

Dictionary skills: Part 3

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 (MED 2)* to give learners practice in using the dictionary to check meaning and for vocabulary development.



Exercise 1: Expressions with prepositions

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 *at the mercy of*).

Exercise 2: Verb + noun collocations

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

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

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

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, *not someone's cup of tea* is defined under *tea* not *cup*). 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 (*cake, bread* – in the case of *chalk and cheese*, looking up *cheese* has a cross-reference to *chalk* where the definition is given).

Exercise 6: Phrasal verbs

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.

- Pensioners get an annual increase in line _____ the cost of living.
- These files should be kept _____ lock and key.
- Just as a matter _____ interest, when will we be paid?
- I've never had a very good memory _____ names.
- Workers are entirely _____ the mercy of dishonest employers.
- China and India formally objected _____ the peace plan.
- I have some ideas about where to go but I'm open _____ suggestions.
- What is your opinion _____ her latest novel?

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.

explanation	eyebrows	emphasis	expenses
enthusiasm	effort	exception	evidence

- Make a conscious _____ to drink less tea and coffee.
- We should place greater _____ on staff development.
- The defeat did not dampen the _____ of the home team.
- The criminals destroyed the _____ by flushing it down the toilet.
- This book provides a clear _____ of how to use the Internet.
- He raised his _____ in disbelief.
- All reasonable _____ will be reimbursed.
- I don't usually lend people money but I'll make an _____ in your case.

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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. **plucky**
 - a) *brave and determined, especially when success is unlikely*
 - b) *expensive, comfortable and attractive*
2. **picky**
 - a) *small or not important*
 - b) *only liking specific things and not easily pleased*
3. **preposterous**
 - a) *main or more important than others*
 - b) *extremely unreasonable or silly*
4. **quirky**
 - a) *slightly strange*
 - b) *shaking or not steady on your feet*
5. **rash**
 - a) *done too quickly without considering the effects of your actions*
 - b) *excited about something and impatient to begin it*
6. **secluded**
 - a) *private, peaceful and not near other people or places*
 - b) *deliberately not telling people things*
7. **shifty**
 - a) *looking dishonest*
 - b) *unable to keep still*
8. **showy**
 - a) *trying to make people admire you*
 - b) *big and expensive in a way that seems ugly*

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. monopoly		
2. imaginative		
3. negotiable		
4. cucumber		
5. disgraceful		
6. problematic		
7. protocol		
8. synthesis		

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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. know which side your bread is buttered
 2. one man's meat is another man's poison
 3. not someone's cup of tea
 4. pour cold water on something
 5. a piece of cake
 6. take the biscuit
 7. have egg on your face
 8. in a stew
- a. *to be the most silly, stupid or annoying thing in a series of things*
 - b. *not the type of person or kind of thing you like or enjoy*
 - c. *not everyone likes the same things*
 - d. *something that is very easy to do*
 - e. *very nervous, worried or confused about something*
 - f. *to be embarrassed or appear stupid because something you tried to do has gone wrong*
 - g. *know who to be nice to in order to gain advantages for yourself*
 - h. *do or say something that spoils someone's plans or enthusiasm for doing something*

6 Phrasal verbs: *put up*

A First match the examples with the definitions.

1. Several of the banks have decided to *put up* interest rates.
 2. I was soaked before I could *put up* my umbrella up.
 3. Would you be able to *put me up* for the night when I come to London?
 4. John was in the garden *putting a fence up*.
 5. The family has *put up* £15,000 towards the cost of the child's medical treatment.
 6. She *put up* a notice about the school trip to Italy.
- a. [T] to provide a large amount of money for something
 - b. [T] to let someone stay in your house
 - c. [T] to build something such as a wall, fence or house
 - d. [T] to fix a picture or notice onto an upright structure such as a wall
 - e. [T] to raise something so that it's ready for use
 - f. [T] to increase the value or price of something

B Now decide which of the above definitions of *put up* 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 food and drink.

1. Chalk and cheese.
2. To have your cake and eat it.
3. Bread and butter.

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KEY

1 Expressions with prepositions

1. with
2. under
3. of
4. for
5. at
6. to
7. to
8. of

2 Verb + noun collocations

1. effort
2. emphasis
3. enthusiasm
4. evidence
5. explanation
6. eyebrows
7. expenses
8. exception

3 Adjectives and definitions

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

4 Word stress

1. four; second
2. five; second
3. four; second
4. three; first
5. three; second
6. four; first
7. three; first
8. three; first

5 Idioms

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

6 Phrasal verbs: *put up*

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

7 Homework task

1. used for saying that two people or things are completely different from each other
2. to have all the benefits of a situation when, in fact, having one thing means that you cannot have the other
3. something that provides your main income