



Exercise 1

Complete the sentences with the words in the box.

by | of | to | in | on

- 1 We're just going to play it _____ ear.
- 2 This is just the tip _____ the iceberg.
- 3 Let's put that decision _____ the back burner for now.
- 4 I'm _____ two minds about spending all that money at once.
- 5 He stuck _____ his guns in spite of their grumbling.
- 6 We'll cross that bridge when we come _____ it.

Exercise 2

Match sentence halves 1–6 with A–F to make complete sentences.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 The bottom line is simply | A and cut straight to the chase. |
| 2 We're going to play it by ear | B but let's not make a mountain out of a molehill. |
| 3 You will have to stop sitting on the fence | C but I won't split hairs. |
| 4 The answer should have a capital letter | D and see how the next 24 hours go. |
| 5 Let's skip the introductions | E that business is about money. |
| 6 We can't ignore this issue | F and show where your loyalty lies. |

Exercise 3

Choose the best answer to complete the sentences.

- 1 'They really believe in what I do and they want to enable me to do it.' She went on to explain her success: 'I'm very good, that's _____.'
a the bottom line b the tip of the iceberg c the back burner
- 2 Then he became really ill and had to put all his plans _____.
a up in the air b on the fence c on the back burner
- 3 'What if you need another operation after this one?' – 'I'll _____.'
a make a mountain out of a molehill b cross that bridge when I come to it
c stick to my guns
- 4 The President accused his critics of being oversensitive and of _____.
a playing it by ear b cutting to the chase c making a mountain out of a molehill
- 5 For four hours of questioning, Grommek _____, but by five o'clock he had changed his story.
a played it by ear b cut to the chase c stuck to his guns
- 6 She was _____ about whether or not to turn back.
a splitting hairs b in two minds c up in the air

Exercise 4

Correct the idioms in these sentences.

- 1 The dates for the summit meeting are still up on the fence at the moment.
- 2 The police say that these numbers could just be the top of the iceberg.
- 3 He'll do what he can to make you change your mind, but you stick on the back burner.
- 4 I'd don't want to retire when I'm sixty years old but I'll cut to the bridge when I come to it.
- 5 She forgot her notes so she had to play it by air at the interview.
- 6 There just isn't any more money and that sits on the bottom line.
- 7 After he retires, Ken will be able to sit in the back seat in the family business.
- 8 I was proud to work for Ferrari, and to drive their fantastic cars was the icing in the cake.

Exercise 5

Complete the sentences with idioms in this unit, changing the verb forms if necessary.

- 1 I was so pleased just to have passed the exam; coming first was _____.
- 2 I can't really say too much about who else I'm going to be working with at the moment because it's all very much _____ and anything could happen.
- 3 I never really had a plan for my life. I just _____. Neither of us is very ambitious and we have enough money.
- 4 She introduced herself and then said 'I'll _____: I have all the evidence I need to put you in prison for the next ten years'.
- 5 This is a misleading figure. There will be many hidden costs that we will discover as this project develops. I suggest that £1.4 billion is only _____.
- 6 Yet on this key issue, the government has chosen to _____, saying that schools must decide for themselves.
- 7 He warned reporters not to _____. 'I'm disappointed, but it's not heartbreaking', he said. 'It was far worse in 1996.'
- 8 I'm fed up with being the boss so I'm going to _____ and let other people do the hard work for a while.

Exercise 6

Complete the table with idioms from this unit.

emphasizing something important	1 _____
	2 _____
showing that something is less important	1 _____
	2 _____
	3 _____
	4 _____
a decision not yet made	1 _____
	2 _____
	3 _____
	4 _____

Your turn!

Have you had to decide how important something is in your life recently? Use the idioms in this unit to talk about it. For example:

I stuck to my guns told my parents I wanted to go travelling.

I don't know what I'll do after my exams – I'll cross that bridge when I come to it.



The nurse thought Jim was making a mountain out of a molehill.