

IDIOMS

Idioms are groups of words (sometimes entire sentences) that carry an arbitrary meaning beyond the combination of the meanings of the individual words (e.g., many a man, hang fire, he gets under my skin). Idioms cannot be meaningfully translated word-for-word into another language because they seldom mean what they literally say.

Often, idiomatic errors occur in the use of prepositions after verbs. Whenever you are confused as to which preposition to use after a given word, consult an English handbook for some examples. You may also be able to locate a dictionary of verbal idioms at a bookstore. Your choice of idioms depends on the context. For example, agree may be followed by about, on, to, or with.

Directions: Determine if an idiomatic error exists in each of the following sentences. If it does, correct the error. If it does not, mark the sentence as correct.

1. Presidential and vice-presidential candidates ideally should feel compatible to each other.
2. The amount of sage in the stuffing for the Thanksgiving turkey varies considerably according with the preferences of the cook's family.
3. Most virologists doubt that we will again experience an epidemic in influenza so widespread as the outbreak during World War I.
4. Oblivious of possible dangers, the unpredictable grizzly will charge even a man.
5. The rules and procedures of the chapter must comply to those of the state administrative agency.
6. According with the 1935 Farmers' Almanac, more blind salamanders will be born in the months of July and August than in previous years.
7. Extended contract disputes often make sports fans antagonistic at players and owners alike.
8. The breeds of fish raised at the state agency are inferior to those caught at Uncle John's marina at Lake Tahoe.
9. The police and the private investigators have no conception about the fear that the public has of them.
10. The hockey team denied knowing anything about the drugs found underneath the back seat of the bus.
11. The old man sitting in the bar was fearfully regarded because everyone knew that he was extremely jealous for the youth of the patrons.
12. Most of the soldiers serving in a foreign country enjoy to get correspondence from children in America.
13. George plans leaving the academy before the snow begins to fall.

14. The team of advisors that performs all duties at registration is independent from the advisory board in the administration office.
15. The little girl ran away from her mean aunt in search for happiness.
16. The scientist claimed being a genius.
17. Denise, the secretary to the vice president, was desirous of the young executive with the hard, muscular build.
18. The young, broken-hearted poet died with sorrow after he received word that his sweetheart had been killed by a giant snowball.
19. The amount of preparation done by students taking an exam has a direct bearing with the quality of the answers given.
20. The school teacher could not stand listening to the shouts and screams of the unruly children on the playground.
21. As Sarah watched her mother kissing everyone else goodbye, she was jealous for her mother's attention.
22. Patients at the Prairie View Hospital who had difficulty paying their bill considered to try the new, inexpensive drug developed by Dr. Wellbeing.
23. The students who received their essay examinations compared the results and discovered unfair differences with the teacher's grades and comments.

Sources:

Hodges, John C. and Whitten, Mary E. Harbrace College Handbook. Chicago: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1984.

Dillingham, William B., Hiers, John T., and Watkins, Floyd C. Practical English Workbook. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978.

Answer Key

- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. compatible with | 9. conception of | 17. correct |
| 2. according to | 10. correct | 18. died of |
| 3. epidemic of | 11. jealous of | 19. bearing on |
| 4. correct | 12. enjoy getting | 20. stand to listen |
| 5. comply with | 13. to leave | 21. jealous of |
| 6. According to | 14. independent of | 22. considered trying |
| 7. antagonistic toward | 15. in search of | 23. differences in |
| 8. correct | 16. claimed to be | |

Created by Sandra Karnei

Revised: Spring 2005

Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC)

Texas State University-San Marcos