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Advanced English

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New Edition

ADVANCED ENGLISH

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Answer Key
Other books by the author

Gain momentum/ Gather pace

Meaning: to become gradually stronger, faster or more successful.

Examples: *The campaign has been gaining momentum ever since the television appeal.*
The spacecraft will fly around the earth to gain/gather momentum for its trip to Jupiter.
One would have to be deaf and blind, or else very naive, not to see that the opposition is gathering momentum.

The Talk of the Town

Meaning: to be what everyone is talking about.

Examples: *The death of Michael has been the talk of the town recently.*
This town doesn't have a lot to gossip about already, not really anyway, and two guys getting together would make us the talk of the town.
How did you not hear about the fire at city hall last night? It's the talk of the town!

Rest assured

Meaning: to be certain that something will happen. (Used to make someone feel safe or less worried about something)

Examples: *You can rest assured that you're going to get a good deal.*
Please rest assured that we are doing everything in our power to make your grandmother comfortable here.
You can rest assured that we will do everything we can to get your money back.

Have/With a clear conscience

Meaning: to be guiltless or have no feelings of guilt or remorse over something.

Examples; *Don't you dare accuse me of causing this, I have a clear conscience!*
Sophie and the child will be taken care of, and because of that I can live with a clear conscience.
You can face Lionel with a clear conscience -- you've done nothing to harm him.

Go a long way

Meaning: 1. to achieve much success. 2. to be very adequate, useful or helpful.

Examples: *Don't do anything rash—patience will go a long way toward bringing you allies in this situation.*
Thank you for your generous donation; I'm sure it will go a long way.
It was clear from a very young age that Kylie would go a long way.

Ahead of the curve

Meaning: at the forefront of or leading in something, such as a developing situation, field of study or business, social development, etc.

Examples: *Our expert advice will help you stay ahead of the curve.*
In order to put yourself in the right place at the right time, it is essential to keep ahead of the curve.
Our commitment is to stay ahead of the curve and give our customers optimal network coverage and quality.

Not in a month of Sundays

Meaning: Something that is going to take a LONG TIME. A seemingly endless or prolonged period of time.

Examples: *It will take you **a month of Sundays** to get through all the revisions.*
*He's never going to get that finished **in a month of Sundays**!*
I wish that someone had a camera here so I could have a picture taken of me *to send home to you folks. I've got more equipment on that I don't think I could use it all **in a month of Sundays**.*

Wear out

Meaning: 1. to make someone feel very tired. 2. to use something a lot so that it no longer works, or can no longer be used.

Examples: *I read that book over and over till I wore it out.*
With only five laps left, the white warning layer appeared on Sachs's right rear tire, telling him that his tire was *wearing out.*
I was completely worn out – my energy spent from worrying.

Beat around the bush

Meaning: to talk about lots of unimportant things because you want to avoid talking about what is really important:

Examples: *Quit beating around the bush and say what's on your mind.*
Why are you beating around the bush? Are you leaving our company?
Let's stop beating about the bush and discuss this matter.

The same old thing

Meaning: The same thing that is always done or that always happens. It often implies that such a thing is boring or monotonous.

Examples: *We just sit around and do the same old thing on Fridays. Let's go out this week.*
A: "What are you doing this summer?" B: "Same old thing—loading up the car and heading to the beach."
Yeah, I can imagine hearing the same old thing over and over again on this show could get boring.

Slip up

Meaning: to make a careless mistake.

Examples: *These figures don't make sense - have we slipped up somewhere?*
It's easy for a journalist to slip up and use somebody else's idea without crediting them.
I have to concentrate while I do this, so please don't talk and slip me up!

Get even

Meaning: to exact revenge or do something that one perceives as equalizing prior mistreatment.

Examples: *Sheila swore that she would get even with me after she figured out that I had started the rumor about her.*
He is so furious about their treatment of him that he's determined to get even.
The best way to get even with the jerks from high school is to become successful.

Pinpoint

Meaning: find or identify with great accuracy or precision

Examples: *Emergency workers are still unable to pinpoint the cause of the explosion.*
They were unable to pinpoint the source of the noise.
He pinpointed the position on the map.

Trade-off

Meaning: a kind of compromise that involves giving up something in return for getting something else.

Examples: *There is a trade-off between doing the job accurately and doing it quickly.*
The explosion in data collection has been accepted by many as a trade-off for convenience and discounts.
For some car buyers, lack of space is an acceptable trade-off for a sporty design.

Bottom line

Meaning: the fundamental and most important factor.

Examples: *The bottom line is that the great majority of our kids are physically unfit.*
You have all made compelling arguments, but the bottom line is that we need a viable, cost-effective solution, and I still don't think we've found one yet.
We've had some success this year, but the bottom line is that the business is still losing money.

Breakthrough

Meaning: an important discovery or event that helps to improve a situation or provide an answer to a problem.

Examples: *A major breakthrough in negotiations has been achieved.*
This drug has been heralded as a major breakthrough in the fight against breast cancer.
The development of digital imagery was a breakthrough in computer technology.

Hit bottom

Meaning: to reach the lowest or worst point of a decline.

Examples: *I knew I had hit bottom when I missed my son's birthday party.*
Prices have been falling for weeks during the crash, but the economy has finally hit bottom.
Our profits have hit bottom.

Takeaway

Meaning: a main message or piece of information that you learn from something you hear or read.

Examples: *At the end of the class, the teacher gives us the takeaway points.*
The takeaway from the conference was how competitive the tourism industry has become.
The main takeaway for me is that we need to continue to communicate all the things we're doing for our customers.

Check your progress (1)

1. You can ……. that your children are in good hands.
a. gain momentum b. rest assured c. go a long way.

2. Businesses that want to stay ……. find trend research crucial.
a. wear out b. around the bush c. ahead of the curve.

3. Oh , no! Did you ……. and tell him who her new boyfriend is?
a. slip up b. pinpoint c. rest assured

4. In radio you have to keep the listener listening. That's the …….
a. talk of the town b. bottom line c. month of Sundays

5. If you are mistreated at work, you'll be tempted to ……
a. get even. b. slip up c. hit bottom

6. Scientists are on the brink of a …….. in the treatment of cancer.
a. trade-off b. breakthrough c. takeaway

7. Can you shift the blame onto him alone and yet have ……..?
a. the bottom line b. the same old thing c. a clear conscience

8. Jeep's Wrangler continued to …….; sales are up 11 percent this year.
a. gain momentum b. wear out c. beat around the bush

9. Moving parts in engines …… much more quickly than stationary parts.
a. hit bottom b. rest assured c. wear out

10. The new assessment system …… areas for improvement within the company.
a. pinpoints b. wears out c. gets even

Answers; 1. b 2. c 3. a 4. b 5. a 6. b 7. c 8. a 9. c 10. a

Spearhead

Meaning: to lead something such as an attack or a course of action.

Examples: *British troops spearheaded the invasion.*
Joe Walker will be spearheading our new marketing initiative.
He's spearheading a project to start rebuilding the hospital.

In and of itself

Meaning: By itself, without considering any other factors. Considering it alone.

Examples: *In and of itself the plan might work, but I doubt that it will be approved.*
The idea in and of itself is not bad, but the side issues introduce many difficulties.
And so likewise, once we have learnt the application for virtue it will acquire a value in and of itself.

Unaccounted for

Meaning: (person) it is not known where they are or whether they are still alive. (something) it is not present and there is no explanation for what has happened to it.

Examples: *A fire on the ship killed a hundred or more passengers - some likely victims are still unaccounted for.*
An audit of the police department found that $100,000 in cash and one handgun were unaccounted for.
Many people were unaccounted for after the disaster.

A far cry from

Meaning: to be completely different from something.

Examples: *This flat is a far cry from the house they had before.*
What you did was a far cry from what you said you were going to do.
The song they played was a far cry from what I call music.

Way off the mark

Meaning: very inaccurate or wrong.

Examples: *I never once said that! Your reporter is far off the mark in her accusations.*
I guessed it cost three thousand dollars and apparently I wasn't far off the mark.
While he does make one or two valid points, I find much of his argument off the mark.

Go about

Meaning: 1. do something as normal. 2. deal with something.

Examples: *There were no further reports of violence in the town, and most people went about their daily activities as usual.*
You are going about this in the wrong way.
How should I go about researching this topic? Would you tell me how to go about it?

Take it out on

Meaning: to punish or harm someone or something because one is angry or disturbed about something.

Examples: *Dan has been frustrated by the lack of progress, and unfortunately he's been taking it out on his coworkers.*
I know you've had a bad day, but you don't have to take it out on me!
She feels tensed most of the time and takes out her anger on her pets.

Take for granted

Meaning: not value somebody/something just because they are/it is always there.

Examples: *We take so many things for granted these days: electricity, running water, cars...*
The plenitude of our natural resources has resulted in most people taking them for granted for most of human history.
The boss takes us for granted, but if we weren't here, this whole company would collapse.

In one's element

Meaning: In an environment naturally suited to or associated with one; doing what one enjoys.

Examples: *Kate, of course, was in her element, making all the arrangements.*
He's in his element when he's doing woodworking.
As an outgoing person, I'm in my element when I have to make a speech off the top of my head in front of a crowd of people.

loophole

Meaning: something that has been left out of a law or legal document that people can use to avoid obeying it

Examples: *Our solicitor is bound to find a loophole enabling us to get round the law.*
He exploited a legal loophole in order to avoid paying child support.
The new law has closed a loophole that enabled rich corporations to pay no tax.

In a dither

Meaning: In a nervous, confused, or agitated state.

Examples: *The economy is still in a dither after news that the country's largest corporation has filed for bankruptcy.*
We were in a dither waiting to meet the president at our school rally.
Planning the wedding put her in a dither.

Lay out

Meaning: 1. to explain something carefully and clearly. 2. to arrange in a pattern or design. 3. to spend an amount of money.

Examples: *They had already laid out a substantial sum for the wedding.*
The city was laid out with the town hall on a hill in its centre.
The documents lay out the principles clearly enough.
The designer laid out the book with pictures on every page.

Up to scratch

Meaning: reaching an acceptable standard; as good as the usual standard.

Examples: *Your last essay wasn't up to scratch/didn't come up to scratch.*
The last few episodes of the TV program haven't been quite up to scratch.
She was turned down because her German was not up to scratch.

Understatement

Meaning: the presentation of something as being smaller or less good or important than it really is.

Examples: *To say that her resignation was a shock would be an understatement - it caused panic.*
To say he's been busy would be the understatement of the year.
He called it a postscript but he had always had a taste for understatement.

On the ball

Meaning: attentive, knowledgeable, and quick to take action; alert to new ideas, methods, and trends.

Examples: *I'm so glad that my assistant is always on the ball because I'm too scatterbrained to manage my schedule on my own.*
Some clubs struggle to raise money. A few are on the ball and make a professional job of it.
maintaining contact with customers keeps me on the ball.

Turn down

Meaning: to not accept an offer or request.

Examples: *How could you turn down such a fantastic job?*
I thanked him for the offer but turned it down.
The man that I loved, father to my last child, had the audacity to turn me down.

Step down

Meaning: withdraw or resign from an important position or office.

Examples: *Effective immediately, I'll be stepping down as director of the company.*
Following the scandal, the governor was forced to step down from office.
Steve Spreadborough has been forced to step down from work commitments after suffering a stroke last week.

Drift away

Meaning: lose personal contact over time.

Examples: *Andrea and I never had a big fight or anything, we just drifted away from each other over the years, and now I hardly ever see her.*
The two women were roommates in college and drifted apart as they got married.
He began drifting away from me a few months ago, and l haven't seen him at all in the last three weeks.

Check your progress (2)

1. The …… has allowed hundreds of drink-drivers to avoid prosecution.
a. loophole b. spearhead c. understatement

2. The manager had to …….. on account of poor health.
a. turn down b. drift away c. step down

3. I didn't sleep well last night and I'm not really …….. today.
a. in a dither b. way off the mark c. on the ball

4. All this luxury was …… the poverty of his childhood.
a. a far cry from b. unaccounted for c. up to scratch

5. You won't have to …… a fortune for this dining table.
a. go about b. lay out c. turn down

6. To say that he was displeased is …….... He was absolutely furious.
a. taken for granted b. an understatement c. in and of itself

7. Is there some other way you can deal with your anger rather than ……. me?
a. going about b. taking it out on c. stepping down

8. Some international film historians hold that Shadow Show art …… the film art.
a. spearheaded b. took for granted c. took it out on

9. Of these 25 remain well; 13 are ……., and one died from colonic cancer.
a. unaccounted for b. laid out c. in their element

10. The piano player was not feeling well and his performance wasn't ……..
a. in and of itself b. way off the mark c. up to scratch.

Answers; 1. a 2. c 3. c 4. a 5. b 6. b 7. b 8. a 9. a 10. c

Get going

Meaning: 1. to get someone excited; to get someone talking excitedly. 2. To start taking some action or start moving.

Examples: *The whole business really makes me mad. Don't get me going.*
We need to get going if we want to get this house cleaned up before your mother gets here.
Let's get going! We can't stand here all day.

Drop out of

Meaning: To leave an activity or program without finishing it.

Examples: *I'm going back to school because I always regretted dropping out of college.*
She dropped out of her business course and has now taken up a fine arts degree. She's really in her element now.
He dropped out of the race after two laps.

Set aside

Meaning: 1. to save for a particular purpose. 2. to not let a particular feeling, opinion, or belief influence you, in order to achieve something more important.
3. to put something to the side or out of the way.

Examples: *They agreed to set aside their differences and work together for peace.*
Have you set aside some money for your child's education?
He sets aside some time every day to read to his children.
Would you mind setting those books aside so I can clean the desk?
Please set your phone aside while I'm talking to you!

Single out

Meaning: to choose and focus on a single person or thing out of a group of others.

Examples: *They singled out her project from all the other applicants for its creative and ingenious design.*
For some reason, the bullies keep singling me out to pick on each day.
Unable to determine who had committed the offense, the teacher singled out the most mischievous student for punishment.

Sort out

Meaning: 1. to understand or resolve a problem or conflict. 2. to arrange according to class or category.

Examples: *My job is to sort out the recyclables so that all the paper, plastic, aluminum, and glass goes to the right part of the facility.*
They brought in the head of human resources to sort the issue out.
I sorted out the blue socks and washed them separately.
It took me an hour to sort out the problem with my reservation.

