres in Prague today.

Performances are visually (7) ___ as there is such intricate choreography involved. Actors must rehearse (8) ___ before going on the dark stage. A single wrong move can ruin the whole production.

Skills tip

There may be times when you won't know all the words in the answer choices in *Advanced* Paper 1 Part 1. If this should happen, there are a couple of things you can do. One strategy is to use a process of elimination to find the answer, in which you cross out all the choices you know are wrong and choose from the remaining options. Another tip is to choose the answer that first came to mind when you read the text and ignore the unknown words. If all else fails, try guessing the answer, but definitely don't leave it blank.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 A props | B supports | C bases | D parts |
| 2 A shading | B darkening | C colouring | D lighting |
| 3 A popularised | B familiarised | C customised | D standardised |
| 4 A leading | B jumping | C standing | D lasting |
| 5 A thoughts | B wits | C ideas | D brains |
| 6 A packed | B crammed | C crowded | D jammed |
| 7 A disturbing | B alarming | C shocking | D stunning |
| 8 A accurately | B intensively | C severely | D strictly |

Answer Key

Unit 1

Improve your Use of English skills

1 C 2 C 3 A 4 C

Get started

Students' own answers

Develop your vocabulary

1

1 c 2 a 3 d 4 e 5 b

2

1 call 4 capacity
2 collaborative 5 limelight
3 choreography

3

1 playwright 4 house
2 vehicle 5 ovation
3 props

Develop your Use of English skills

1

1 act 6 hat
2 big 7 blue
3 block 8 mould
4 sight 9 green
5 million 10 larger

2

1 arms 6 sailing
2 nerves 7 pieces
3 piece 8 nick
4 milk 9 rain
5 course 10 skinned

3

1 c 2 a 3 b 4 a 5 b 6 d

4

1 a 2 b 3 b 4 a 5 a 6 a

5

1 left 6 dead
2 fine 7 beaten
3 sweet 8 good
4 clean 9 second
5 straight 10 worse

6

1 consideration 5 discussions
2 scenes 6 par
3 wavelength 7 shoulders
4 handle 8 balance

7

1 c 2 e 3 d 4 a 5 b

8

Suggested answers

1 She had the best of both worlds as she had managed to become famous and still keep a private life.

2 I'm kicking myself for not auditioning for what could have been the role of a lifetime.

3 Don't split hairs over small details that aren't very important.

4 It's better to try and improve things in life by writing about them than by using violence – after all the pen is mightier than the sword.

5 The director obviously sought you out because you're talented, so take the job and don't look a gift horse in the mouth.

9

1 We're going to break off with tradition this holiday season and not play the *Nutcracker Suite*.

2 She's been rehearsing for weeks and she knows the role inside in out.

3 The actor showed a worrying pattern ~~for~~ of behaviour by repeatedly missing rehearsals.

4 You've got to have your wits ~~round~~ about you on stage to deal with unexpected events.

5 The director assured the theatre manager that all would be done ~~for~~ in good time.

10

1 b 2 d 3 c 4 a 5 b 6 b

11

1 O 2 O 3 S 4 O 5 S

12

1 at a moment's notice 4 put my feet
2 stroke of luck 5 ring a bell
3 clear as mud

13

1 beyond 6 art
2 point/peak 7 full/worthy
3 open 8 end
4 take
5 command/earn/gain/get/garner

Exam focus

1

Students should tick gaps 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6.

2

1 T 2 T 3 F 4 F 5 F

Skills tip

a No, b No

3

Part 1: a

Part 2: a, d

Part 3: c, f

Part 4: b, e

Exam practice

1 A 2 D 3 A 4 C 5 D 6 A 7 D 8 B

Unit 2

Improve your Use of English skills

1 B 2 A 3 C 4 A

Get started

Students' own answers

Develop your vocabulary

1

1 on 4 at
2 on/at 5 in
3 under/in

2

1 dotcom 4 budgets
2 start-ups 5 prototype
3 innovative

3

1 c 2 e 3 a 4 b 5 d

Develop your Use of English skills

1 Our company has a lot of work to do before it gets all its old business back. = regains

2 We need a new product on the shelves in six months; there's no time to mess around. = behave in a silly, unserious way

3 The new CEO should shake this faltering and failing company up and help it recover. = make fundamental changes

4 I have been rather taken aback by the speed at which management wants new developments from us. = surprised

5 The smartphone took off faster than anyone expected, and now it dominates the mobile phone market. = became successful quickly

6 That computer company started out in a garage which belonged to the mother of one of the founders. = began operating