Bob works as a manager in a furniture store. Peter, his boss, is not happy about sales. Bob’s new advertising campaign hasn’t helped. Peter decides to fire him.

Peter: Bob, I hate to break the news, but our sales were down again last month.

Bob: Down again, Peter?

Peter: Yeah. These days, everybody’s shopping at our competition, Honest Abe’s Furniture Store.

Bob: But everything in there costs an arm and a leg!

Peter: That’s true. They do charge top dollar.

Bob: And their salespeople are very strange. They really give me the creeps!

Peter: Well, they must be doing something right over there. Meanwhile, we’re about to go belly-up.

Bob: I’m sorry to hear that. I thought my new advertising campaign would save the day.

Peter: Let’s face it: your advertising campaign was a real flop.

Bob: Well then I’ll go back to the drawing board.

Peter: It’s too late for that. You’re fired!
Bob: What? You’re giving me the ax?

Peter: Yes. I’ve already found a new manager. She’s as sharp as a tack.

Bob: Can’t we even talk this over? After all, I’ve been working here for 10 years!

Peter: There’s no point in arguing, Bob. I’ve already made up my mind.

Bob: Oh well, at least I won’t have to put up with your nonsense anymore! Good-bye to you and good-bye to this dead-end job.

Peter: Please leave before I lose my temper!

---

**IDIOMS – LESSON 1**

**about to** – ready to; on the verge of

**Example 1:** It’s a good thing Bob left the furniture store when he did. Peter was so angry, he was about to throw a dining room chair at him.

**Example 2:** I’m glad you’re finally home. I was just about to have dinner without you.

**after all** – despite everything; when everything has been considered; the fact is

**Example 1:** You’d better invite Ed to your party. After all, he’s a good friend.

**Example 2:** It doesn’t matter what your boss thinks of you. After all, you’re going to quit your job anyway.

**at least** – anyway; the good thing is that...

**Example 1:** We’ve run out of coffee, but at least we still have tea.

**Example 2:** Tracy can’t afford to buy a car, but at least she has a good bicycle.

**Note:** The second definition of this phrase is “no less than”: There were at least 300 people waiting in line to buy concert tickets.
(to) break the news – to make something known

Example 1: Samantha and Michael are getting married, but they haven’t yet broken the news to their parents.
Example 2: You’d better break the news to your father carefully. After all, you don’t want him to have a heart attack!

(to) cost an arm and a leg – to be very expensive

Example 1: A college education in America costs an arm and a leg.
Example 2: All of the furniture at Honest Abe’s costs an arm and a leg!

dead-end job – a job that won’t lead to anything else

Example 1: Diane realized that working as a cashier was a dead-end job.
Example 2: Jim worked many dead-end jobs before finally deciding to start his own business.

(let’s) face it – accept a difficult reality

Example 1: Let’s face it, if Ted spent more time studying, he wouldn’t be failing so many of his classes!
Example 2: Let’s face it, if you don’t have a college degree, it can be difficult to find a high-paying job.

(to) give one the creeps – to create a feeling of disgust or horror

Example 1: Ted’s friend Matt has seven earrings in each ear and an “I Love Mom” tattoo on his arm. He really gives Nicole the creeps.
Example 2: There was a strange man following me around the grocery store. He was giving me the creeps!

(to) go back to the drawing board – to start a task over because the last try failed; to start again from the beginning

Example 1: Frank’s new business failed, so he had to go back to the drawing board.
Example 2: The president didn’t agree with our new ideas for the company, so we had to go back to the drawing board.

(to) go belly-up – to go bankrupt

Example 1: Many people lost their jobs when Enron went belly-up.
Example 2: My company lost $3 million last year. We might go belly-up.