Deep down

Meaning: at bottom, basically. In your most private thoughts; in reality rather than in appearance

Examples: *I tried to put on a brave face after the breakup, but deep down I was in agony.*
He acts like a jerk most of the time, but deep down I think Nate is a good guy.
Deep down I knew that Caroline was right.

Off the cuff

Meaning: casually and spontaneously; without planning or preparation.

Examples*: I didn't have time to organize my thoughts, so I just spoke off the cuff.*
The senator has become known for making off-the-cuff remarks that create controversy.
I'm not very good at making speeches off-the-cuff.

Have a lot on one's plate

Meaning: have a great deal (or too much) to cope with. To have a lot to do.

Examples: *I just have a lot on my plate right now while I'm finishing up my degree and doing this huge project for work.*
With the new baby and the new house, they have a lot on their plate,
The aid agencies have (more than) enough on their plate without having unnecessary visitors to take care of.

Draw out

Meaning: 1. To pull something out of some other thing. 2. To make something longer than usual or necessary; prolong something. 3. To extract information from someone.

Examples: *The burglar drew out a knife.*
The speaker drew the lecture out so that it would last the entire class.
The police drew out the truth from the suspect.
The doctor drew a tongue depressor out of the jar and told me to open my mouth.
I swore my sister to secrecy, but dad will be able to draw the story out of her.

Work up

Meaning: 1. to develop a particular feeling. 2. To excite or arouse one's emotions.

Examples: *I just can’t work up any enthusiasm for this trip.*
Try not to work up Mom too much. We just want to have a nice relaxing afternoon.
The kids had worked themselves up to a fever pitch of excitement.

Keep a low profile

Meaning: stay out of public notice, avoid attracting attention to oneself.

Examples: *Until his appointment becomes official, Ted is keeping a low profile .*
He's been in a little trouble recently so he's trying to keep a low profile.
A: "I haven't seen you in a while—how are you?" B: "Oh, I'm fine, just keeping a low profile so I can finish my research by the deadline."

High-maintenance

Meaning: needing a lot of work to keep in good condition. (of a person) demanding a lot of attention.

Examples: *He’s sort of a high-maintenance guy. He requires lots of reassurance.*
Second hand cars can be high-maintenance.
If you're high maintenance and believe you're the best girl, every man would be awed by your confidence and would try to woo you and win your fancy.
She acts like she needs constant entertainment from me or she'll get bored, she's such high maintenance girl.

Forgone Conclusion

Meaning: a result that is obvious to everyone even before it happens.

Examples: *The result of the election seems to be a foregone conclusion.*
After how poorly the team has played so far this season, it's a foregone conclusion that they won't make it to the championship.
It’s a foregone conclusion that Spain will win tonight’s match.

Comply with

Meaning: to follow or adhere to a particular rule or regulation.

Examples: *There are serious penalties for failure to comply with the regulations.*
Please be advised that your construction project needs to comply with all building codes.
She had very set views about the funeral, and everyone was happy to comply with her wishes.

Stumbling block

Meaning: something that prevents action or agreement.

Examples: *One potential stumbling block could be the difficulty of accessing the data.*
Lack of willingness to compromise on both sides is the main/major stumbling block to reaching a settlement.
We're trying to sell the house, but its undesirable location has proved to be a real stumbling block.

In (the) light of

Meaning: because of; taking (something) into consideration.

Examples*: I see no reason, in the light of these reports, to abandon our current policy.*
In the light of recent incidents, we are asking our customers to take particular care of their personal belongings.
In light of this new evidence, we are reopening the investigation.
In the light of the severe weather, graduation will be postponed.

Near miss

Meaning; a situation in which danger or problems are barely avoided.

Examples: *That was a near miss - we must have come within an inch of that lorry!*
There was another near miss this afternoon just over Heathrow Airport when a jet nearly hit a small private plane.
He drove like a maniac. We had one near miss after another.

Weigh up

Meaning: to think carefully about the advantages or disadvantages of a situation before making a decision.

Examples*: I'm weighing up my options before I decide to apply for the job.*
Regulators are weighing up whether to allow the merger to go ahead.
Before buying weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of each type.

Check your progress (3)

1. That was a …….. - we must have come within an inch of that lorry!
a. near miss b. forgone conclusion c. stumbling block

2. The factory was closed for failing to ……. government safety regulations.
a. comply with b. work out c. draw out

3. Harris …….. at the moment. Why don't we give the project to Melinda?
a. is setting aside b. is keeping a low profile c. has a lot on his plate

4. Beth's experience suggests that people don't really change …….
a. off the cuff b. stumbling blocks c. deep down

5. Better ……. that book if you want to finish it in a month.
a. draw out b. get going on c. comply with

6. Don't …… the overweight members of your family for lifestyle changes.
a. sort out b. single out c. drop out of

7. Some people are ……. and drain your energy like a vampire with a bendy straw.
a. stumbling blocks b. high maintenance c. way off the mark

8. His theory is no longer tenable …… the recent discoveries.
a. deep down b. to work up c. in light of

9. The teacher helped to …….. the meaning of the poem.
a. comply with b. work up c. draw out

10. Tonight's meeting will ……. the relative merits of the two candidates.
a. draw out b. drop out of c. weigh up

Answers; 1. a 2. a 3. c 4. c 5. b 6. b 7. b 8. c 9. c 10. c

Measure up

Meaning: to meet a particular requirement, standard, or expectation.

Examples: *I can't possibly measure up to Mom's sky-high expectations!*
We compared the movie we made to some of the other films to see how it measured up.
This team easily measures up to any of the others in the league.
I wanted the job, but I just didn't measure up.

Make it

Meaning: 1. to achieve one's goals. 2. To arrive (at some thing or location) successfully or on time.

Examples: *I can see by looking around this room that you have really made it.*
We only made it to the concert a few minutes before it was supposed to begin.
She's a very good dancer but I'm not sure she'll make it as a professional.
I hope my car can make it to the next town.

Burst into flames

Meaning: suddenly begin to burn fiercely.

Examples: *The two cars burst into flames soon after the collision.*
As soon as the flame reached the curtains, the entire wall seemed to burst into flames.
The helicopter flipped on its tail and burst into flames killing eight of the nine people aboard.

Burst into tears/ laughter

Meaning: to begin to cry/ laugh suddenly.

Examples: *After the last notes of her song, the audience burst into tears, such was its beauty and tenderness.*
The children burst into tears on hearing of the death of their dog.
Eli and Abigail seemed to get the meaning of these moments and both burst into laughter.

Crack up

Meaning: 1. burst into laughter. 2. to experience a mental or emotional breakdown.
3. to destroy something.

Examples: *We all cracked up at Josh's joke.*
He drove into a tree and cracked up his car.
She's terrified to leave the house all of a sudden—I think she's cracking up.
All those days of sleep deprivation finally caused me to crack up.

Play down

Meaning: to make something seem less important than or not as bad as it really is.

Examples: *The doctor tried to play down the seriousness of my father's illness, but we weren't fooled.*
We need to play down the presence of micro transactions in the game and focus more on the gameplay itself in our marketing.
John is a famous actor, but the director tried to play him down as just another member of the cast.

Stick something out

Meaning: to endure, tolerate, or last through to the end of something.

Examples: *I know you're unhappy with the job, but just stick it out to the end of this project before you start looking for new work.*
We've had problems in our marriage for years, but we've been sticking it out for the kids' sake.
I didn’t really like the movie, but I stuck it out.

Pull someone’s leg

Meaning: to deceive someone playfully; tease someone.

Examples: *Are you serious about moving back in or are you pulling my leg?*
Quit pulling my leg, I know there isn't a Hollywood director calling me right now.
Is he serious or just pulling my leg? I'm just pulling your leg, darling. You used to have a sense of humour.

Play dumb

Meaning: to pretend to be unintelligent or unaware in order to deceive someone or gain an advantage.

Examples: *I don't think I'm supposed to know that Rick is getting fired, so I'm just going to play dumb the next time I see him.*
A: "Did Tammy ask you about my date with Steve?" B: "Yeah, but I played dumb about it. I just couldn't handle more of her drama today."
Whenever she is asked to clean her room, however, Chaser seems to play dumb.

Grow out of

Meaning: To no longer do something because one has aged or matured. 2. To emerge or develop from something

Examples*: I thought she would have grown out of temper tantrums by now.*
Haven't you grown out of your fear of the dark yet?
The new law grew out of people's dissatisfaction with the election results.
This whole matter grew out of your failure to let the cat out last night.

Make ends meet

Meaning: earn just enough money to live on.

Examples: *Even with no children to support, she couldn't make ends meet.*
It's not easy to make ends meet with a big family, but somehow we manage.
To make ends meet, Phil picked up a second job delivering pizzas.

Stand on one's own feet

Meaning: to be independent; to survive without any help.

Examples: *It's about time he left home and learnt how to stand on his own two feet.*
She'll have to get a job and learn to stand on her own two feet sooner or later.
You're a talented programmer, and you could have a lot of influence here if you stood on your own feet a bit more.

Be worth (doing)

Meaning: used to say that something is interesting, useful, or helpful.

Examples*: A lot of the small towns in the area are definitely worth visiting.*
It’s well worth getting there early if you want a good seat.
It’s worth checking the details of the contract before you sign it.

Go easy on something/someone

Meaning: to not take or use too much of something/ to treat someone in a gentle way.

Examples: *Go easy on/with the cream. That's all there is.*
Go easy on your little brother, will you? He didn't mean to break the window.
Try to go easy on criticizing their report. They did the best they could in the time allotted.
Please go easy on the onions. I don't like them very much.

Corner the market

Meaning: To sell or produce something so successfully as to overshadow all others in the same field.

Examples: *That company is so popular right now that they've really cornered the market on video games.*
If you think he bought all that stock to corner the market, you should report him—that kind of activity is illegal.
By reducing prices so that the smaller stores can’t compete and are forced to close, Bestsave has effectively cornered the market.

Go the whole hog

Meaning: do something completely or thoroughly.

Examples: *You only live once. Might as well go the whole hog and get the works.*
Having already limited local taxation, why not go the whole hog and abolish it completely?
We only planned to order appetizers, but we went whole hog and ended up getting a seven-course meal.

Laughing stock

Meaning: a person subjected to general mockery or ridicule .

Examples: *If I mess up this speech, I'll be the laughing stock of the school!*
Another performance like that and this team will be the laughing stock of the league.
I can't wear this to the party! I'll be a laughing stock!

Touch on

Meaning: to mention a subject quickly when speaking or writing about another subject.

Examples: *The talk was about educational opportunities for adults, and the speaker also touched on sources of finance.*
Before concluding, I would like to touch on the excellent work done by our interns.
We'll touch on that matter later in the meeting, so let's stay focused on the issue at hand.

Check your progress (4)

1. His constant blunders made him the …….. of the whole class.
a. stumbling block b. near miss c. laughing-stock

2. The helicopter ……. after hitting a power line.
a. burst into flames b. measured up c. touched on

3. "We've …….. in Europe." "Well, today Europe, tomorrow the world".
a. cornered the market b. made ends meet c. played down

4. Some people can't cope with the death of a loved one, and simply …….
a. play dumb b. crack up c. measure up

5. Did Ronnie really call or are you just …….?
a. touching on b. pulling my leg c. making ends meet

6. Steve felt so drained he could hardly ……..…… to the car.
a. crack up b. make it c. go easy

7. To be weak is to be always leaning on others, afraid to ……..
a. burst into laughter b. pull your leg c. stand on your own two feet

8. It …….. the list to see how great the disjunction is.
a. makes it to b. is worth going through c. sticks it out

9. When a man from the Security Police asked you, you were really smart to ….
a. play dumb b. crack up c. play down

10. I was a bed wetter for a long time, I …….. it and it made me proud.
a. went easy on b. grew out of c. touched on

Answers; 1. c 2. a 3.a 4.b 5.b 6.b 7.c 8.b 9. a 10.b

Lay one’s hands on

Meaning: 1. to find or get something. 2. to touch or grasp someone, often with the threat of violence.

Examples: *I need to go to the library and lay my hands on this book for my research paper.*
It took years, but I've finally laid my hands on this very rare Beatles recording!
Oh, once I lay my hands on you, you'll take back what you said!
Tom's gone off with the keys again; just wait till I lay my hands on him.

Fluster

Meaning: to make/become agitated, excited, or confused.

Examples: *Shouts from the protesters flustered the speaker.*
I was flustered by my teacher's comments and began to stumble over my words.
Don’t let that new tax form fluster you – it’s not as bad as it looks.

Act up

Meaning: 1. to misbehave. 2. to malfunction.

Examples: *Sophie got bored and started acting up.*
My car always acts up in cold weather.
The little girl was acting up, so her mother took her out of the restaurant.
The engine began to act up when we were miles from anywhere.

Dwell on

Meaning: 1. to obsessively think or worry about something. 2. to inhabit a particular place or surface.

Examples: *In his speech, he dwelt on the plight of the sick and the hungry.*
I want to become a scientist and study the creatures that dwell upon other planets.
That type of animal dwells exclusively on land.

Go astray

Meaning: 1. to deviate from what is good or expected. 2. to become lost.

Examples: *I'm afraid your son has gone astray and gotten into a bit of trouble.*
A: "It seems my coat has gone astray." B: "Hmm, maybe someone picked it up by mistake."
My life goals just kind of went astray for a time in my twenties, but I've got back on track.
Mary's book went astray or maybe it was stolen.

Work out

Meaning: 1. To do exercise. 2. to have a favorable or acceptable outcome. 3. to work to resolve something or reach an agreement, solution.

Examples: *I work out in the mornings now before work, and I find that it really makes me have more energy during the day. (1)*
I'm certain it's a blessing in disguise. I forgot my phone that night, but it worked out for the better, because the woman whose phone I borrowed became my wife. (2)
I really hope Ron and Jenny can work out their issues. I can't imagine them apart. (3)
If our staff can't work out this problem, we're going to have to hire a consultant. (3)
Don't worry. I am sure that everything will work out all right. (2)

Make out

Meaning: 1. to be able to see, hear, read, or distinguish something despite difficulty. 2. to manage to do something with someone or something.

Examples: *What did you say? I couldn't quite make it out.*
I think I can make out with this hammer.
If I can't make out with a crew of four, I'll have to ask for more help.
I can read most of this, but I can't make out the last part. Can you?

