Idioms for everyday situations and feelings

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
INTERMEDIATE | B1-B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Tick the correct meaning category for each idiom.

Idiom	Frustration	Determination	Confusion	Relief

1 at the end of my rope [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

2 dig in your heels [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

3 lost the plot [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

4 breathe a sigh of relief [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

5 fed up [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

6 stick to your guns [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

7 in a fog [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

8 off the hook [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

2 Correct the idiom in each sentence.

1 She was at the end of her string. _____

2 He dug in his feet on the issue. _____

3 I completely lost my plot during the meeting. _____

4 She breathed a sigh of release. _____

5 He was fed off with the situation. _____

6 She stuck to her weapons despite pressure. _____

7 He felt like he was in a cloud all morning. _____

8 She was finally off the line. _____

3 Choose the idiom that best fits each context.

1 For being completely exhausted and unable to cope: at the end of my rope / breathe a sigh of relief.

2 For refusing to change your position stubbornly: dig in your heels / lost the plot.

3 For becoming confused or losing track of a situation: lost the plot / stick to your guns.

4 For feeling relieved after a stressful moment: breathe a sigh of relief / fed up.

5 For being annoyed after tolerating something too long: fed up / off the hook.

6 For no longer being held responsible for something: off the hook / in a fog.

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4 Complete the sentences with idioms from the box.

at the end of her rope | breathed a sigh of relief | dug in his heels | fed up | in a fog | lost the plot | off the hook | stuck to her guns

1 She was 1 _____ after weeks of overtime with no support.
2 He 2 _____ and refused to change his position, no matter the pressure.
3 Halfway through the film, I completely 3 _____ and had no idea what was happening.
4 They 4 _____ once the exam results finally arrived.
5 He was 5 _____ with the constant delays.
6 Despite criticism, she 6 _____ and didn't back down.
7 He wandered around 7 _____ after the long flight.
8 Luckily, she was 8 _____ once the real culprit was found.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Why idioms are hard to translate

Language learners often find idioms among the most challenging aspects of a new language, since their meaning frequently cannot be deduced from the individual words alone. A phrase like 'at the end of my rope' makes little literal sense translated word for word, yet native speakers understand it instantly as expressing exhaustion and frustration. Idioms also vary considerably between languages even when expressing similar underlying emotions, meaning a learner cannot simply translate an idiom from their first language and expect it to make sense, or even sound natural, in the target language.

1 What do language learners often find among the most challenging aspects of a language? _____
2 Why can idiom meaning frequently not be deduced from individual words? _____
3 Give the example idiom used in the text. _____
4 What do native speakers understand this idiom as expressing? _____
5 What does the text say about idioms varying between languages? _____
6 What should a learner not simply do with an idiom from their first language? _____

6 Rewrite each phrase using the idiom in capitals.

1 She was completely exhausted and unable to cope. AT THE END OF HER ROPE _____
2 He refused stubbornly to change his mind. DUG IN HIS HEELS _____
3 She felt relieved after the stressful situation ended. BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF _____

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4 He was no longer blamed for the mistake. OFF THE HOOK _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 100-120 word account of a stressful or challenging situation using at least ten idioms for feelings and reactions.

[ ] Use at least ten target idioms. [ ] Include polite, precise wording. [ ] Organise the account clearly.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Categories

1 Frustration 2 Determination 3 Confusion 4 Relief 5 Frustration 6 Determination 7 Confusion 8 Relief

2 Corrections

1 at the end of her rope 2 dug in his heels 3 lost the plot 4 breathed a sigh of relief
5 fed up 6 stuck to her guns 7 in a fog 8 off the hook

3 Suitable idioms

1 at the end of my rope 2 dig in your heels 3 lost the plot 4 breathe a sigh of relief 5 fed up 6 off the hook

4 Sentences

1 at the end of her rope 2 dug in his heels 3 lost the plot 4 breathed a sigh of relief
5 fed up 6 stuck to her guns 7 in a fog 8 off the hook

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Idioms.
2 Because their meaning frequently cannot be deduced from the individual words alone.
3 'At the end of my rope'.
4 Exhaustion and frustration.
5 That they vary considerably even when expressing similar underlying emotions.
6 Simply translate it and expect it to make sense or sound natural.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 She was at the end of her rope. 2 He dug in his heels.
3 She breathed a sigh of relief. 4 He was off the hook.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check range, respectful register and clear organisation.