

Dictionary skills: Part 2

Level 3

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Age: Teenagers / adults

Time needed: 45–60 minutes (approx)

Subject: Dictionary skills / vocabulary development

Summary: These worksheets are designed for use with the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* to give learners practice in using the dictionary to check meaning and for vocabulary development.



Exercise 1: Expressions with prepositions

1. Ask learners to work in pairs or small groups to discuss the possible answers. Listen to their suggested answers but do not correct any mistakes. Then ask them to check in the dictionary. Ensure that your learners know which word to look up in each case (for example, in the phrase *in the event of a crash*).

Exercise 2: Verb + noun collocations

2. Note that there are two ways in which the MED2 helps with collocations. Main frequent collocates are shown in **bold** within the entry (for example, *doubt: **raise doubts***). Additional collocations are given in pink collocation boxes – with the heading *Words frequently used with _____*. For example, *space: Words frequently used with space. Verbs: create, fill, find, leave, make, take up*.

Exercise 3: Adjectives and definitions

3. Ask learners to work in pairs or small groups to discuss the possible answers. Listen to their suggested answers but do not correct any mistakes. Then ask them to check in the dictionary. Draw your learners' attention to the Metaphor boxes to be found in the MED2. Categories include *angry* and *happy* (for a full list see Language Awareness page 11).

Exercise 4: Word stress

4. Ask learners to work in pairs or small groups to discuss the possible answers. Listen to their suggested answers but do not correct any mistakes. Then ask them to check in the dictionary. Make sure they know how word stress is represented in the dictionary – with a short vertical line above and before the stressed syllable, e.g. 'examine.

Exercise 5: Idioms

5. Before you ask your learners to do this exercise, highlight which word is underlined in each idiom and ask them what type of word it is. Note that the verbs are not underlined as the idioms and their definitions will not be found under the entries for the verbs (for example, *flog a dead horse* is defined under *horse* not *flog*). To give learners further practice in the tricky skill of identifying which word in an idiom to look up, ask them to have a quick look at Exercise 7 (homework) and tell you which three words they will have to look up (*lion, frog, goat*).

Exercise 6: Phrasal verbs

6. Ask learners to work in pairs or small groups to discuss the possible answers. Then ask them to check in the dictionary. Highlight the importance of the order of presentation of the meanings of phrasal verbs with several meanings (for example, *put on*, where no fewer than 15 different meanings are listed).

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1 Expressions with prepositions

Fill the gaps in these examples from the dictionary using prepositions. Then check your answers in the dictionary.

1. She believed she was on the brink _____ discovering a cure for cancer.
2. _____ the event of a crash, these added safety features may be lifesavers.
3. Britain, in common _____ other European countries, has abolished the death penalty.
4. All building work must be carried out _____ compliance with safety regulations.
5. You don't happen to recall his name _____ any chance?
6. They spoke _____ condition that their names would not be used in the article.
7. Rachel was coming _____ the conclusion that Leif was only interested in himself.
8. This contract includes a provision _____ salary increases over time.

2 Verb + noun collocations

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these nouns. Then check your answers in the dictionary by looking up the verbs and finding the nouns they collocate with.

contribution	control	consideration	scheme
difficulties	diseases	participation	dominance

1. If you experience _____ in completing the form, ask for help.
2. We encourage student _____ in our classes.
3. Smoking can cause fatal _____.
4. Community police have made a very positive _____ to crime prevention.
5. It is a matter that deserves further _____.
6. With this victory, the team has maintained its _____ of European football.
7. They have devised a _____ to allow students to study part-time.
8. The driver lost _____ of the vehicle on an icy road.

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3 Adjectives and definitions

In each of these examples, one definition is correct and one is incorrect. Which do you think are the correct definitions? Check your answers in the dictionary.