Pass out

Meaning: 1. To distribute something to others. 2. To faint or lose consciousness.

Examples: *Please pass these out to the rest of the class.*
The restaurant is passing out free samples of their food to people walking by.
He passed out as soon as he saw the blood.
Some of the football players passed out from the heat.

Stranded

Meaning: left without the means to move from somewhere.

Examples: *She offers a lift to a stranded commute.*
He left me stranded in town with no car and no money for a bus.
If the tide comes in, we'll be stranded on these rocks.

Lose track of

Meaning: to no longer know what is happening, or not to remember something.

Examples: *She had lost all track of time and had fallen asleep.*
What he was saying was so complicated that I lost track after the first couple of sentences.
I've lost track of the number of times he's asked me to lend him money.

Unwittingly/Inadvertently

Meaning: without intention; accidentally. (antonym: **deliberately**)

Examples: *His name had been inadvertently omitted from the list.*
I'm afraid I inadvertently took your bag when I left.
Many parents unwittingly place their children in danger by not making sure they wear seat belts.

Reap the benefit, reward, etc.

Meaning: to get something good as a result of your own actions.

Examples: *She studied every evening and reaped the benefit at exam time.*
We sold them most of their modern weapons and now we are reaping the bitter harvest.
In his old age, Charlie is reaping the rewards of a life of exercise and healthy eating.

Skim the surface

Meaning: To do, engage with, or understand something to only a minimal or superficial degree.

Examples: *Jack never felt satisfied devoting his time and attention to one thing, so instead he's skimmed the surface of a number of hobbies and interests.*
Does your technology go in-depth, or is it barely skimming the surface of this information, leaving you with minimal data points with which to win new business?

Thunderstruck/ Dumbstruck

Meaning: extremely surprised or shocked.

Examples: *Ruth was thunderstruck when he presented her with an engagement ring.*
I was thunderstruck to hear that in the great demonstration of fighting vehicles, tanks, troop carriers, and all the rest.
You might be dumbstruck with fear when you hear a scary noise upstairs.

Like chalk and cheese

Meaning: very different from one another; totally or nearly opposite in nature.

Examples: *Good luck getting those two to talk to each other—they're like chalk and cheese.*
My daughters are like chalk and cheese —one loves baseball and the other loves ballet.
Marianne and Ellis are like chalk and cheese. She's very serious and studious while he's sporty and sociable.

Two sides of the same coin

Meaning: two things that seem disparate but are actually related.

Examples: *Imports and exports are like two sides of the same coin.*
For some people Great opportunity and great danger are two sides of the same coin.
As two sides of the same coin, librarians and instructional designers need to work together to achieve the best outcomes for their libraries.

Back out

Meaning: withdraw from a commitment, promise, plan, or situation.

Examples: *They backed out of the deal the day before they were due to sign the contract.*
She was considered a strong contender to win the local election, but she backed out at the last minute and continued working as CEO of her company.
Are you going to try to back out of our agreement? You won't back out, will you?

Fiasco

Meaning: a complete failure, especially a ludicrous or humiliating one.

Examples: *The show was a fiasco - one actor forgot his lines and another fell off the stage.*
The entire political campaign was a fiasco, and at the end he drew only 30% of the votes.
The only military expedition, in 1624, ended in a fiasco.

Check your progress (5)

1. Action without knowledge is aimless and tends to ……..
a. pass out b. dwell on c. go astray

2. Air travellers were left ……. because of icy conditions.
a. stranded b. unwittingly c. astray

3. The minister reportedly stressed that economic and political reforms were …..
a. backed out b. fiasco c. two sides of the same coin.

4. Millions of Americans ……. by the news of the bombing.
a. were dumbstruck b. acted up c. went astray

5. She was a very calm person. Nothing could ……. her.
a. lose track of b. fluster c. pass out

6. We are just starting to …… careful long-term planning.
a. lose track of b. work out c. reap the rewards of

7. The party was a total …….. because the wrong date was given on the invitations.
a. laughing-stock b. fiasco c. near miss

8. Learn from the past but don't live and …….. yesterday.
a. dwell on b. pass out c. back out

9. If we only ……. of life, we will, necessarily, become superficial.
a. skim the surface b. lose track c. back out

10. He has failed to …….. a coherent strategy for modernising the service.
a. make out b. work out c. pass out

Answers; 1. c 2.a 3.c 4.a 5.b 6.c 7.b 8.a 9.a 10.b

Apathy

Meaning: lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern.

Examples: *There is a growing sense of apathy among teens and a feeling that there are no opportunities.*
To this list one might add apathy, disrespect, recklessness, insensitivity, and dishonesty.
They may develop apathy or resistance if they view their boss as oppressive.

Proportional

Meaning: in correct relation to.

Examples: *Weight is proportional to size.*
How far you go is directly proportional to how fast you go (= as one thing increases, the other increases at exactly the same rate).
The degree of punishment is meant to be proportional to the seriousness of the crime.
There's a false idea that physical prowess and intellectual ability are inversely proportional.

Obsolete

Meaning: no longer produced or used; out of date.

Examples: *Gas lamps became obsolete when electric lighting was invented.*
Traditional retailing is in danger of being rendered obsolete by the internet.
We need to replace some obsolete equipment.
Rapid technological change soon makes systems obsolete.

Deplete

Meaning: to reduce something in size or amount, especially supplies of energy, money, etc.; (use up/ consume/ exhaust)

Examples: *If we continue to deplete the earth's natural resources, we will cause serious damage to the environment.*
The illness depletes the body of important vitamins.
That last holiday seriously depleted my bank account!

Cumbersome

Meaning: 1. awkward because of being large, heavy, or not effective. 2. difficult to do or manage and taking a lot of time and effort.

Examples: *Although the machine looks cumbersome, it is easy to use.*
Critics say that the process for amending the Constitution is cumbersome.
This approach allows faster initial deployment, but maintenance of the application becomes cumbersome with a growing number of cases.

Pathetic

Meaning: 1. causing feelings of sadness or sympathy. 2. useless or not effective in an annoying way.

Examples: *I think it's pathetic that only half of the eligible voters tend to vote.*
Are you telling me you're frightened to speak to her? Don't be so pathetic!
The refugees were a pathetic sight - starving, frightened and cold.

Perpetual

Meaning: continuing forever in the same way. Occurring repeatedly; so frequent as to seem endless and uninterrupted

Examples: *They lived in perpetual fear of being discovered.*
He has hard, cold eyes and his mouth is set in a perpetual sneer.
She resented his perpetual complaining about her cooking.
Clara could recall her mother's perpetual nagging at her father.

Dwindle

Meaning: diminish gradually in size, amount, or strength.

Examples: *The community has dwindled to a tenth of its former size in the last two years.*
Her hopes of success in the race dwindled last night as the weather became worse.
While public interest in Ebola continues to dwindle , the epidemic itself continues to soar.

Recalibrate

Meaning: to change the way you do or think about something.

Examples: *You need to recalibrate your expectations.*
The administration appears to have recalibrated its strategy.
Frequently, users must recalibrate the data at their home sites to take advantage of better calibration files or software.

Upsurge

Meaning: (noun) a sudden and usually large increase in something.

Examples: *Department stores report a recent upsurge in credit-card fraud.*
An upsurge of/in violence in the district has been linked to increased unemployment.
Why, after all, have we had this great upsurge in population over the last two centuries?

Phase out

Meaning: to gradually eliminate or remove someone or something.

Examples: *When was the two-dollar bill phased out of circulation?*
Of course I'm worried—the corporate office is phasing out all of the jobs in our department!
We will gradually phase the old schedule out to create a more efficient one.

Boisterous

Meaning: 1. noisy, energetic, and cheerful. 2. (of weather or water) wild or stormy.

Examples: *To this humorous "wet" joke, the audience burst into a boisterous laughter.*
An argument developed between the soldiers and some civilian men and women who objected to their boisterous behaviour.
Children's parties, featuring fortune-telling and boisterous games, have long been part of the Halloween tradition in America.

Pre-empt

Meaning: take action in order to prevent (an anticipated event) happening; forestall.

Examples: *The authorities concerned were advised to take measures to pre-empt any untoward incident.*
The minister held a press conference in order to pre-empt criticism in the newspapers.
The group raised its offer in an attempt to pre-empt a possible counterbid from a rival.

Makeshift

Meaning: (adjective) acting as an interim and temporary measure.

Examples: *Thousands of refugees are living in makeshift camps.*
Steven was forced to use a rock as a makeshift hammer.
The solution - makeshift, as usual - simply exacerbated the existing problem.

Build up

Meaning: 1. to increase or develop something gradually. 2. to encourage or flatter someone. 3. to become stronger.

Examples: *I've been putting $50 aside every month in an attempt to build up my savings.*
Not getting that job left my son really discouraged, so I've been trying to build him up. (2)
I'm trying to build up my leg muscles so that I can run even faster.

Cue

Meaning: (noun) something serving as a signal or suggestion.

Examples: *She waited for her cue – the ring of the telephone – to come on stage.*
Being passed over for promotion twice was his cue to start looking for another job.
They started washing up, so that was our cue to leave the party.

Under no illusions

Meaning: to know and understand the reality or truth of a situation; be fully aware of the true state of affairs.

Examples: *Don't worry, I'm not getting back together with Alex. After all his lies, I'm under no illusion about how he operates.*
We are under no illusion as to what our task is with Winx.

Out of one's mind/ head/ senses

Meaning: to be silly and senseless; to be crazy and irrational.

Examples: *Don't drive so fast, Tom! You have to be out of your head!*
He's out of his mind if he thinks this plan is going to work!
After yet another sleepless night, I'm starting to feel like I'm out of my mind with exhaustion.

Check your progress (6)

1. He was ……. about her willingness to sacrifice him or anyone else.
a. under no illusions b. out of his mind c. perpetual

2. They start off so large and marvelous, then they …….. away to nothing.
a. recalibrate b. pre-empt c. dwindle

3. We turned the box upside down and used it as a ……. table.
a. perpetual b. makeshift c. boisterous

4. Her husband took the ……., and said that it was time for them to leave.
a. apathy b. cue c. upsurge

5. The army plans to …… the equipment as it becomes obsolete.
a. phase out b. build up c. dwindle

6. It's …… that grown men have to resort to violence like this.
a. boisterous b. perpetual c. pathetic

7. The organization changed its …….. title to something easier to remember.
a. pathetic b. cumbersome c. boisterous

8. They tried to hammer ……. ideas into the young people's heads.
a. makeshift b. obsolete c. boisterous

9. I have had to …… my bank account to pay for the house furnishings.
a. build up b. deplete c. phase out

10. The child was very …….. at home, but was on his best behavior at school.
a. makeshift b. obsolete c. boisterous

Answers; 1.a 2.c 3.b 4.b 5.a 6.c 7.b 8.b 9.b 10.c

Skirmish

Meaning: 1. to fight for a short time with a small group of people. 2. to argue for a short time.

Examples: *Police and protesters skirmished in the chilly rain.*
Rebels skirmished with nearby American forces.
The parties skirmished about attorney fees.

Be endowed with

Meaning: to have a particular quality or feature.

Examples: *Some lucky people are endowed with both brains and beauty.*
Sardinia is generously endowed with prehistoric sites.
Australia is well-endowed with uranium resources, boasting one of the biggest reserves in the world at Olympic Dam.

Undermine

Meaning: lessen the effectiveness, power, or ability of, especially gradually or insidiously.

Examples: *The president has accused two cabinet members of working secretly to undermine his position/him.*
Suddenly she just turned on me and accused me of undermining her.
If you continually criticize children you can seriously undermine their confidence.

Grate on someone

Meaning: to annoy someone; to bother someone.

Examples: *Your negative attitude really grates on me. Everything you say grates on me.*
My obnoxious brother is grating on my nerves. Your whining really grates on me.
Her snarky comments are really starting to grate on me.

Die down

Meaning: if something dies down, it becomes much less noisy, powerful, or active.

Examples: *I waited for the laughter to die down before I spoke.*
The wind died down during the night.
It was several minutes before the applause died down.

Grounding

Meaning: *a knowledge of the basic facts about a particular subject.*

Examples*: This course is designed to give drivers a grounding in car maintenance.*
His degree gave him a firm grounding in his field.
You need a good grounding in mathematics for this type of work.

Bitter pill to swallow

Meaning: an unpleasant fact or situation that is difficult to accept.

Examples: *The truth about her family had been a bitter pill to swallow.*
When Brett's parents stopped giving him money to pay his bills and told him to get a job, it was a bitter pill for him to swallow.
Getting a poor performance review was a bitter pill to swallow.

Make a comeback

Meaning: to achieve a success after retirement or failure.

Examples: *After being down five goals at the start of the third period, they made a remarkable comeback and tied the game with mere seconds to spare.*
After analysts predicted her campaign was dead in the water two months ago, the candidate appears to be making an incredible comeback.
You're never too old to make a comeback.

Curb

Meaning: to control or limit something that is not wanted.

Examples: *The government should act to curb tax evasion.*
You must try to put a curb on your bad temper/spending habits.
The police are trying to curb under-age drinking.

Head off

Meaning: 1. to try to stop something from happening. 2. to prevent someone from going somewhere by getting in front of them. 3. to leave a place (set off)

Examples: *I'm calling the editor now to head off this story before they print it. (1)*
Let's try and head them off before they cross the bridge. (2)
Louise just headed off to the store, but you can probably still catch her, if you leave now. (3)
I think I can head her off before she reaches the police station.

Give someone a dose (a taste) of their own medicine

Meaning: give someone the same bad treatment that they have given to others.

Examples: *Bill is always excluding me from things, so I'm going to give him a taste of his own medicine and not invite him to my party.*
This team likes to play tough defense, so let's give them a taste of their own medicine and not give them any space to score.
The famously aggressive interviewer was given a taste of his own medicine today when one caller asked him a series of very direct questions.

Skeptical

Meaning: not easily convinced; having doubts or reservations.

Examples: *The public were deeply skeptical about some of the proposals.*
Ruth is convinced that it's a good idea but I'm deeply skeptical.
I've always been skeptical about alternative therapies.

Turmoil

Meaning: a state of great disturbance, confusion, or uncertainty.

Examples: *The country is in a state of political turmoil.*
The Stock Exchange is in turmoil following a huge wave of selling.
Her mind was in turmoil.
She grew up in the turmoil of the 1960s.

