

Worksheet 4: Idioms 2

1 The meaning of many idioms is not obvious, but you can sometimes use the context to guess the general sense. Can you guess the meaning of the idioms in bold below?

- Service is shocking in this store, and shoppers **are voting with their feet**.
- A: 'Do you fancy some cake?'
B: '**I wouldn't say no.**'
- My baby just won't go to sleep – I'm **at my wits' end** at night time.
- All the criticism Pete got was **like water off a duck's back**.
- Anyone can make a pizza – **there's nothing to it**.
- I **can't make head nor tail of** these directions, can you?
- She was sacked **on the spot**. Can you believe it? Incredible!
- Don't talk to him about the situation at work: it's a bit of **a sore point** at the moment.
- The children's behaviour has become **a bone of contention** between us.
- It's **touch and go** whether he'll be fit enough to play on Saturday.
- You know what they say: **blood is thicker than water**.
- I'm going to the shops to pick up a few **bits and pieces**.

2 Put the phrases in bold in Exercise 1 into the correct column below.

TYPE OF IDIOM	EXAMPLES
Verb-based idioms, e.g. <i>hit the roof</i> = become very angry INF.	
Noun phrases, e.g. <i>a piece of cake</i> = sth that is very easy to do INF.	
Prepositional phrases, e.g. <i>under the weather</i> = not feeling well INF.	
Fixed phrases with two words, joined by <i>and</i> , e.g. <i>dos and don'ts</i> = rules that you should follow in a particular situation INF.	
Exclamations/spoken phrases, e.g. <i>Hang on!</i> = wait INF; <i>very much so</i> used to emphasize agreement	
Sayings, e.g. <i>Strike while the iron is hot</i> = make use of an opportunity immediately	
Similes with <i>as/like</i> : <i>(as) blind as a bat</i> = with bad eyesight; <i>sleep like a log</i> = sleep very well INF.	

3 Read the extract from a chat page, then underline nine idioms. With a partner, try to explain what they mean. Which type of idiom is each one?

Laars: (at 8:56pm) Just heard that MP Alison Marks is on the verge of resigning.

Boris22: (at 8:57pm) You're kidding! Well, something was obviously going on behind the scenes.

Adele-UK: (at 8:59pm) **Boris: Remember that she's got a young family. Maybe the stresses and strains of the job were just too much – all that time away from the family takes its toll.**

Janie55: (at 9:01pm) Adele: You can say that again! Women have to bear the brunt of family responsibilities, and being an MP is a tough job. It's really hard for them to strike a happy medium. Well, I for one will be sorry to see her go.

4 Rewrite the sentences using the word in capitals. The meaning must stay the same.

- We're not sure if he'll come. TOUCH

- We disagree strongly about money. BONE

- She's not feeling too well. WEATHER

- Sam's got terrible eyesight. BLIND

- The illness has affected her badly. TOLL

- Do it now: don't wait! IRON

- I find these instructions impossible to follow. HEAD

- It's very easy. NOTHING

- The economy has almost collapsed. VERGE

- The exam was incredibly easy. CAKE