(to) give someone the ax – to fire someone

Example 1: Mary used to talk to her friends on the phone all day at work, until one day her boss finally gave her the ax.
Example 2: Poor Paul! He was given the ax two days before Christmas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>(to) lose one’s temper</strong> – to become very angry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 1:</strong> Bob always <strong>loses his temper</strong> when his kids start talking on the telephone during dinner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 2:</strong> When Ted handed in his essay two weeks late, his teacher really <strong>lost her temper</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>(to) make up one’s mind</strong> – to reach a decision; to decide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 1:</strong> Stephanie couldn’t <strong>make up her mind</strong> whether to attend Harvard or Stanford. Finally, she chose Stanford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 2:</strong> Do you want an omelette or fried eggs? You’ll need to <strong>make up your mind</strong> quickly because the waitress is coming.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>no point in</strong> – no reason to; it’s not worth (doing something)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 1:</strong> There’s <strong>no point in</strong> worrying about things you can’t change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 2:</strong> There’s <strong>no point in</strong> going on a picnic if it’s going to rain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>(to) put up with</strong> – to endure without complaint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 1:</strong> For many years, Barbara <strong>put up with</strong> her husband’s annoying behavior. Finally, she decided to leave him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 2:</strong> I don't know how Len <strong>puts up with</strong> his mean boss every day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>real flop or flop</strong> – a failure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 1:</strong> The Broadway play closed after just 4 days – it was a <strong>real flop</strong>!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 2:</strong> The company was in trouble after its new product <strong>flopped</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>(to) save the day</strong> – to prevent a disaster or misfortune</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 1:</strong> The Christmas tree was on fire, but Ted threw water on it and <strong>saved the day</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 2:</strong> We forgot to buy champagne for our New Year’s party, but Sonia brought some and really <strong>saved the day</strong>!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>(as) sharp as a tack</strong> – very intelligent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 1:</strong> Jay scored 100% on his science test. He’s <strong>as sharp as a tack</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 2:</strong> Anna got a scholarship to Yale. She’s <strong>as sharp as a tack</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>(to) talk over</strong> – to discuss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 1:</strong> Dave and I spent hours <strong>talking over</strong> the details of the plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 2:</strong> Before you make any big decisions, give me a call and we’ll <strong>talk things over</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>top dollar</strong> – the highest end of a price range; a lot of money</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 1:</strong> Nicole paid <strong>top dollar</strong> for a shirt at Banana Republic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE 2:</strong> Wait until those jeans go on sale. Why pay <strong>top dollar</strong>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practice the Idioms

Fill in the blank with the missing word:

1) I can’t believe you bought a couch at Honest Abe’s. Everything in that store costs an arm and a _____.
   a) foot                  b) leg                   c) hand

2) After Bob found out that his advertising campaign failed, he wanted to go back to the drawing _____.
   a) board               b) table                c) room

3) When somebody isn’t listening to you, there’s no _____ in trying to argue with them.
   a) edge                 b) tip                    c) point

4) José is really smart. He’s as sharp as a _____.
   a) tack                 b) nail                  c) screw

5) The salespeople at Honest Abe’s always look angry and never speak to anybody. No wonder they _____ Bob the creeps.
   a) take                 b) give                 c) allow

6) Bob got fired. He isn’t looking forward to _____ the news to his family.
   a) breaking          b) cracking          c) saying

7) Bob thought his new advertisements would bring in lots of customers and save the _____.
   a) morning           b) night                c) day

8) Fortunately, Bob no longer has to put _____ with his stupid boss at the furniture store.
   a) over                  b) in                 c) up

Answers to Lesson 1, p. 160
What's the matter?

I got canned today!
**BOB RETURNS HOME WITH BAD NEWS**

Bob tells his wife Susan that he lost his job. Susan suggests that he start his own business.

*Susan:* What’s the matter, dear?

*Bob:* Susan, I got canned today at work.

*Susan:* But Bob, you were Peter’s right-hand man!

*Bob:* Yes, and he stabbed me in the back.

*Susan:* Keep your chin up. Maybe he’ll change his mind and take you back.

*Bob:* When pigs fly! Once he makes up his mind, he never changes it. Besides, I told him off.

*Susan:* Look on the bright side: you won’t have to set eyes on Peter ever again.

*Bob:* Thank goodness for that!

*Susan:* Hang in there. I’m sure you won’t be out of work for long.

*Bob:* In the meantime, we’ll have to live from hand to mouth.

*Susan:* Don’t get too stressed out, Bob. We’ll make ends meet.
Bob: I can always get a job at McDonald’s as a last resort.

Susan: I don’t think they’re hiring right now.

Bob: If worse comes to worst, we can sell our home and move into a tent.

Susan: Let’s think big! Maybe you can start your own business.

Bob: Easier said than done!

---

**IDIOMS – LESSON 2**

**-(to) change one’s mind** – to change one’s opinion or decision  
**Example 1:** Brandon wasn’t going to take a vacation this year, but then he **changed his mind** and went to Bora Bora for two weeks.  
**Example 2:** Why aren’t you applying to medical school this year? Did you **change your mind** about becoming a doctor?

**easier said than done** – more difficult than you think  
**Example 1:** You want to climb Mount Everest? **Easier said than done!**  
**Example 2:** Moving into a new home is **easier said than done**.

**-(to) get canned** [slang] – to lose one’s job; to get fired  
**Example 1:** After Chris **got canned**, it took him a year to find a new job.  
**Example 2:** Lisa is a lousy secretary. She deserves to **get canned**!  
**Synonyms:** to get sacked; to be given the ax

**-(to) hang in there** – to persevere; to not give up  
**Example 1:** I know you’re four games behind, but you can still win the tennis match. Just **hang in there**!  
**Example 2:** **Hang in there**, Don! Your invention will soon be a success.