1. **fitful**
 - a) *full of sudden, strong emotion*
 - b) *starting and stopping often*
2. **dire**
 - a) *very severe or serious*
 - b) *(of a song) slow and sad and often sung at funerals*
3. **manky**
 - a) *dirty and unpleasant to look at*
 - b) *strong and brave*
4. **shifty**
 - a) *frequently changing shape or appearance*
 - b) *looking dishonest*
5. **curt**
 - a) *using few words in a way that shows you are impatient or angry*
 - b) *forming curves or circles*
6. **fickle**
 - a) *always changing your mind about who or what you like*
 - b) *invented for a book, play or film*
7. **flippant**
 - a) *soft and hanging down in a loose or heavy way*
 - b) *treating a serious subject in a way that is not serious*
8. **gorgeous**
 - a) *very beautiful*
 - b) *very steep*

4 Word stress

Use the dictionary to find how many syllables these words have and which syllable is stressed.

British	No. of syllables	Stressed syllable
<i>e.g. examine</i>	3	<i>second</i>
1. magnificent		
2. marvellous		
3. nondescript		
4. sedentary		
5. supposedly		
6. unforgivable		
7. unenthusiastic		
8. heartbreaking		

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5 Idioms

Match these idioms with their meanings. Then check your answers by looking up the underlined words in the dictionary.

1. a dog in the manger
 2. to flog a dead horse
 3. from the horse's mouth
 4. to let the cat out of the bag
 5. to take to something like a duck to water
 6. to take the bull by the horns
 7. like a bear with a sore head
 8. a wolf in sheep's clothing
- a. to learn a new activity very easily, as if you have been doing it for a very long time
 - b. information from someone who is directly involved
 - c. someone who seems friendly but is in fact unpleasant or cruel
 - d. to deal with a problem in a very direct and confident way, even if a risk is involved
 - e. someone who does not want or need something, but will not let other people have it
 - f. to tell someone something that was intended to be secret
 - g. to waste time on something you know is not going to happen
 - h. in a bad mood, getting annoyed very easily

6 Phrasal verbs: take off

A First match the examples with the definitions.

1. I'm taking Monday off to go to London.
 2. I'd better take my shoes off.
 3. Her business has really taken off.
 4. As soon as she saw George arrive, she just took off.
 5. Beth can take off Judy Garland brilliantly.
 6. The plane should take off on time.
- a. [I] informal to leave a place suddenly
 - b. [I] to leave the ground and start flying
 - c. [T] to remove something, especially a piece of clothing
 - d. [T] to copy the way someone speaks or behaves in order to entertain people
 - e. [I] to become successful or popular very fast
 - f. [T] to have a particular amount of time away from work

B Now decide which of the above definitions of take off is the most common and which is the least common. Rank them in order from 1 to 6 and write the letters of the examples in the gaps. Then check in the dictionary to see the order of priority given there.

1. ____ 2. ____ 3. ____ 4. ____ 5. ____ 6. ____

7 Homework task

Use the dictionary to find the meanings of these idioms associated with animals.

1. In the lion's den.
2. To have a frog in your throat.
3. To get someone's goat.

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KEY

1 Expressions with prepositions

1. of
2. in
3. with
4. in
5. by
6. on
7. to
8. for

2 Verb + noun collocations

1. difficulties
2. participation
3. diseases
4. contribution
5. consideration
6. dominance
7. scheme
8. control

3 Adjectives and definitions

1. b
2. a
3. a
4. b
5. a
6. a
7. b
8. a

4 Word Stress

1. four; second
2. three; first
3. three; first
4. two (three); first
5. four; second
6. five; third
7. six; fifth
8. three; first

5 Idioms

1. e
2. g
3. b
4. f
5. a
6. d
7. h
8. c

6 Phrasal verbs: *take off*

- | A | B |
|------|------|
| 1. f | 1. c |
| 2. c | 2. b |
| 3. e | 3. e |
| 4. a | 4. f |
| 5. d | 5. a |
| 6. b | 6. d |

7 Homework task

1. To be in a situation where you are with a lot of people who criticize or attack you.
2. To be unable to speak clearly for a short time because your throat is blocked.
3. To annoy someone.