

Proverbs and idioms by Thais Casson

Age:	Teenagers/Adults
Level:	Upper intermediate–Advanced
Time:	30–45 minutes
Objectives:	To learn and practise using proverbs and idioms
Key skills:	Speaking
Materials:	One copy of the worksheet per student; one copy of the answers per pair or group of three

Teacher's note: This activity can be done with classes of different levels, depending on the idioms and proverbs used. You can use easier or fewer sayings, according to the class. The speaking activity can also be adapted according to the students' level – maybe a less advanced group wouldn't be able to develop a conversation using the language. The focus is making students aware of idioms and proverbs that are part of the English language. They need to learn how to adapt idioms and understand that they are not literal. Students may get confused if they try to translate word for word, without considering the idiom's overall general idea.

Before the lesson

Cut up and shuffle each set of answers (one per pair or group of three). Alternatively, you can forego this step and just hand out the answer sheet to the students or even write the answers on the board.

Procedure

- Begin the class by giving some examples of proverbs or idioms the students have previously learnt. Say the first part of the sayings and have the students complete them. You know best what sayings are suitable for your group but some suggestions are:
 - Better safe than sorry.
 - A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
- Ask the students what the sayings mean. (*1. You should behave carefully, even if this seems difficult*

or unnecessary, so that you will not have problems later; 2. It is better to have something that you can be certain of than to want something that might be better but you are not certain to get.) Then, ask the students to give examples of situations in which the proverbs could be used.

- Put students in pairs or threes. Hand out one worksheet per student and have students discuss and try to complete the idioms and proverbs based on previous knowledge or by guessing.
- After they have finished trying to figure out the answers, hand out the slips containing the answers (one set per pair or group of three) and have students match the beginnings and endings. Then, go through the answers with the whole class. Alternatively, if you have not cut them up, you can either hand out the answers (which appear in the correct order) or write the answers on the board. Whichever method you choose, be sure to elicit or explain the meaning of each idiom and proverb.

Key:

- If you eat good food you will be healthy; if you eat bad food you will be unhealthy.*
- You have to work hard if you want to achieve something.*
- When you do not see or hear about something, you do not think about it.*
- Used for telling someone you are happy that they did something but you wish they had done it earlier.*
- If you arrive somewhere or do something before other people, you will have more chance of succeeding.*
- You should not form an opinion about someone or something only from their appearance.*
- Do not count on something happening that has not yet happened.*
- Diffent experiences and situations make life enjoyable or interesting.*

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9. *People who are similar to each other or share similar interests tend to spend time with each other.*
 10. *Home is the best place to be.*
 11. *Used when something, especially money, is easily got and then soon spent or lost.*
 12. *Different people have different opinions about what is beautiful.*
 13. *Treat other people with the same consideration and kindness that you would like them to show towards you.*
5. In different pairs or threes, tell students they are going to choose three idioms or proverbs from the list and think of situations in which they could be used. Before they start, present the following example to the whole group:
- You have arranged to see a friend and you were supposed to meet at 3 at a coffee shop. It's 3.30, you have been waiting for 30 minutes and your friend finally arrives. What do you say?
(Answer: 'Better late than never!')
6. After they have finished, ask for a volunteer to act out with you your example situation using 'Better late than never!' Then, ask the pairs or threes to choose one of their situations and act it out to the class. Depending on the number of students and the time, you may ask the groups to act out more than one dialogue.

Optional extension

Ask the students to choose one of the idioms or proverbs as a theme for a 100–150-word essay. This can be done as homework.

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Complete the idioms and proverbs.

1. You are what _____.
2. No pain, _____.
3. Out of sight, _____.
4. Better late _____.
5. The early bird catches _____.
6. Don't judge a book _____.
7. Don't count your chickens _____.
8. Variety is the spice of _____.
9. Birds of a feather _____.
10. There's no place like _____.
11. Easy come, _____.
12. Beauty is in the eye _____.
13. Do unto others as you would have them do _____.

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... you eat.



... no gain.



... out of mind.



... than never.



... the worm.



... by its cover.



... before they hatch.



... life.



... flock together.



... home.



... easy go.



... of the beholder.



... unto you.