**if worse comes to worst** – in the worst case; if absolutely necessary  
**Example 1:** Ted’s car isn’t running well. **If worse comes to worst**, he can take the bus to school.  
**Example 2:** I know you’re running out of money. **If worse comes to worst**, you can always sell some of your jewelry.
| **Example 1**: Even when he was unemployed and homeless, Bill managed to **keep his chin up**.  
**Example 2**: **Keep your chin up**! You’ll find your lost dog soon.  

**last resort** – if there are no other alternatives left; the last solution for getting out of a difficulty  
**Example 1**: David was locked out of his house. He knew that as a **last resort**, he could always break a window.  
**Example 2**: I don’t like taking medicine. I’ll only take it as a **last resort**.

**Example 1**: Jenny was earning $5 an hour working at the store. She was really **living from hand to mouth**.  
**Example 2**: George is really poor. He **lives from hand to mouth**.

**Example 1**: Leo was upset that his soccer game was canceled. His mother said, “**Look on the bright side**, now you can stay home and watch TV.”  
**Example 2**: You lost your job? **Look on the bright side**, now you’ll have more free time!

**Example 1**: Kimberly wasn’t able to **make ends meet** so she had to ask her parents to pay her rent.  
**Example 2**: If you can’t **make ends meet**, you’ll need to start spending less.

**Example 1**: Gary was **out of work** for a year before finding a new job.  
**Example 2**: Bob is **out of work**. Do you know anybody who might want to hire him?

**Example 1**: Juan’s **right-hand man** helps him make all of his decisions.  
**Example 2**: When Jack Thompson retired as president of his company, his **right-hand man** took over.
**(to) set eyes on** – to look at; to see for the first time

**EXAMPLE 1:** Ted was in love from the moment he *set eyes on* Amber.
**EXAMPLE 2:** Susan knew from the moment she *set eyes on* Ted’s friend Lucas that he would be trouble.

**(to) stab someone in the back** – to betray someone

**EXAMPLE 1:** Jill and Heather were friends, until Heather *stabbed Jill in the back* by stealing her boyfriend.
**EXAMPLE 2:** You’re firing me after all I’ve done for this company? You’re really *stabbing me in the back*!

**(to be) stressed out** – under severe strain; very anxious

**EXAMPLE 1:** Al is so *stressed out* about his job that he can’t sleep at night.
**EXAMPLE 2:** You’ve been so *stressed out* lately. You really need to take a long vacation!

**(to) tell off** – to scold; to tell someone in strong words what one really thinks

**EXAMPLE 1:** When Ted showed up for chemistry class a half an hour late, his teacher really *told him off*.
**EXAMPLE 2:** Patty is going to *tell off* the plumber because the pipes he said he fixed are still leaking.

**thank goodness** – I’m grateful; I’m relieved

**EXAMPLE 1:** When Ted came home at 4 a.m. last Sunday, his mother said, “*Thank goodness* you’re home! I was so worried about you.”
**EXAMPLE 2:** *Thank goodness* you didn’t go to California on Monday. It rained there every day this week.

**(to) think big** – to set high goals

**EXAMPLE 1:** Why run for Governor of New York? *Think big:* run for President of the United States!
**EXAMPLE 2:** Ken and Sandra hope to sell their house for $3 million dollars. They always *think big*.

**What’s the matter?** – What’s the problem?

**EXAMPLE 1:** *What’s the matter*, Bob? You don’t look very happy.
**EXAMPLE 2:** Oscar looks very pale. *What’s the matter* with him?

**When pigs fly!** [slang] – never

**EXAMPLE 1:** Will Ted teach Nicole how to play the guitar? *When pigs fly!*
**EXAMPLE 2:** Sure, I’ll give you my new laptop. *When pigs fly!*
**SYNONYMS:** when hell freezes over; never in a million years
Practice the Idioms

Fill in the blank with the missing word:

1) What’s the _____? You look upset.
   a) situation  b) issue  c) matter

2) I know I can trust you. You would never stab me in the _____.
   a) leg  b) back  c) arm

3) If Bob and Susan run out of money, they can always borrow money from Susan’s sister as a _____ resort.
   a) final  b) first  c) last

4) You look really stressed ____. Why don’t you sit down, relax, and have a cup of tea?
   a) about  b) in  c) out

5) Bob, everything will be fine. You just need to keep your chin _____ and remember that tomorrow is another day.
   a) up  b) down  c) above

6) I just can’t make up my _____ whether to order chicken or fish.
   a) head  b) brain  c) mind

7) Nicole accidentally stepped on Ted’s guitar. Ted got really angry and told her _____.
   a) off  b) out  c) away

8) Your husband left you for his psychologist? Hang ____ there! I’m sure he’ll realize she’s crazy and then come back to you.
   a) up  b) in  c) out

Answers to Lesson 2, p. 160