



IDIOM

UNIT 3

Exercise 1

Match phrases 1–8 with A–H to make idioms from this unit.

1 go off at	A the bag
2 get your wires	B base
3 to be	C a tangent
4 keep someone	D the beans
5 spill	E the picture
6 touch	F posted
7 let the cat out of	G at cross purposes
8 put someone in	H crossed

Exercise 2

Complete the sentences with the words in the box. Some of the sentences have more than one answer.

out | from | at | in | off | on

- 1 Keep me _____ the loop, will you?
- 2 I wish she wouldn't keep going off _____ a tangent.
- 3 We heard a rumour _____ the grapevine.
- 4 Let me put you _____ the picture.
- 5 I heard all this straight _____ the horse's mouth.
- 6 I think they were arguing _____ cross purposes there.
- 7 She promised me she wouldn't let the cat _____ of the bag.
- 8 She really came _____ of her shell when the singing started.

Exercise 3

Re-order the phrases to make sentences. Add punctuation where necessary.

- 1 true / it must be / here in black and white / because it's
- 2 as you develop / keep me / the idea / in the loop
- 3 every week to / touch base / we meet / have lunch and
- 4 was moving / that the discussion / off on a tangent / I thought
- 5 she was doing / she asked him / on how / to keep her posted
- 6 paid / the office cleaner to / the newspaper reporter / spill the beans
- 7 the issue of / find common ground on / they managed to / rates of pay
- 8 going away / the family agreed that / would bring him out of his shell / to university

Exercise 4

Make sentences 1–6 less formal. Replace the underlined words with the correct idioms A–F.

- 1 I haven't heard any news yet, but I'll inform you.
- 2 It was meant to be a surprise, but someone gave the secret away.
- 3 I heard a rumour that Penny and Alan are getting married.
- 4 It must be true. I heard it from a reliable source.
- 5 Let's meet up next week just to make contact again.
- 6 They support different teams but they agreed with each other when someone mentioned the off-side rule.

- A let the cat out of the bag
- B heard on the grapevine
- C keep you posted
- D found common ground
- E heard it straight from the horse's mouth
- F touch base



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Exercise 5

Match idioms 1–6 with situations A–F.

- 1 Jo and Dee learnt that Bud was being fired when Baz told them what he'd heard from Amit.
- 2 First the professor was talking about dinosaurs, then somehow it was the price of oranges!
- 3 This diamond was found by a workman on a building site. He told me about it himself.
- 4 I think we should tell Lee that the time of the meeting has been changed.
- 5 I thought we were going to the cinema and he thought I was cooking him dinner!
- 6 Nobody knew about the baby until Suzi mentioned maternity leave.

- A We got our wires crossed.
- B I got it from the horse's mouth.
- C She let the cat out of the bag.
- D They heard it on the grapevine.
- E Let's put him in the picture.
- F He went off at a tangent.

Exercise 6

Complete the table. Put the idioms in the correct groups.

keep someone in the picture		go off at/on a tangent		hear something on the grapevine
keep someone posted		let the cat out of the bag		get your wires crossed
touch base		from the horse's mouth		in the loop
				at cross purposes
				spill the beans
				in black and white

communicating badly	1 _____
	2 _____
	3 _____
maintaining communication	1 _____
	2 _____
	3 _____
	4 _____
revealing a secret	1 _____
	2 _____
trusting information	1 _____
	2 _____
	3 _____

Your turn!

Think about the way you've communicated with people around you recently. Use the idioms from this unit to describe a situation from the last few days. For example:

My teacher went off on a tangent and started telling us about her holiday.

I heard on the grapevine that Petra's getting married.



Sometimes, even your friends
let the cat out of the bag.