

Using Idioms to Express Easy and Difficult

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Introduction

This is an idiom lesson for upper-intermediate and advanced level students. The aim is to understand the metaphorical meaning of phrases related to the concepts of ease and difficulty. The emphasis is on meaning and the ability to incorporate these expressions into daily life.

Teachers Notes

Part 1

Write the phrase "**Food for Thought**" on the board. Ask the students if they have any thoughts on what this might mean. Afterwards, clarify the meaning.

Food for thought = something to think about.

Part 2

Ask the students the following questions. Write some of the responses on the board.

- What is difficult to do?
- What is easy to do?
- What is difficult for you to understand?
- What is easy for you to understand?

Part 3a

Hand out the idiom worksheet (see below) to the students and discuss the meanings of the idioms. Ask the students to match some of the idioms to the statements given in part 2.

- a piece of cake
- as easy as pie
- a cake walk
- in a nutshell
- save my (your) bacon
- a hard nut to crack
- in a jam
- in a pickle

Part 3b

The teacher may want to discuss with the students the different connotations of the following words.

Easy

That which can be done, gotten, mastered, or endured without difficulty; freedom from trouble; that which demands little effort or presents little difficulty.

Ease

freedom from pain, worry or trouble; comfort

Difficult

hard to do, make, manage, understand; involving trouble or requiring extra effort; hard to satisfy, persuade or please.

Part 4

Ask the students to read the dialogs on the worksheet. Help them match a suitable idiom response to each statement. Some of the idioms are interchangeable. There can be more than one right answer for some of the statements. After the students have completed this section, point out other possible answers.

Part 5

Have the students read the paragraph filled with idioms. Ask the students to rewrite the paragraph by replacing the idiomatic expressions with the equivalent literal English meanings.

Idiom Worksheet

Food for Thought

1. Idioms

- a) a piece of cake
- b) as easy as pie
- c) a cake walk
- d) in a nutshell
- e) save my (your) bacon
- f) a hard nut to crack
- g) in a jam
- h) in a pickle

2. Fill in the missing dialog phrases using idioms from the list above. Not all of the idioms will be used.

Dialog 1

Mark and Anna are neighbors. They meet outside on their way to work in the morning.

Mark: Hi Anna. How are you?

Anna: Hi Mark, not so good. My car is broken and I have an important meeting at work. I don't want to be late and I still have to take my children to school.
I'm _____.

Mark: No problem. You can ride with me. We can take your kids to school on the way.

Anna: Thanks. I don't know what I would do without you. You really _____.

Dialog 2

Mark and Anna are on their way home after work.

Anna: Hi Mark. How was work today?

Mark: I don't know. I'm having problems. I don't understand my new boss.
He's _____ . How was your day?

Anna: Good. I finished everything. I even helped Judy download all her files to her new computer. It was _____ .

3. Rewrite the paragraph without the use of idioms.

Here is some food for thought. Idioms can be a piece of cake. When you're faced with a hard nut to crack, remember this lesson. So, don't let idioms get you in a pickle. The can be a cake walk.

In a nutshell, today's lesson can someday save your bacon.

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<http://iteslj.org/>

<http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Larson-Idioms.html>