Time out

Meaning: a short period in which a child has to stop an activity as a punishment for behaving badly. 2. A brief pause, break, or hiatus from something.

Examples: *His dad put him in a timeout for telling lies.*
If you keep throwing your toys like that, I'm going to give you a time out!
I wish I had taken time out before starting this job—that might have kept me from getting burned out so quickly.
Take time out for lunch. Work will still be here when you get back.

Dabble

Meaning: take part in an activity in a casual or superficial way.

Examples: *He first dabbled in politics when he was at law school.*
She dabbled with drugs at university.
When he was younger he dabbled in astrology.

Dark horse

Meaning: Someone who unexpectedly wins a competition. Someone who surprises others with their skills or talents.

Examples: *Nobody thought Cheri could win the race after breaking her leg last year, but she turned out to be a dark horse and took first place.*
No one thought the brash newcomer would be a threat to the established candidates, but he's turning out to be a real dark horse in this campaign.
Angela was suddenly viewed as a dark horse when she displayed her beautiful sculptures at the art fair. Nobody knew she had such artistic talent.

Embark on

Meaning: to start a new project or activity, usually one that will take time.

Examples: *After leaving college, Lucy embarked on an acting career.*
The new government embarked upon an energetic legislative programme.
I want to go back to school for a business degree - I plan to embark on that process this fall.

Turn over a new leaf

Meaning: to change one's behavior, usually in a positive way. To begin again, fresh; to reform and begin again.

Examples: *Jason has really turned over a new leaf—he hasn't been in the slightest bit of trouble in months.*
I have made a mess of my life. I'll turn over a new leaf and hope to do better.
Why don't you turn over a new leaf and surprise everyone with your good characteristics?

Check your progress (7)

1. He volunteered to ……. a dangerous secret mission into occupied France.
a. grate on b. embark on c. curb

2. He took …… from campaigning to accompany his mother to dinner.
a. a makeshift b. time out c. a comeback

3. Baz acknowledged that U.S. officials were …….. about his proposals.
a. making a comeback b. dabbling c. skeptical

4. They could think of no way to …… the inflation.
a. dabble b. grate on c. head off

5. I began to ……. my appetite for food and drink.
a. curb b. embark on c. die down

6. Don't worry, the gossip will soon ……..
a. make a comeback b. take time out c. die down

7. After a few minutes her voice began to ……. Dougal's ears.
a. grate on b. dabble c. curb

8. Hong Kong has been ……. one of the finest natural harbors in the world.
a. endowed with b. skeptical about c. embarking on

9. The fact that his friends no longer trusted him was ……..
a. time out b. a bitter pill to swallow c. a turmoil

10. He lost the last election but hopes to …… next time.
a. skirmish b. turn over a new leaf c. make a comeback

Answers; 1.b 2.b 3.c 4.c 5.a 6.c 7.a 8.a 9.b 10.c

Spill the beans

Meaning: to reveal something that was meant to be a secret.

Examples: *We had everything organized for Bruce's surprise party, but Kate accidentally spilled the beans to him at work.*
Come on, spill the beans! Whose fault was it?
So who spilled the beans about her affair with David?

Rub it in

Meaning: to keep reminding one of one's failures; to nag someone about something.

Examples: *You deserve it! Why do you have to rub in everything I do wrong?*
"You know that this means you won't get to qualify for the state championships, right?" B: "Sheesh, no need to rub it in, Dave."
Yes, I know you're going to Japan with the money you won in the lottery—you don't need to rub it in!

Bang one’s head against a brick wall

Meaning: to do, say, or ask for something repeatedly but to be unable to change a situation.

Examples: *Some people are never going to agree with you on this, so it's no use beating your head against a wall trying to convince everyone.*
I keep asking her not to park there, but it's like banging my head against a brick wall.
I've been beating my head against the wall trying to understand this math equation.

Thrive

Meaning: To grow vigorously; flourish. To be successful or make steady progress; prosper.

Examples: *Industries such as water, telecoms, and insurance have been thriving.*
Children thrive when given plenty of love and attention.
This type of plant thrives in cool conditions.

Lift a finger

Meaning: make the slightest effort to do something, especially to help someone.

Examples: *I clean every weekend, and you never lift a finger to help!*
I know you're watching TV, but can you perhaps lift a finger and help me bring in these grocery bags?
If the public does not care much for the interests of the press, it will not lift a finger to save a politician from sexual embarrassment.

Overwhelm

Meaning: 1. to defeat someone or something by using a lot of force. To be too much to deal with 2. to cause someone to feel sudden strong emotion.

Examples: *They were overwhelmed with/by grief when their baby died.*
Government troops have overwhelmed the rebels and seized control of the capital.
They were overwhelmed with/by grief when their baby died.
I was overwhelmed by all the flowers and letters of support I received.

Plight

Meaning: an unpleasant condition, especially a serious, sad, or difficult one.

Examples: *Few of us can be unmoved by the plight of the refugees.*
My problems aren't much compared with the plight of the storm victims.
We must direct our efforts towards relieving the plight of children living in poverty.

Teething problems

Meaning: Problems encountered during the initial part of a process.

Examples: *Our supply line issues are just teething problems. Once we get the process streamlined, we'll be fine.*
Some teething troubles aside, the new computer system works well.
There are bound to be teething problems in a new marriage.

Show someone the ropes

Meaning: To explain or demonstrate to one how to do or perform a task or activity.

Examples: *I know there's a lot to take in, but your partner has been here for over 10 years and will show you the ropes.*
This class is intense! You're expected to know how to do everything from day one, without anyone showing you the ropes.
Lynn spent an afternoon showing the new girl the ropes.

Grim

Meaning: worrying/worried, without hope, serious or sad.

Examples: *I divined from his grim expression that the news was not good.*
Experts have been giving grim predictions for the future of the company.
Later Mr. Ashby left the court, grim-faced and silent.

Harassment

Meaning: (noun) behaviour that annoys or upsets someone like threats, offensive remarks, or physical attacks.

Examples: *They face daily harassment and assault on the streets.*
The company investigated claims of workplace harassment and racial discrimination.
The UN cannot tolerate the continuing harassment of peacekeeping soldiers.

In hindsight/ retrospect

Meaning: Looking backward, reflecting on the past. Reconsidering the past with the knowledge one now has. (antonym: foresight)

Examples: *In retrospect, we shouldn't have invested so heavily in one sector, but there's no way we could have known about some of the risks.*
In hindsight we all wish that at various times in our lives we would have made different choices.
Also problematic is that research indicates that, in hindsight, people consistently exaggerate what could have been anticipated in foresight.

Viable

Meaning: capable of success or continuing effectiveness; practicable.

Examples: *So obviously, the government will have to think of ways and means to ensure that these accounts, once they come in, become commercially viable accounts.*
He envisions two possibly viable paths: splitting and resistance.
Shutting the border is "not a viable solution.

Strapped for cash

Meaning: Without any or very much money at the moment; broke temporarily.

Examples: *My brother always complains that he's strapped for cash, but it's no surprise when he won't go find a job!*
Would you mind covering the cost of dinner? I'm a little strapped for cash at the moment.
Four in 10 social housing tenants on benefits skip meals because they're so strapped for cash.

Plausible

Meaning: 1. likely to be true. 2. someone who is plausible seems to be honest and sincere, even though they may not be.

Examples: *A bomb was the only plausible explanation for the crash.*
The story was plausible but that didn't necessarily mean it was true.
Yeskeliar was precisely chosen because he was such an accomplished and plausible liar.
He smiled grimly and replied: "'Yes, he is a plausible rascal, but if you should happen to meet him again, I advise you to keep your pockets buttoned.

Untoward

Meaning: unexpected and inappropriate or inconvenient.

Examples: *Both tried to behave as if nothing untoward had happened.*
Unless anything untoward happens we should arrive just before midday.
Unfortunately, such responses may run afoul of modern laws that aim to constrain untoward behavior.
Another young journalist made a few untoward remarks about Richard.

Be doomed to

Meaning: likely to have an unfortunate and inescapable outcome; ill-fated.

Examples: *Financial markets are neither rational nor efficient, and any investment strategy that ignores that fact is doomed to failure.*
Those intentions defy prediction and the individual who tries to do so is doomed to lose.
Jolene knew she was already doomed to suffer heartache if she chose to remain with Reynard.

Embellish

Meaning: to add or change some details of a story, usually to make it more interesting or exciting.

Examples: *He couldn't resist embellishing the story of his accident a little.*
He sometimes had to embellish the facts in order to, as he saw it, highlight the truth.
There were claims the candidate had embellished his war record.

Hamper

Meaning: to prevent someone doing something easily.

Examples: *Fierce storms have been hampering rescue efforts and there is now little chance of finding more survivors.*
I tried to run away but I was hampered by my long dress.
the investigation was hampered by their lack of cooperation.

Linger

Meaning: 1. to take a long time to leave or disappear. 2. to spend a long time over (something).

Examples: *The smell from the fire still lingered days later.*
It's impossible to forget such horrific events - they linger (on) in the memory forever.
Time will be extremely tight in this exam, so don't linger over questions you can't figure out.
With how frantic life is these days, I think it's important to linger over things we enjoy, such as good food or drinks.

Alleged

Meaning: said or thought by some people to be the stated bad or illegal thing, although you have no proof.

Examples: *The place where the alleged offences were committed.*
It took 15 years for the alleged criminals to prove their innocence.
Race-related violence has often been spurred by false rumors, generally pointing to alleged conspiracies by one group against another.

Check your progress (8)

1. Just tell the truth and don't …….. the story by any means.
a. embellish b. overwhelm c. spill the beans

2. Unless anything ……. happens we should arrive just before midday.
a. grim b. skeptical c. untoward

3. I'm …….. at the moment-can I pay you later?
a. strapped for cash b. untoward c. grim

4. ……., it would have been better to wait.
a. Viable b. In hindsight c. Bang your head against a brick wall

5. Despite the …….. forecast, the number of deaths was slightly down on last year.
a. viable b. plausible c. grim

6. The Governor admits there have been …… which need sorting out.
a. harassment b. teething problems c. plights

7. Don't just win the match; ……. your opponents by about 20 goals to nil.
a. overwhelm b. thrive c. show the ropes to

8. Earthworms have extremely sensitive skins and cannot ….. under acid conditions.
a. thrive b. lift a finger c. embellish

9. OK, it's time for one of you to ……. . Who broke my lamp?
a. thrive b. spill the beans c. Show us the ropes

10. The king did not …… when his people were hungry.
a. embellish b. lift a finger c. hamper

Answers; 1. a 2.c 3.a 4.b 5.c 6.b 7.a 8.a 9.b 10.b

Shattered

Meaning: 1. broken into very small pieces. 2. extremely upset, impaired or destroyed.

Examples: *Shattered glass lay all over the road.*
The family were shattered by the news of Annabel's suicide.
We feel emotionally shattered by what's happened.
At nine-and-twenty I was gaunt and gray; my nerves were shattered, and my heart was broken.

Blurred

Meaning: 1. not clear or distinct; hazy. 2. unable to see or be seen clearly.

Examples*: Do you agree that male and female roles are becoming blurred?*
The photograph was very blurred.
The picture on the TV went all blurry.
Jimmie walked to the window and began to look through the blurred glass.

To tar with the same brush

Meaning: to unfairly categorize someone or something as being the same as another person or thing, usually in a negative manner.

Examples: *Just because the CEO turned out to be a rotten scoundrel doesn't mean we should tar the entire company with the same brush.*
There is absolutely a segment of video game enthusiasts who create a hostile and toxic environment online, but tarring all gamers with the same brush does a disservice to the community.

Not to have a leg to stand on

Meaning: have no facts or sound reasons to support one's argument or justify one's actions.

Examples: *Now that your alibi has been eliminated, you really don't have a leg to stand on, so it's time to confess.*
You may think you're in the right, but you don't have a leg to stand on.
My lawyer said I didn't have a leg to stand on, so I shouldn't sue the company.

Deliberate

Meaning: 1. done consciously and intentionally. 2. careful and unhurried.

Examples: *This was a deliberate attempt to wreck the peace talks.*
I don't think his name was left off the list by accident - I think it was deliberate.
From her slow, deliberate speech I guessed she must be drunk.
She was nevertheless a slow, deliberate worker unable to grasp the newer technologies and easily flustered by changes in routine.

Indispensable

Meaning: absolutely necessary; crucial.

Examples: *Few would dispute that mobile phones are an indispensable business tool.*
International cooperation is indispensable to resolving the problem of the drug trade.
The library will have three copies of a text considered indispensable to 1,000 students.

Stand out from the crowd

Meaning: to be better than or noticeably different from ordinary people or things

Examples: *Jane's particular fashion sense makes her stand out from the crowd, but I'm not sure that's always a good thing.*
They'll be getting hundreds of applications from people with similar experience, so you need to do something to make your resume stand out from the crowd.
Give your business a name that fits, and create icons that clearly identify it and help it stand out from the crowd of competitors.

Deterrent

Meaning: (n.) a thing that is intended to discourage someone from doing something.

Examples: *They seriously believe that capital punishment is a deterrent.*
Tougher prison sentences may act/serve as a deterrent to other would-be offenders.
I should think the smell of her breath must act as a deterrent to any man.

Think twice

Meaning: to reconsider, be cautious about, or thoroughly contemplate something before committing to it.

Examples: *You should think twice before quitting your job. That's a serious decision.*
I'm going to sue them for everything they're worth—maybe then they'll think twice about trying to steal my ideas!
We should think twice about investing so much money in a project we know so little about.

Think highly of/ Think a lot of

Meaning: to admire and respect someone a lot.

Examples: *The two guys are friends of ours and we think highly of them, so it was disappointing to see our mates left out like that.*
Our last boss thinks very a lot of you, judging from the reference letter she wrote for you.
Somehow I doubt the mayor will think too a lot of an article exposing all of his financial details.

Blessing in disguise

Meaning: an apparent misfortune that eventually has good results.

Examples: *Running late for work turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I would have been in the middle of that big multi-car pileup had I left the house on time.*
Tony's motorcycle accident was a blessing in disguise, because he got enough insurance money from the other driver to make a down payment on a house.
Dad's illness was a blessing in disguise; it brought the family together for the first time in years.

Be bound to

Meaning: Be certain or destined to; also, be determined or resolved to.

