

ELL IDIOMS-DIFFICULT

1. What does it mean to “Give it to me straight”?
 - a. Give me something free from angles.
 - b. Give me a ruler.
 - c. Tell me the truth.
 - d. Tell me that you’re heterosexual.
2. If someone says “He really has ‘a chip on his shoulder’” that means:
 - a. A small piece of wood is balanced on his shoulder.
 - b. A potato chip is sitting on his shoulder.
 - c. He’s still upset about something that happened in his past.
 - d. He’s proud about something that happened to him in the past.
3. “Take my word for it” means:
 - a. Get a word from someone and define it.
 - b. Get a definition from someone.
 - c. Believe what I say.
 - d. I am an honorable person.
4. I “have a gut feeling” that he’s right can be taken to mean:
 - a. I have an intuitive sense he’s correct.
 - b. I have an upset stomach about his being correct.
 - c. I have diarrhea because he’s correct.
 - d. I have an upset stomach because he’s right-handed.
5. What does it mean when someone says, “Actions speak louder than words”?
 - a. Actions make louder sounds than the volume of a voice.
 - b. What you do is more significant than what you say.
 - c. What you act on creates more noise than what you say.
 - d. Actions can talk just like words.
6. If you are told to “Hold your head up,” this means:
 - a. Stop resting your head on your desk.
 - b. Take pride in yourself.
 - c. Take your head in your hands.
 - d. Hold you head upright.
7. You “pale in comparison” means:
 - a. You are lighter skinned than another person.
 - b. The blood drained from your face when you were compared to another person or thing.
 - c. You appear to be deficient when compared to another person or thing.
 - d. You have a light skin tone.
8. What does it mean when someone “chills out”?
 - a. A person gets really cold.
 - b. Someone turns down the air conditioning in a house or a vehicle.

- c. A person chills or refrigerates something.
 - d. A person relaxes.
9. What does it mean when a person must “tighten her/his belt”?
- a. That person has lost weight and must use something to hold her/his pants up.
 - b. That person must be more frugal because of difficult economic times.
 - c. That person must refasten her/his belt or be ashamed because her/his pants are falling down.
 - d. That person must do something to prevent almost certain embarrassment.
10. When you are told that someone won’t “take any lip” from you, it means:
- a. That no one wants to kiss you.
 - b. That no one wants to see you sulk or pout.
 - c. That no one wants to see you smile.
 - d. That no one wants to hear you respond rudely.
11. What does “I racked my brain” mean?
- a. I destroyed my brain, possibly studying.
 - b. I thought intensely while looking for the answer.
 - c. I hung my thoughts up on a problem.
 - d. I destroyed my brain with drinking and dissolute living.
12. If someone says “He threw a hissy fit” that means:
- a. He hissed like a snake.
 - b. He hissed in an insulting manner.
 - c. He behaved without emotion, coldly, like a reptile.
 - d. He had an overwrought, emotional outburst.
13. When someone says “She ran around like a chicken with its head cut off,” this means that
- a. She acted in a frenzied or crazy manner.
 - b. She acted like a bird that was bleeding to death as a result of being beheaded.
 - c. She began flapping her arms like a chicken would flap its wings as a result of being beheaded.
 - d. She acted distracted and began running around and clucking.
14. What does “I was up a creek without a paddle” mean?
- a. I was canoeing and lost my paddle or oar.
 - b. I was in a boat on a small stream and lost my paddle or oar.
 - c. I was in trouble or in a difficult predicament.
 - d. I was in trouble or in a difficult predicament because I’d lost my paddle.
15. If someone says “Once bitten, twice shy” that person means:
- a. After an animal bites you the first time, you need extra time to feel safe again around animals.
 - b. After being bitten by anything, you need extra time to feel safe again.
 - c. After being hurt, it takes a long time for a person to feel comfortable taking chances.

- d. After being hurt by someone, usually in a romantic relationship, a person must have two other romantic relationships before that person feels comfortable having a romantic relationship again.
16. What does the phrase “wears the pants in the family/house” mean?
- That a person has the most authority in a family/house.
 - That a person wears pants when at home.
 - That a person wearing pants has a family.
 - That a person who wants authority must wear pants.
17. You must learn to “blow your own horn” means:
- That each person in a band is responsible for playing his or her own instrument.
 - That people in the brass section of a band must not share instruments.
 - That a person must learn to blow the horn that she or he has been given.
 - That a person must learn how to display her or his own talents/abilities.
18. Now “the shoe is on the other foot” means:
- That circumstances have reversed, and because of this, participants have changed places.
 - That a person has changed his or her shoes from one foot to the other.
 - That circumstances have reversed, and one participant must now suffer the consequences of the other’s actions.
 - That two people have exchanged shoes.
19. The phrase “have a lot on your plate” means:
- That you have gotten a lot of food at a buffet.
 - That you have accumulated a lot of trash in your life.
 - That you have gotten more than enough problems or issues to deal with.
 - That you have gotten more food than you could ever possibly eat.
20. What does the phrase “[something or someone] really ate my lunch” mean?
- That something/someone has really been difficult to handle.
 - That something/someone has really been a heavy weight to bear.
 - That something/someone has stolen my food.
 - That something/someone ate my lunch without asking.

Answers:

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| 1. c | 11. b |
| 2. c | 12. d |
| 3. c | 13. a |
| 4. a | 14. c |
| 5. b | 15. c |
| 6. b | 16. a |
| 7. c | 17. d |
| 8. d | 18. a |
| 9. b | 19. c |
| 10. d | 20. a |