

MACMILLAN DICTIONARY



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Finding idioms and phrases in MD

Teacher's Notes

www.macmillandictionary.com

Introduction

English contains many idiomatic expressions.

- 1 An idiomatic expression is a combination of words with a particular meaning.
- 2 The meaning cannot usually be guessed from the individual words.
- 3 Words cannot usually be left out or put in a different order, so words, word order and meaning need to be learnt as a whole.

The [Macmillan Dictionary](#) helps learners by giving the word order, meaning and usage of idiomatic expressions. Here are two examples:

let your hair down *informal* to relax and enjoy yourself because you are in a comfortable environment: *We need*

shake like a leaf to shake a lot, for example because you are cold, nervous, or afraid: *Put on a sweater – you're shaking like a leaf!*

Aim of worksheet

To help students locate and use the definitions for idioms and phrases.

Time and materials

Allow two minutes for the starter, and five minutes each for activities 1, 2 and 3. You'll also need a few minutes for the discussion at the end.

Students need access to the [Macmillan Dictionary](#).

Procedures

Starter

- 1 Read and discuss the introduction with the whole class.
- 2 Ask students to look at the excerpts for *let your hair down* and *shake like a leaf* on the worksheet just to notice how the idioms are printed in **bold**, and then defined.

► Activity 1

- 1 Ask students to look at the example *not give/budge an inch* and to talk about what it means, and how it can be used. Invite them to use the dictionary to check.
- 2 Then ask them to complete the remaining idioms by choosing words from the box, using the dictionary if necessary.
- 3 Finally, make sure that students understand what the idioms mean.

Answers

- | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|------------------------|---|----------------------|---|------------------------|
| a | inch | b | mind | c | prey | d | matter |
| e | bearings | f | press | g | spot | h | wisdom |
| i | corner | j | chance | k | mile | l | pocket |

► Activity 2

- 1 Discuss with your students the following three guidelines for finding idioms and phrases in the dictionary.
 - 1 Decide which is the keyword in the idiomatic expression. Usually this word is a noun or a verb, sometimes an adjective or adverb.
 - 2 Look up the keyword in the dictionary to see if the idiom is there. If not, try one of the other words.
 - 3 Idioms are given after the definitions of the different senses of the word.
- 2 Ask students to decide which word is the keyword in each excerpt. Students check their answers in the dictionary.

Answers

- [hit the roof/ceiling](#): hit
[have your hands full](#): hand

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► Activity 3

- 1 Ask students to apply the guidelines from activity 2 in order to find the keyword and the meaning of the idiomatic expressions in the sentences in activity 3.
- 2 Check the answers with the class, and make sure that students understand what each idiomatic expression means.

Answers

- a [apple of her father's eye](#)/apple
- b [got cold feet](#)/foot
- c [light at the end of the tunnel](#)/light
- d [take the plunge](#)/plunge
- e [in her good books](#)/book
- f [in black and white](#)/black-and-white

Discussion

Discuss with the class any difficulties that they have found in using the dictionary, and ask them to make suggestions and offer tips on using the dictionary effectively and quickly.