Examples: *We all thought that Doug was bound to be an artist, so we were very surprised when he became a trader on Wall Street.*
A: "Do you think it will rain today?" B: "It hasn't rained for weeks, so it's bound to."
The kids are out late, so of course she’s bound to worry.

So-called

Meaning: 1. commonly called. 2. incorrectly or falsely termed.

Examples*: My so-called friend has stolen my girlfriend.*
It's fairly shocking when a so-called developed country can't even provide homes for all its citizens.
This so-called charity has robbed thousands of poor people of their money.
And this is one of the so-called privileges of working for this company.

Going/getting nowhere

Meaning: to fail to achieve something, or to fail to be successful.

Examples: *The talks are going nowhere, no progress is being made.*
For five days he toiled on at "Overdue," going nowhere, seeing nobody, and eating meagerly.
I finished it because I thought we were going nowhere, but I now realise I'm still in love with him.

Uncharted territory/ water

Meaning: an activity or subject that people do not know anything about or have not experienced before.

Examples: *We're starting to get into uncharted waters exploiting these tax loopholes.*
As I opened up the computer to try and fix the problem, I realized that I was getting into completely uncharted waters and decided to leave it to the experts.
We're in uncharted waters, which make earnings harder than usual to predict.

Black mark

Meaning: (n.) a note or record of a person's misdemeanour or discreditable action.

Examples: *A black mark went down against his name for turning down the job.*
Jerry's speeding ticket was a black mark on his driving record that prevented him from getting a job as a delivery man.
Any complaints to the boss and you got a black mark straight away.

See the light

Meaning: understand or realize something after prolonged thought or doubt.

Examples: *He suddenly saw the light and realized he was going nowhere with United.*
Tutoring helped me see the light about these physics equations.
I used to wonder why people disliked Lydia, but I started seeing the light after I overheard her making fun of me.

Join forces

Meaning: to work together with someone else in order to achieve something. To combine efforts.

Examples: *Teachers joined forces with parents to prepare the hall for the school play.*
Individuals and organizations have joined forces to provide fund-raising facilities.
If you were really great, really true to yourself, you would join forces with Leach and Johnson.

Check your progress (9)

1. All agreed to drop their hostility and ….. in the face of this unprecedented threat.
a. to be bound to b. Think highly c. join forces

2. He left the bank after 40 years' service without a single …….. against him.
a. blessing in disguise b. deterrent c. black mark

3. Radical factions say the talks are …… and they want to withdraw.
a. getting nowhere b. joining forces c. tarred with the same brush

4. Most of these …… special offers come with strings attached.
a. indispensable b. so-called c. blurred

5. Be positive, this could be …….., use the time gained wisely.
a. an uncharted territory b. black mark c. a blessing in disguise

6. Long prison sentences can be a very effective …….. for offenders.
a. deterrent b. black mark c. uncharted territory

7. For mountain-climbing a really good sleeping-bag is ……...
a. indispensable b. shattered c. blurred

8. Because they worked so closely in the same department, John was …….. …as Tim.
a. joining forces b. without a leg to stand on c. tarred with the same brush

9. His life has been cruelly …….. by an event not of his own making.
a. so-called b. blurred c. shattered

10. The event is …….. to attract wide press coverage .
a. deliberate b. shattered c. indispensable

Answers; 1.c 2.c 3.a 4.b 5.c 6.a 7.a 8.c 9.c 10.a

Minefield

Meaning: 1. an area planted with explosive mines. 2. a subject or situation presenting unseen hazards.

Examples: *The sergeant crawled through a minefield to rescue two badly injured boys.*
We are also marking minefields, removing mines and educating people about the threat.
The whole subject is a political minefield.
The kitchen is a minefield of potential hazards.

Causality

Meaning: the principle that there is a cause for everything that happens.

Examples: *It was reserved for the greatest of modern philosophers to reveal to the world that causality is a condition, and a necessary condition, of thought.*
Whatever it shows is controlled by the same laws of causality which govern nature.
Seeing and thinking express the freedom and the causality behind all things.

Pull rank (on)

Meaning: to use one's higher position to gain an advantage.

Examples: *When she couldn't get her way politely, she pulled rank and got some action.*
Even though I'm the boss, I try not to pull rank. I like to let everyone have a say in how things are done.
Whenever new assignments come up, Tom always pulls rank on us and picks the best one for himself.

Take/ Get the flak

Meaning: to receive a lot of criticism, judgment, or teasing.

Examples: *Why do I always get the flak when something goes wrong around here?*
Because I'm in a family full of surgeons, I get a lot of flak for my career in the arts.
She makes decisions quickly and doesn't take any flak from the contractors who share her world.

Tip of the iceberg

Meaning: a hint or suggestion of a much larger or more complex issue or problem.

Examples: *As with many injuries, the damage we can see is only the tip of the iceberg.*
The money missing from petty cash was only the tip of the iceberg of financial mismanagement.
The flooding is bad, but we're dealing with just the tip of the iceberg—a huge spate of environmental disasters are on the horizon because of climate change.

Drop in the ocean

Meaning: a very small amount that will not have much effect.

Examples: *I'm glad Tony started repaying the money he borrowed from me, but the five dollars he gave me yesterday is just a drop in the ocean compared to what he still owes.*
$10 million is only a drop in the ocean compared to what is needed,
Her cry was only a single drop in the ocean compared to the billions of tears shed by mourners after the war.

Clip one’s wings

Meaning: to restrict one's freedom, power, or full potential.

Examples: *The boss is always trying to clip my wings and micro-manage me.*
The kids need to be able to explore the world around them—don't clip their wings.
You had better learn to get home on time, or I will clip your wings.

Race against the clock/ time

Meaning: (noun/ verb) to act quickly to accomplish something in a short amount of time.

Examples: *It's a race against time to get the building finished before the rainy season sets in.*
After getting a flat tire, it was a race against the clock to make it to the airport in time.
Jen's going to have to race against the clock if she wants to get her story in tomorrow's newspaper—it's almost time to send it to the publisher!

Countdown

Meaning: the counting backward aloud from an arbitrary starting number to indicate the time remaining before an event or operation.

Examples: *The countdown to Tuesday’s primary elections has begun.*
Alan Shepard sat impatiently in the claustrophobic contraption, waiting for the countdown to rocket him into outer space atop a 30-ton missile.
The countdown to the semi-finals and finals are almost here! Have you booked your tickets?

Tie the knot

Meaning: to get married.

Examples: *All of my friends have tied the knot and started having kids.*
John and Mary are tying the knot this summer in France.
The couple tied the knot last year after a 13-year romance.
Len tied the knot with Kate five years ago.

Make a mountain out of a molehill

Meaning: exaggerate the importance of something trivial.

Examples: *You're making a mountain out of a molehill. You wrote one bad essay - it doesn't mean you're going to fail.*
This is a minor setback. Let's not make a mountain out of a molehill.
The company's CEO has blamed the media for making a mountain out of a molehill.

Be blown away

Meaning: 1. to be thoroughly impressed, overwhelmed, or excited by something. 2. dead; killed.

Examples*: I am blown away by the show of support from everyone.*
I was blown away by how good that movie was!
Four of the mob were already blown away when the cops got there.
Two guys were blown away in your building tonight, and you don't know anything about it?

Blow away

Meaning: 1. of the wind, to blow someone or something away from its current location. 2. to defeat an opponent easily and/or by a wide margin.

Examples*: Our trashcans were blown away in that bad storm.*
I was almost blown away on my walk to the library because it's so windy out!
The final score was 17-1? Wow, we really blew that team away! I have a feeling the top-ranked team is just going to blow away any opponent they face.
The visiting soccer team was much better than our team and easily blew us away.

Blow up

Meaning: 1. to explode. 2. to inflate or exaggerate. 3. When a storm blows up, it begins.

Examples: *Our poor dog is hiding under the bed because our neighbors celebrate the Fourth of July by blowing up tons of fireworks.*
The bomb might have blown up if the children had tried to move it.
Can you help me blow up these balloons for the birthday party?
I need to blow up one of my bike tires—it's a little flat right now.
The media always blows up reports of celebrity behavior.

Blow out

Meaning: 1. to extinguish a flame. 2. (of a tyre) to puncture.

Examples: *Make a wish and blow out your birthday candles!*
The car went into a rubber-shredding skid when the front nearside tyre blew out.
I almost lost control of the car when I got a blowout on the highway.

Sit on the fence

Meaning: To not make a decision or take a side when presented with two or more options or possibilities.

Examples: *A. "Which of the candidates Joan will vote for." B: " She's still sitting on the fence".*
You can't sit on the fence any longer—you need to choose who of these two we need to fire.
The government has been sitting on the fence about legalizing marijuana for the past several years.

Put out

Meaning: 1. (put someone out) cause someone trouble or inconvenience. 2. cause someone trouble or inconvenience.

Examples: *It would be lovely to stay with you, but I don't want to put you out.*
Would it put you out too much to let her visit you for a couple of hours?
It took firefighters three hours to put the blaze out.
Please put that cigarette out.

Back to square one

Meaning: back to where one started, with no progress having been made.

Examples: *Negotiations have broken down, and it's back to square one.*
We'll have to go back to square one if the government pulls our funding on this project.
Yet another relationship down the tubes. I guess I'm back to square one yet again!
We lost our appeal of the lower court decision, so back to square one.

Check your progress (10)

1. The deal about the house fell through; I'm afraid we……...
a. 're back to square one b. ‘re put out c. sitting on the fence

2. You can't …….. any longer - you have decide whose side you're on.
a. sit on the fence b. blow up c. clip your wings

3. The terrorists are threatening to …… the hijacked airliner.
a. blow up b. put out c. pull rank on

4. Our first hosts were in Sault Sainte Marie, and I was ……by their generosity.
a. back to square one b. blown out c. blown away

5. You should let go of some of his mistakes. Do not ……..
a. get the flak b. sit on the fence c. make a mountain out of a molehill.

6. The …….. to the rocket launch will begin at 9.00 am.
a. minefield b. countdown c. race against the clock

7. This figure represents only the …, since as many as 90% of cases go unreported.
a. race against the clock b. tip of the iceberg c. drop of the ocean

8. There has long been an unspoken consensus across the party spectrum that challenging the system would be to enter a political …….
a. countdown b. causality c. minefield

9. Why do I always …….. when something goes wrong around here?
a. get the flak b. tie the knot c. pull the rank

10. I had always wanted to go but marriage and family life had ……...
a. blown me away b. clipped my wings c. put me out

Answers; 1.a 2.a 3.a 4.c 5.c 6.b 7.b 8.c 9.a 10.b

Throw someone a curve (ball)

Meaning: unexpectedly present someone with a challenge or disruption.

Examples: *Mother Nature threw us a curve ball last winter with record-breaking amounts of snow.*
Her confidence and fact-of-the-matter answers threw police a curve during their questioning.
I had only been reading the textbook instead of going to classes, so a few of the questions on the final exam really threw me a curve ball.

Bat a thousand

Meaning: be very successful; achieve perfection.

Examples: *I'm really batting a thousand this week—I got an A on my exam, I got the lead in the school play, and I won the poetry contest!*
Their first film, Suture , garnered them serious critical acclaim and with The Deep End , they are now batting a thousand.
We're batting a thousand, here, since we got both boys to school with time to spare.

Drop the ball

Meaning: make a mistake; mishandle things.

Examples: *For God's sake don't drop the ball on this - we're relying on you.*
I think she really dropped the ball when she decided to quit that promising internship.
I know I dropped the ball today—I just got swamped at work and completely forgot about picking the kids up from school.

Fall off the radar

Meaning: To be ignored or forgotten in favor of something more important; to fall into obscurity or disappear from public view.

Examples: *Cyndi Lauper was so famous for a while and then she fell off the radar. People don't talk about her anymore.*
When the economy crashed, many social welfare projects simply fell off the radar.
The band had a hugely popular single in the 80s, but they fell off the radar soon afterward.

Go the extra mile

Meaning: make a special effort to achieve something.

Examples: *State regulators will go the extra mile to ensure that this settlement is as investor-friendly as possible.*
He's a nice guy, always ready to go the extra mile for his friends.
I have to say, our lawyer really went the extra mile in making sure every aspect of our case was watertight.

Float one's boat

Meaning: If something does not float your boat, you do not enjoy it or want it. When something floats your boat, you like it.

Examples: *The idea of playing football on a cold winter morning doesn't float my boat.*
"What kind of music floats your boat?"
A: "What do you want for dinner?" B: "Whatever floats your boat, I'm not even hungry."

Big time

Meaning: (adverb) If you do something big time, you do it to a great degree. (noun) the state of being famous or successful.

Examples: *How was the interview?" "Terrible, I messed up big time.*
With a little luck we could make this thing work big-time.
Though she'd been acting for years, it was after her role in last summer's blockbuster that she finally hit the big time.

Watertight

Meaning: (adj.) 1. not allowing water to pass in or out. 2. without flaws or loopholes.

Examples: *Most wooden ships were watertight in harbour, but they all leaked when they got out to sea.*
To build these structures under water, the work place is enclosed by watertight walls.
Even if you think you have a watertight contract, some people are just bonkers, or have limitless legal resources.
A watertight ban may not be feasible because there are always borderline cases.

Dry as dust

Meaning: extremely dull; lacking emotion, expression, or interest.

Examples: *That lecture on polynomials almost put me to sleep—it was just dry as dust.*
Conversely, we know professional workers who are themselves dry as dust and make everything they touch dry as dust.
Some think the study of English grammar is as dry as dust, probably because they think it is virtually completed.

Thick as two short planks

Meaning: very stupid.

Examples: *He's a very skilled football player but he's as thick as two short planks.*
Jen's new girlfriend is very nice, but she's as thick as two short planks.
There was not a lot to know other than it was packed with loonies who loved to scream and shout - and were as thick as two short planks.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating

Meaning: the real value of something can be judged only from practical experience or results and not from appearance or theory.

Examples: *Our analysts think that the marketing campaign will reinvigorate our sales, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating.*
The mechanic assured us that the engine should work right, but the proof of the pudding will be in the eating.
Theory says that this material will produce a superior widget, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Face like thunder

Meaning: a face that looks very angry.

Examples: *He burst into the room with a face like thunder.*
When I looked up, he had a face like thunder, and I knew that I was in trouble.
Mr. Clarke had a face like thunder after his assistant's mistake.

Black and white

Meaning: (adj.)absolutely right or wrong, good or bad, with no grades between them.

Examples: *My grandmother has very rigid ideas of character and behaviour; she sees everything in black and white.*
Love isn't always black and white, you know. You have to accept that there are many gray areas in relationships.
Don't debate me about it. The rules are black and white, and you broke them.

Neck and neck

Meaning: Extremely close together; at or near an equal level. Usually said of competitors in a race or competition.

Examples: *We're going to have to wait until the very last votes are tallied. The two athletes have been neck and neck for this entire race. The election is neck and neck.*
Mary and Ann were neck and neck in the spelling contest. Their scores were tied.

Black and blue

Meaning: Bruised, either physically or emotionally. Covered in livid bruises.

Examples*: It's normal to feel black and blue right after you break up with someone.*
What is that black-and-blue mark on your leg?
I'm probably going to be black and blue after falling down the steps this morning.

Wear and tear

Meaning: the process of wearing down or breaking down something by regular use.

Examples: *Driving in freezing weather means lots of wear and tear on your car.*
I drive carefully and have my car serviced regularly to avoid wear and tear.
The insurer will reduce any payout to take into account wear and tear of the item.

Bumper to bumper

Meaning: close together and moving slowly.

Examples: *Panic buying caused bumper to bumper queues at service stations as motorists queued for up to six hours and pumps ran dry.*
Being a Friday evening, it was bumper to bumper on the main road leading out of town.
The traffic is horrible - bumper to bumper," he said of the drive between the Oxnard and Los Angeles airports.

Hit and miss

Meaning: (adjective) Sometimes good or successful, sometimes not; having mixed or unpredictable results; random, aimless, careless, or haphazard.

Examples: *Films at the festival were hit and miss, but they were all unique.*
The company still relies on hit-and-miss techniques that seem antiquated by today's standards.
The tour around the region felt a bit hit and miss, with no clear agenda or plan.

Check your progress (11)

1. The trains are often late, so getting to work on time is a fairly ……. affair.
a. watertight b. neck and neck c. hit-and-miss

2. The furniture suffers a lot of ……. when the children are at home.
a. black and blue b. hit and miss c. wear and tear

3. Opinion polls show the two main parties are running ……..
a. bumper to bumper b. neck and neck c. hit and miss

4. The situation is not …….; we still don't know what to do.
a. black and white b. bumper to bumper c. thick as two short planks

5. This machine is supposed to be the solution to the production problems, but …..
a. it is dry as dust b. it is like thunder c. the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

6. Her life felt ……. to her, dull and deadly.
a. hit and miss b. black and white c. dry as dust

7. He played in clubs for years before making it to the ……..
a. wear and tear b. big time c. countdown

8. What …….? In other words, what drives you? ? What keeps you going?
a. floats your boat b. falls you off the radar c. throws you a curve ball

9. The downside is less expensive campaigns tend to …… of most entrepreneurs.
a. go the extra mile b. float the boats c. fall off the radar

10. Some adversity would ……., and all his faith would go right out the window.
a. float his boat b. go the extra mile c. throw him a curve

Answers; 1.c 2.c 3.b 4.a 5.c 6.c 7.b 8.a 9.c 10.c

Give or take

Meaning: 1. approximately. 2. apart from.

Examples: *There were maybe 20 people there, give or take.*
The structure is thought to be around two thousand years old, give or take a decade or so.
Give or take the occasional argument, my sister and I get along pretty well.
We're in Manchester, not Sydney, though on a sunny day the two cities do have a similar feel to them, give or take the odd beach, bridge, harbour and opera house.

Out and about

Meaning: doing things outside from the house especially after an illness.

Examples: *It's nice to be out and about after being bedridden for so long.*
Beth has been ill, but now she's out and about.
As soon as I feel better, I'll be able to get out and about.

All fingers and thumbs

Meaning: be clumsy or awkward in your actions.

Examples: *Tom could never be a surgeon—he's all fingers and thumbs.*
Can you sew this button on for me? I'm all fingers and thumbs.
She could not undo the string of the parcel — she was all fingers and thumbs.

Wax and wane

Meaning: to alternatingly increase (wax) and decrease (wane). To fluctuate a lot.

Examples: *My fortune has waxed and waned over the years, but I live simply anyway, and it has never affected me much.*
Voter turnout waxes and wanes depending on which positions are up for election.
The level of security that people are psychologically able to accept changes as crisis situations wax and wane.

Through and through

Meaning: in every aspect; thoroughly or completely.

Examples: *I know Elizabeth through and through, and I really doubt that she's mad at you.*
She's a student through and through, which is why she decided to pursue a doctorate.
I've studied this report through and through trying to find the facts you've mentioned.

Variety is the spice of life

Meaning: Having many different experiences is what makes life interesting, exciting, enjoyable, or worthwhile.

Examples: *I think everyone should travel the world. Variety is the spice of life, after all!*
You should really start trying new foods instead of eating the same thing all the time. Variety is the spice of life.
It is important to vary the training program so that boredom is avoided. Exercise should be fun and variety is the spice of life.

Not the end of the world

Meaning: used for saying that something bad is not really as serious as someone thinks it is.

Examples: *It would be great if I got this teaching position, but I guess it isn't the end of the world if they pass me over.*
I've enjoyed my time in international football, but it won't be the end of the world if I'm not selected again.
You need to know that it is not the end of the world if it doesn't go your way.

Not the only fish in the sea

Meaning: Not the only suitable thing, opportunity, or person one can find.

Examples: *I know you are broken up about Janet leaving you, but she's not the only fish in the sea.*
I'm pretty disappointed that I didn't get the job, but I'm trying to remind myself it's not the only fish in the sea.

Be on the safe side

Meaning: being especially careful in order to avoid something unpleasant.

Examples: *I made an extra batch of brownies, just to be on the safe side in case we have more guests than we anticipated.*
To be on the safe side, carry some extra money in your shoe.
I like to be on the safe side and stay in my hotel room at night.

Spend a penny

Meaning: used euphemistically to refer to a need to urinate. (also: answer the call of nature)

Examples: *you can't get to sleep when you want to spend a penny.*
A: "Where's Janet?" B: "She's gone to spend a penny."
Do you want to spend a penny before we leave?
Wait a minute, I have to go answer the call of nature.

A bit on the side

Meaning: 1. a person with whom one is unfaithful to one's partner. 2. money earned outside one's normal job.

Examples: *I spotted Harry at the diner with a woman much younger than his wife. I think he's having a bit on the side.*
We've thought for a while that he was having a bit on the side.
My wife has started to earn a bit on the side to help us offset all the extra expenses from the renovation.
There is no harm in making a bit on the side as long as you have enough time.

Play the field

Meaning: having lots of sexual relationships; without committing oneself to anyone.

Examples: *All of Joe's friends are married now, but he continues to play the field.*
Becky's not ready to settle down with one man - she enjoys playing the field too much.
I played the field a bit during college, but I prefer having a steady relationship.

Have a bun in the oven

Meaning: to be pregnant.

Examples: *You're having a baby shower for Carla today? Wow, I didn't even know she had a bun in the oven.*

1. *“You know how you have a bun in the oven?” I stifled a laugh. B. “Yes. Yes, I do.”*

It's not going to be easy since so much time has passed and you have a bun in the oven.

One’s number is up

Meaning: It is one's time to die, suffer, or be punished.

Examples: *My only wish is that I don't feel any pain when my number is up.*
This evidence proves that the senator was part of the conspiracy. His number's up this time.
When my number is up, I hope it all goes fast.

Oblivious

Meaning: *(adj.)* lacking consciousness or awareness of something.

Examples: *Oblivious to the burning smell emanating from the kitchen, my father did not notice that the rolls in the oven were burned until much too late.*
She became absorbed, oblivious to the passage of time.
Absorbed in her work, she was totally oblivious of her surroundings.
The mayor seems oblivious to the likely effects of the new legislation.

Ignorance is bliss

Meaning: Not knowing is better than knowing and worrying.

Examples: *Sometimes I just decide to ignore the news for a few days. Ignorance is bliss.*
When it comes to what my kids end up eating at their grandparents' house, ignorance is bliss.
A: I never knew that the kid who mows our lawn has been in trouble with the police. B: Ignorance is bliss!

Nuance

Meaning: a slight variation in meaning, tone, expression.

Examples: *The nuances of the poem were not obvious to the casual reader, but the teacher was able to point them out.*
Actors have to study the nuances of facial expression to show the whole range of emotions.
The painter has managed to capture every nuance of the woman's expression.
Linguists explore the nuances of language.

Good riddance

Meaning: said to express relief at being free of an unwanted person or thing.

Examples: *Our neighbors and their nasty dogs have moved out – good riddance!*
Well, I didn't want to talk to you anyway, so good riddance!
A: "Did you hear that Janet broke up with her boyfriend?"
B: "Good riddance to bad rubbish. That deadbeat was really dragging her down."

Check your progress (12)

1. We've got rid of the old computer system, and …… to bad rubbish is what I say.
a. good riddance b. out and about c. spend a penny

2. These users will easily learn each …… of the applications they use.
a. fingers and thumbs b. nuance c. wax and wane

3. Absorbed in her work, she was totally …….. of her surroundings.
a. oblivious b. through and through c. out and about

4. “Last time I ……., I had to give up smoking.
a. a bit on the side b. had to play the field c. had a bun in the oven

5. Colette was married to a man in his sixties and couldn't resist …… with someone who was much younger than the one she chose to marry for his money.
a. the end of the world b. a bit on the side c. the only fish in the sea

6. You might still want to go for an X-ray, however, just to ……
a. be on the safe side. b. play the field c. spend a penny

7. What's the big deal? It's only a misunderstanding, not ……
a. all fingers and thumbs b. the only fish in the sea c. the end of the world.

8. Being a grown woman, divorced, single and free, she had realized that …….
a. her number was up b. she was oblivious c. variety is the spice of life

9. Public interest in the issue has …… over the years.
a. played the field b. waxed and waned c. a bun in the oven

10. ……. an hour or so, we should be in Beijing in about twelve hours.
a. Through and through b. Wax and wane c. Give or take

Answers; 1.a 2.b 3.a 4.c 5.b 6.a 7.c 8.c 9.b 10.c

Fair’s fair

Meaning: used for saying that someone should accept something because it is fair.

Examples: *Fair’s fair, I had the car yesterday so you can have it today.*
It is your turn to watch the kids for Ellen tonight because I do it all the time—fair's fair.
You may not like her, but fair’s fair, she’s a good teacher.

Deadbeat

Meaning: an idle, feckless, or disreputable person.

Examples: *He's a real deadbeat who's never had a proper job.*
Come off it, deadbeat, you're never going to get anywhere.
A: "Did you hear that Janet broke up with her boyfriend?"
B: "Good riddance to bad rubbish. That deadbeat was really dragging her down."

Get one’s skates on

Meaning: used when you want to tell someone to hurry up.

Examples: *Come on, get your skates on — we should be there by now!*
Bargain hunters had better get their skates on — the best properties are selling fast.
If these guys don't get their skates on, we'll be here moving boxes all day.

Give someone a break

Meaning: stop putting pressure on someone about something.

Examples: *Give her a break – she was only five minutes late.*
Guys, I told you I needed you to be quiet for five minutes while I made a call, and you couldn't even do it for 10 seconds! Give me a break, will you?
You, the night owl, are getting up at 5 AM tomorrow? Give me a break!

Novice

Meaning: a beginner, someone without training or experience.

Examples: *I've never driven a car before - I'm a complete novice.*
Because we were all novices at archery, our instructor decided to begin with the basics.
This plant can be difficult for novice gardeners to grow.

Ad hoc

Meaning: made or happening only for a particular purpose or need, not planned before it happens.

Examples: *The market and ad hoc approaches promote a much smaller role for the state.*
A number of ad hoc groups made up of individual firms were established.
When read by itself, this weaker statement appears awkward and ad hoc.

Hand out

Meaning: to distribute.

Examples: *The teacher will hand out the tests at the beginning of class.*
They won’t hand out your phone number without permission.
Before you leave, I have some notices to hand out to you all.
Demonstrators handed out leaflets to passers-by.

De facto

Meaning: existing in fact, although perhaps not intended, legal, or accepted.

Examples: *The city is rapidly becoming the de facto centre of the financial world.*
He's her de facto husband though they're not actually married.
English is de facto the common language of much of the world today.

Status quo

Meaning: the present situation.

Examples: *Are you in favor of statehood, independence, or the status quo for Puerto Rico?*
They have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo
The company was so conservative that anyone who did something out of the ordinary and broke the status quo ran the risk of getting fired.

On the rocks

Meaning: (of a relationship or enterprise) experiencing difficulties and likely to fail.

Examples: *She confided to her mother six months ago that her marriage was on the rocks.*
The company is on the rocks these days following the disastrous release of their latest product.
Simon's business has been on the rocks for some time and I understand he's going into liquidation.

Nominal

Meaning: trifling, insignificant.

Examples: *Because he was moving the following week and needed to get rid of his furniture more than he needed money, Kim sold everything for a nominal price.*
She's the nominal head of our college - the real work is done by her deputy.
Clinton has nominal opposition in the Democratic primary.

Cut and run

Meaning: make a speedy departure from a difficult situation rather than deal with it.

Examples: *I don't trust that investor, and I expect him to cut and run as soon our company's stock dips the slightest bit.*
As soon as I finish what I am doing here, I'm going to cut and run. I've got to get home by six o'clock.
He had an unfortunate tendency to cut and run when things didn't go his way.

Go one’s way

Meaning: (of events, circumstances, etc.) be favourable to one.

Examples: *If the court's decision goes our way, we can expect a payout of nearly $2 million.*
In relationships, he had an unfortunate tendency to cut and run when things didn't go his way.
First, my car breaks down, then I lose the keys to my apartment—nothing's going my way today!

Run a tight ship

Meaning: be very strict in managing an organization or operation.

Examples: *Jane ran a tight ship around here. The department has devolved into chaos without her leadership.*
Shaona was running a tight ship and didn't waste time on small talk.
Andy is totally organized and confident. He runs a tight ship and he does a great job.

Laugh off

Meaning: to make yourself laugh about something unpleasant in order to make it seem less important or serious.

Examples: *She tried to laugh off their remarks, but I could see she was hurt.*
Although his feelings were hurt, he just laughed the incident off as if nothing had happened.
I did fall on the ice, but it didn't ruin my day—I was able to laugh it off.

Check your progress (13)

1.Hearing footsteps in the doorway, he …, not even remembering to take his hat.
a. cut and run b. laughed off c. handed out

2. She confided to her mother six months ago that her marriage was …….
a. nominal b. on the rocks c. a novice

3. True reconciliation, however, means anything but maintaining the ……...
a. status quo b. deadbeat c. de facto

4. After cutting the ribbon, he waded into the sand to …….. candy.
a. cut and run b. get his skates on c. hand out

5. …….. committee has been set up to deal with the problem.
a. A deadbeat b. A de facto c. An ad hoc

6. ……. - she's only a child and she didn't mean any harm.
a. Cut and run b. Give her a break c. Run a tight ship

7. A patient who cannot pay is turned over to a collection agency, like any other ….
a. deadbeat b. status quo c. novice

8. As so many people were bringing it to my attention, I figured something had to …..
a. run a tight ship b. go my way. c. give me a break

9. The couple ……. rumours that their marriage was in trouble.
a. laughed off b. handed out c. cut and run

10. She's the …… head of our college - the real work is done by her deputy.
a. de facto b. ad hoc c. nominal

Answers; 1.a 2.b 3.a 4.c 5.c 6.b 7.a 8.b 9.a 10.c

Nadir

Meaning: (noun) the lowest or most unsuccessful point in a situation.

Examples: *My day was boring, but the nadir came when my new car was stolen.*
He was attracted in two different directions by two loadstones, and hesitating eternally between the heights and the depths, between the vault and the pavement, between fall and ascent, between zenith and nadir.
The stock market has gone nuts, more than doubling since its March 2009 nadir .

Weather the storm

Meaning: to experience something and survive it.

Examples: *Newspapers have weathered the storm of online information by providing news online themselves.*
That was the hardest year of my life, but in the end I was able to weather the storm with the support of my family.
The manager went on another shouting rampage and frightened his assistants. The rest of us stayed in our offices to weather the storm.

Foil

Meaning: prevent from succeeding. (thwart)

Examples: *A brave policewoman foiled the armed robbery.*
Democrats seem to be thinking: We are determined to lose the 2020 election to foil Democrats' attempts to lose it.
It took all of his strength to release these buttons, but one remaining button foiled his plans.

Go by the board

Meaning: (of something planned or previously upheld) be abandoned, rejected, or ignored.

Examples: *Does this mean our holiday plans will have to go by the board?*
All our work and planning went by the board after our funding was pulled.
I hate to see good food go by the board. Please eat up so we won't have to throw it out.

Obsequious

Meaning: (adj.) obedient, compliant or attentive to an excessive or servile degree.

Examples: *They do not need me to be a somewhat obsequious supporter.*
Donald acted like Susan's servant, obeying her every request in an obsequious manner.
We think of authoritarian behavior as being strong and confident, but actually it's more obsequious.

Myriad

Meaning: (adj. - noun) constituting a very large, indefinite number; innumerable.

Examples: *It was difficult to decide what to do on Saturday night because the city presented us with myriad possibilities for fun.*
Myriads of insects danced around the light above my head.
As I stood thus meditating, I turned my gaze from the landscape to the heavens where the myriad stars formed a gorgeous and fitting canopy for the wonders of the earthly scene.

Vanish into thin air

Meaning: to disappear without leaving a trace.

Examples: *When I came back, my car was gone. I had locked it, and it couldn't have vanished into thin air!*
This is the spooky moment a black cat appeared to completely vanish into thin air outside a home.
A family is coming together from across the country after a mother vanished into thin air.

In the offing

Meaning: likely to happen or appear soon; on the horizon; coming up.

Examples: *With an election in the offing, the mayor is getting nervous.*
There is a big investigation in the offing, but I don't know when.
It's hard to tell what's in the offing if you don't keep track of things.

Obtuse

Meaning: (adj.) lacking quickness of sensibility or intellect.

Examples: *Political opponents warned that the prime minister's obtuse approach to foreign policy would embroil the nation in mindless war.*
He wondered if the doctor was being deliberately obtuse.
It might well happen that among so many thousands there might be one slow-witted enough and obtuse enough not to have grasped this fact.

Let someone down

Meaning: fail to support or help someone as they had hoped.

Examples: *When I was sent to prison, I really felt I had let my parents down.*
You will be there tomorrow - you won't let me down, will you?
I'm counting on you to close this deal, Robert—don't let me down.

Morose

Meaning: (adj.) gloomy, ill-tempered or sullen.

Examples: *David's morose nature made him very unpleasant to talk to.*
After that, Aisha became morose, refusing meals and no longer socializing.
He was much warmer than his slightly morose public image – and he smiled a lot when recalling the sweetest times.

Be taken aback

Meaning: startled, astonished, shocked, or disconcerted.

Examples: *The Herd-boy was so taken aback by his words, that he stood trembling before him, and did not dare to explain his presence.*
All of us were a bit taken aback to learn that John was moving to England next month.
I must admit that I was taken aback when I heard we weren't receiving our bonuses this year.

Panacea

Meaning: a remedy for all ills or difficulties.

Examples: *Doctors wish there was a single panacea for every disease, but sadly there is not.*
Some economists say that consumer spending is the panacea for all economic ills.
He is sceptical of grand designs and policy panaceas, and wary of the anticipated effects of efforts to implement them.

Leave high and dry

Meaning: to leave someone in a difficult situation without any help.

Examples: *You really left me high and dry when you forgot to pick me up last night. I had no way of calling or getting home!*
The departure of several key employees has left the business high and dry.
All the children ran away and left Billy high and dry to take the blame for the broken window.

In the wake of

Meaning: following (someone or something), especially as a consequence.

Examples: *Airport security was extra tight in the wake of yesterday's bomb attacks.*
In the wake of the scandal, several committee members resigned.
The quiz, in which listeners are tested on their musical knowledge, was taken off the air in the wake of the fiasco.

Any port in a storm

Meaning: in adverse circumstances one welcomes any source of relief or escape.

Examples: *I don't want to live with my parents, but it's a case of any port in a storm. I can't find an apartment I can afford.*
He hates his job, but he can't get another. Any port in a storm, you know.
A."I know she's lonely, but I can't believe she's going out with that guy."
B. "Well, you know what they say: any port in a storm."

Modicum

Meaning: (noun) a small amount of something.

Examples: *Refusing to display even a modicum of sensitivity, Magda announced her boss's affair to the entire office.*
There's not even a modicum of truth in her statement.
Anyone with a modicum of common sense could have seen that the plan wouldn't work.

Catch up on

Meaning: to do something that you have not been able to do recently.

Examples: *I need to catch up on all the gossip! I'm sure I missed a lot over spring break.*
If you haven't been watching the news for the last few days, you have a lot to catch up on.
If you haven't done any biology homework in weeks, you better spend this weekend catching up on it—it's due on Tuesday!

Check your progress (14)

1. Come over for a chat so we can …… each other's news.
a. catch up on b. let down c. foil

2. I shouldn't be so critical, for …… up here in the mountains during the winter
a. nadir b. being morose c. any port in a storm

3. But since he handled his money as he did, it grew less and less, and at last he was ……., without a red cent.
a. vanished into thin air b. foiled c. left high and dry

4. Some people become …… and depressed when they first retire.
a. obtuse b. morose c. obsequious

5. Either she was woefully ignorant, or willfully ……..
a. obtuse b. myriad c. morose

6. "But where could they have gone?" he demanded. "They can't just ……..!".
a. go by the board b. vanish into thin air! c. weather the storm

7. All this ……. praise for his actions is enough to make most normal people sick.
a. morose b. obtuse c. obsequious

8. A hospital is to fit new-born babies with electronic tags to …… kidnappers.
a. be taken aback b. foil c. let down

9. The recent recession was long and severe; many companies failed to ……..
a. weather the storm. b. be in the offing c. go by the board

10. With an election ……, the prime minister is keen to maintain his popularity.
a. nadir b. taken aback c. in the offing

Answers; 1.a 2.c 3.c 4.b 5.a 6.b 7.c 8.b 9.a 10.c

Parody

Meaning: an imitation of the style of a particular writer, artist, or genre with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect.

Examples: *A hush fell over the classroom when the teacher returned to find Magdalena acting out a parody of his teaching style.*
The paper is running a competition in which you have to parody a well-known author.
I would then take him by the feet and knock the life out of these wretched musketeers who parody the musketeers of France.

Shoot oneself on the foot

Meaning: to damage one's own plans or progress, through foolish actions or words.

Examples: *He really shot himself in the foot, telling the interviewer all about the others who were applying for the job he wanted.*
He'd have a real shot at winning the election if he didn't keep shooting himself in the foot with such inflammatory remarks.
We shot ourselves in the foot by firing her; she knew about the job more than anyone else.

A flash in the pan

Meaning: a thing or person whose sudden but brief success is not **repeatable**.

Examples: *With only one hit song, it was obvious that the young pop star was going to be just another flash in the pan.*
The new startup created a lot of buzz, but it ended up being just another flash in the pan, out of business after just two years.
Hopefully now I'll be taken seriously, I'm not a flash in the pan.

Meticulous

Meaning: (adj.) extremely careful with details.

Examples: *Many hours of meticulous preparation have gone into writing the book.*
The ornate needlework in the bride's gown was a product of meticulous handiwork.
She was used to keeping meticulous records, so the documents, plus dates and times of visits and phone calls, were at hand.

Fighting chance

Meaning: a small but real possibility that something can be done.

Examples: *If we can raise enough money, there's a fighting chance we can save the project.*
If I'm going to have a fighting chance to pass this test, I'm going to have to study all night.
David wanted to give his marriage a fighting chance so he agreed to go to counseling with his wife.

Baptism of fire

Meaning: a first experience of something, usually something difficult or unpleasant.

Examples*: My son's just had his first visit to the dentist. He stood up to this baptism of fire very well.*
Mary's had her baptism of fire; she was assigned to the worst class in the school.
Having never managed a team before, I was suddenly managing thirty people. It was a baptism of fire.

Penchant

Meaning: a tendency, partiality, preference.

Examples: *Fiona's dinner parties quickly became monotonous on account of her penchant for Indian dishes.*
Her penchant for disappearing for days at a time worries her family.
His penchant for detail leads him to examine the various approaches from all angles.

Run the gauntlet of

Meaning: to be exposed to or forced to endure a lot of threats, dangers or criticism.

Examples: *Every day they had to run the gauntlet of hostile journalists on their way to school.*
Medical students often feel that they have to run the gauntlet when they become residents in a hospital.
The director has been running the gauntlet of fans' outrage following the release of his latest film.

Perusal

Meaning: (noun) a careful examination, review.

Examples: *The study is worthy of a careful perusal by all who feel an interest in the subject.*
The actor agreed to accept the role after a three-month perusal of the movie script.
A quick perusal of the list indicates that most of these jobs are not traditional science-related jobs.

Set in

Meaning:(of something unpleasant or unwelcome) begin and seem likely to continue.

Examples: *Tables should be treated with preservative before the bad weather sets in.*
The trick to cleaning a stain is to start on it right away. Never give it enough time to set in.
Bing bitten by a dog, you have to make sure the wound is clean, or an infection could set in.
Despair seems to have set in among the team.

Lurid

Meaning: 1. ghastly, sensational. 2. unpleasantly bright in colour.

Examples: *Barry's story, in which he described a character torturing his neighbour's tortoise, was judged too lurid to be published on the English Library's website.*
You can read all the lurid details of the affair in today's paper.
No rays from the holy heaven come down on the long night-time of that town; But light from out the lurid sea streams up the turrets silently.

Battle of wills

Meaning: an argument or a struggle where each side is very determined to win.

Examples: *Each refusing to compromise, the husband and wife entered into a battle of wills as they attempted to negotiate their divorce settlement.*
Annie and Phil were engaged in a silent battle of wills, each refusing to leave.
If Lava Man can look Bernardini in the eye, he might win a battle of wills with the 3-year-old who has yet to face a neck-and-neck fight in the stretch.

Maxim

Meaning: a short statement expressing a general truth; principle or rule of conduct.

Examples: *You must have heard of the maxim that actions speak louder than words.*
She lived by the maxim, "Do right, risk consequences."
It would be a mistake to give overriding significance to any one of the essay's maxims.
Ms. Stone's etiquette maxims are both entertaining and instructional.

Give away

Meaning: to offer without asking for something in return. 2. to reveal a secret.

Examples: *They are giving away cookies at the store today.*
Any plants that were left I gave away to neighbours.
Don't give away the ending of the book!
If captured, they might give away vital military secrets.

Join the ranks of

Meaning: To become a part or member of a large group or organization.

Examples: *Hey, I heard you'll be joining the ranks at our office next month. Congratulations!*
Each year, more and more people join the ranks of those whose livelihoods were destroyed by the economic recession.
How delightful it would be to join the ranks of the married women-- no longer to hang on to groups of girls much younger than herself-- to escape the long solitude of an old maid's life.

Get away with

Meaning: to not be punished for doing something wrong.

Examples: *How did he get away with not doing his homework?*
If he thinks he can get away with cheating me, he's very much mistaken.
It's not our policy to let kidnappers get away with their crimes.

Plethora

Meaning: an abundance, excess.

Examples: *There's a plethora of books about the royal family.*
The plethora of regulations is both contradictory and confusing.
The wedding banquet included a plethora of oysters piled almost three feet high.

Steal a march on someone

Meaning: to get an advantage over that person by acting before they do.

Examples*: Our rival company managed to steal a march on us by bringing out their software ahead of ours.*
The retail business managed to steal a march on its competitors by signing an exclusive export agreement with Europe.
John and I were both trying to win Courtney's heart, but he stole a march on me when he managed to get tickets to Courtney's favorite band.

Check your progress (15)

1. He was afraid another scholar was going to …….. and publish first.
a. shoot himself on the foot b. set in c. steal a march on him

2. The …… of rules and regulations is both contradictory and confusing.
a. plethora b. battle of wills c. maxim

3. You can't …….. Granny's old bookcase - it's a valuable antique.
a. set in b. Join the ranks of c. give away

4. Annie and Phil were engaged in a silent ……, each refusing to leave.
a. battle of wills b. plethora c. perusal

5. Some reports have contained …….. accounts of deaths and mutilations.
a. funny b. lurid c. depressed

6. In many schools, the rot is beginning to …..….. . Standards are falling all the time.
a. join the ranks b. get away c. set in

7. A quick …….. of the latest Chinese economic indicators doesn't bolster one's faith.
a. fighting chance b. perusal c. plethora

8. With five minutes of the game left, our team still has …….. of winning.
a. a fighting chance b. a maxim c. a perusal

9. The painting had been executed with …….. attention to detail.
a. lurid b. meticulous c. penchant

10. It was as if he was doing a …….. of a president returning from an overseas trip.
a. penchant b. baptism of fire c. parody

Answers; 1.c 2.a 3.c 4.a 5.b 6.c 7.b 8.a 9.b 10.c

Keep up with

Meaning: to do whatever is necessary to stay level or equal with someone or something.

Examples: *Even though he's been travelling, he's kept up with what's going on back home.*
He talks so fast, I can't keep up with what he's saying.
They pioneered the product, but now they have to keep up with the competition as regards innovation and price.

One step ahead

Meaning: A little bit more prepared, skilled, or successful than someone or something else; able to outmaneuver or outpace someone or something.

Examples: *I've been working extra hard so that I'm one step ahead of the new girl threatening to take my job.*
That crook hasn't been arrested yet because he's always one step ahead of the cops.
One of the reasons why they’re so successful as a business is because they always seem to be one step ahead of the competition.

Run out of steam

Meaning: lose impetus or enthusiasm; to lose momentum and fail.

Examples: *After hours working on this project, I'm running out of steam-let’ take a break?*
Toward the end of the lecture, he seemed to run out of steam, leaving us with no conclusion.
The promised economic recovery seems to have run out of steam. The campaign had finally run out of steam.

Go off the rails

Meaning: begin acting in an uncontrolled or unacceptable way.

Examples*: Our project has started going off the rails ever since the manager up and quit last month.*
My youngest son started going off the rails shortly after getting into drugs in high school.
Things go off the rails a little after a clever twist in the third act, but it scarcely matters.

Maverick

Meaning: (noun) an unorthodox, independent, nonconformist person.

Examples: *John is a real maverick and always does things his own way.*
He was considered as something of a maverick in the publishing world.
She is more maverick while I am slightly more conventional.

End up

Meaning: to reach something or somewhere, eventually or by accident.

Examples: *She'll end up penniless if she continues to spend like that.*
They're travelling across Europe by train and are planning to end up in Moscow.
After working her way around the world, she ended up teaching English as a foreign language.

Flabbergasted

Meaning: astounded; feeling shocked because of something you were not expecting

Examples: *Whenever I read an Agatha Christie mystery novel, I am always flabbergasted when I learn the identity of the murderer.*
When they announced her name, the winner just sat there, flabbergasted.
She is flabbergasted by the whole affair.

Down the line

Meaning: at a further, later, or unspecified point; in the future.

Examples: *If you don't do your homework now, it'll be a problem down the line when you don't know the material for the exam.*
I do want to get married, but down the line, not any time soon.
We've had problems with this software all along the line. It was a complete waste of money.

Drop in

Meaning: to go somewhere without announcing or planning it. (Also drop by or drop over.)

Examples: *We can drop in on her while we're in town.*
I hate to drop in on people when they aren't expecting me.
You're welcome to drop in at any time.

In the driving seat

Meaning: in control; in a dominant or influential position.

Examples: *With the new CEO in the driver's seat, the company has turned in its most profitable quarter in years.*
Now that Fred is in the driver's seat, there is a lot less criticism about how things are being done.
Joan can't wait to get into the driver's seat and do what she can to turn things around.

Move up a gear

Meaning: To begin to do something in a more energetic, vigorous, or effective manner than previously.

Examples: *They're going to have to move up a gear if they want to beat the returning champions.*
I notice that you've really moved up a gear with your work lately. Great job!
After a disappointing first half, United moved up a gear and took control of the game.

Lithe

Meaning: (adj.) graceful, flexible, supple.

Examples: *Although the dancers were all outstanding, Joanna’s control of her lithe body was particularly impressive.*
He was a fabulous athlete, full of lithe, quick movements.
She represented the era's ideal of lithe, athletic, modern American womanhood.

Carry on

Meaning: 1. continue an activity. 2. to behave in an angry, excited, or emotional way.

Examples: *If you carry on spending money like that, you'll end up in debt.*
For the moment we've been told to carry on as usual.
'It's no good you carrying on, Mother,' said Sally. 'I'm not going to marry him.'
When you live above a bar, someone is always carrying on when you're trying to sleep.

U-turn

Meaning: a sudden and drastic reversal, as of opinion, policy, fortune, trend, etc.

Examples: *After a huge public outcry about the controversial program, the president quickly made a U-turn and announced that he would not support the plan.*
The disastrous unveiling of the tech giant's latest gadget marks a major U-turn in their otherwise unyielding success.
If the decision yesterday to reprieve the threatened Milford Haven and Holyhead coastguard stations are U-turns, then U-turns are to be welcomed.

Life in the fast lane

Meaning: live in a way which seems full of activity and excitement but which often involves a lot of pressure. (Opposite Life in the slow lane)

Examples: *Tired of life in the fast lane, Jack, a fifty-ish American businessman, decides to give it all up to fulfill a dream of becoming a painter.*
He always lived his life in the fast lane, and he ended up dying at a very young age.
She knew how to have a good time, and had a reputation for living in the fast lane.

Death knell

Meaning: a warning of the end of something.

Examples: *The opening of the superstore will sound/toll the death knell for (= cause the failure of) hundreds of small independent shops.*
Online delivery is not the death knell for record companies.
When she was elected, she said that it was the death knell of the poll tax, and she was right.

Take a nosedive

Meaning: to suddenly and rapidly begin to decline in physical, emotional, or psychological health or stability; to suffer a sudden loss or decline in value or success.

Examples: *My father has held out bravely in his fight against cancer, but I'm afraid he's taken a nosedive in the last couple of weeks.*
Shares in the company are taking a nosedive ever since news of the tax scandal went public.
The New Zealand dollar took a nosedive when the central bank said it is now more likely to cut rates as both the global and domestic economic outlook weaken.

Count on

Meaning: to depend on someone or expect something.

Examples: *I can always count on my sister to cheer me up after a tough day.*
I hope you weren't counting on a Christmas bonus because I don't think we're getting them.
I was counting on getting a raise when I made the decision to purchase a house.

Check your progress (16)

1. We have always been able to ……. you to bring a fresh perspective to the table.
a. carry on b. count on c. keep up with

2. The arrival of large supermarkets sounded the …… of many small local shops.
a. death knell b. U-turn c. maverick

3. The government was forced to do a …… after protests about their taxation policy.
a. death knell b. maverick c. U-turn

4. He turned and saw a ….. figure in a track suit pounding the pavement towards him.
a. down the line b. lithe c. flabbergasted

5. At 69 he is as firmly ……. of the company as ever.
a. in the driving seat b. maverick c. death knell

6. Graf drove a forehand shot …… to win the match.
a. in the driving seat b. off the rails c. down the line

7. He was considered as something of a …… in the publishing world.
a. nosedive b. maverick c. death knell

8. A good teacher is always at least ……. of his students.
a. one step ahead b. down the line c. U-turn

9. It's impossible to …….. a conversation with all this noise in the background.
a. count on b. ended up c. carry on

10. His acting career ……. and he turned to drink for solace.
a. moved up a gear b. took a nosedive c. ended up

Answers; 1.b 2.a 3.c 4.b 5.a 6.c 7.b 8.a 9.c 10.b

On autopilot

Meaning: automatically, without thinking about one's actions, generally because one has done something many times in the past.

Examples: *By the second week of data entry, I could fill in the spreadsheets on autopilot. Making bottles, changing diapers, and putting the baby to sleep were all challenging at first, but now I feel like I'm doing it all on autopilot.*
Sometimes I arrive at work without remembering how I got there, like I was on autopilot the whole time.

Bump into someone

Meaning: to chance on someone; to meet someone by chance.

Examples: *Guess who I bumped into downtown today?*
We didn't mean to exclude you! When Chad and I went out, we just bumped into the rest of the group, that's all.
I happened to bump into Mervyn Johns in the hallway.

The cat’s whiskers

Meaning: to be better than everyone else.

Examples: *Boy, that singer last night was the cat's whiskers, wasn't she?*
She also knew that the medicine could only be made from a cat's whisker.
I felt like I was the cat's whiskers as he handed me my crash helmet and we zoomed off down the road on full throttle, drawing even more attention to myself.

Call off

Meaning: to cancel or decide not to do something.

Examples: *We had to call off the party when she got sick.*
Union leaders called the strike off at the last minute.
If we have much more rain, the game might be called off.

Do up

Meaning: to attach a piece of clothing using buttons, laces, or a zipper.

Examples: *He can’t do up his own coat or shoes yet, he’s only two.*
These trousers must have shrunk - I can't do them up.
If you put any more in that suitcase you won't be able to do it up!
This watch strap is very fiddly - can you do it up for me?

Dog’s life

Meaning: a very unhappy and unpleasant life.

Examples: *He's been leading a dog's life since his wife left him.*
You whipper-snappers think you've got a bright future ahead of you, but it's a dog's life, I tell you!
Aren’t you tired of leading a dog’s life? Why don’t you get a job?

Jubilant

Meaning: feeling or expressing great happiness and triumph.

Examples: *The fans were jubilant at/about/over their team's victory.*
Thousands of students and teachers will be jubilant at the additional funding.
There were milling, dense crowds of jubilant patriots at that event in the war.

Beat a dead horse

Meaning: waste energy on a lost cause or unalterable situation.

Examples: *He keeps trying to get it published but I think he's beating a dead horse.*
We've all moved on from that problem, so there's no use beating a dead horse.
The PM is trying to beat a dead horse by invoking the martyrs (in his election speeches).

Exorbitant

Meaning: (of a price or amount charged) unreasonably high.

Examples: *Some hotels charge exorbitant rates for phone calls.*
This follows concerns raised on the low-quality meat being sold at exorbitant prices as well as other food products.
But lately, he's spent an exorbitant amount of time in the public eye.

Fall apart

Meaning: 1. to break into pieces. 2. to fail or stop working effectively.

Examples: *I picked up the book and it fell apart in my hands.*
He bought some cheap shoes that fell apart after a couple of months.
The deal fell apart because of a lack of financing.
Their marriage fell apart when she found out about her husband's affair.

Bizarre

Meaning: very strange and unusual (eccentric, flaky, freakish).

Examples: *What she was saying was rather bizarre.*
A bizarre thought leaped into his mind.
Many costumes are bizarre works of art ranging from toothbrushes to mattresses and packets of sweets.

Shed crocodile tears

Meaning: to display false, insincere, or hypocritical sadness or remorse.

Examples*: Jessica shed crocodile tears over the expulsion of her rival, Jacob.*
He cries crocodile tears for the industry that his party sought to destroy.
You seem to be crying crocodile tears at the thought of having to miss work tomorrow.

Picturesque

Meaning: (of a place or building) visually attractive, especially in a quaint or charming way. (of language) unusual and vivid.

Examples: *It was a pretty town with a picturesque harbour and well-preserved buildings.*
We strolled through the picturesque streets of the old city.
The illustrator intended not only to explore the picturesque aspects of the poem, but also to present his work as a painting.

A leopard can’t change its spots

Meaning: it's impossible for one to change their character, even if they will try very hard. (old habits die hard)

Examples: *“Brendan: ‘Do you think he’ll ever stop lying to us?’ William: ‘I doubt it; after all, a leopard never changes its spots.’ ”*
Jacky tried to be kind; but a leopard can’t change its spots, she was still very mean.
She is still going after married men!! It is truly impossible for a Leopard to change his spots.

Account for

Meaning: 1. to form the total of something. 2. to explain the reason for something or the cause of something.

Example: *Students account for the vast majority of our customers.*
High-tech companies account for 32% of the total value of the payrolls in the area.
Justin got home late and his mum demanded that he account for his whereabouts earlier.
You are supposed to account for their strange behavior.

A piece of the action

Meaning: A part of the profits or success from an activity.

Examples: *Once Sarah heard that Mel was starting a new software company, she decided she wanted a piece of the action and asked to be his business partner.*
Within five years, every car manufacturer was at it. The hatchback explosion had begun and everyone wanted a piece of the action.

Splash out on

Meaning: to spend (money) freely or extravagantly (on something).

Examples: *So much so that, six years after her last outing to a swimming pool, she decided to splash out on a new costume and take her first dip of the 21st Century.*
You can splash out on fine dining and indulge your every fantasy.
The average parent looks set to splash out more than pounds 850 on day trips, outings and holidays over the summer.

Cover lots of territory

Meaning: 1. to travel to, deal with, or be responsible for a large, specific area. 2. to be thorough and comprehensive in what is presented or dealt with.

Examples: *That lecture really covered the territory in only an hour.*
This thesis will attempt to cover the territory of English Law from 1950 to the present.
When I was a reporter, I had to cover the territory of the entire northern part of the state.
The sales manager was responsible for all of the eastern states and personally covered the territory twice each year.

Check your progress (17)

1. Web services security ……., which cannot be explored all at once.
a. covers a lot of territory b. beat a dead horse c. shed crocodile tears

2. His successors never again ran the town, as he did, but they always had …….
a. dog's life b. the cat's whiskers a piece of the action. c.

3. North American sales ……. 40% of the worldwide market.
a. do up b. fall apart c. account for

4. The castle stands in a …….. setting surrounded by hills.
a. picturesque b. Jubilant c. exorbitant

5. Politicians ……. over the plight of the unemployed.
a. Cover lots of territory b. Beat a dead horse c. shed crocodile tears

6. The house is my responsibility, and I can't just let it …….
a. cry wolf b. fall apart c. beat a dead horse

7. …… housing prices have created an acute shortage of housing for the poor.
a. Bizarre b. Picturesque c. Exorbitant

8. Would you ……. these buttons for me? I seem to be all thumbs today.
a. do up b. call off c. splash out on

9. I tried to avoid her, but it was just my luck to ……. her.
a. fall apart b. bump into c. account for

10. However, when we are ……., we often act unconsciously or habitually.
a. on autopilot b. called off c. the cat's whiskers

Answers; 1.a 2.b 3.c 4.a 5.c 6.b 7.c 8.a 9.b 10.a

Fall out

Meaning: to quarrel or disagree with someone about something.

Examples: *Apparently, Gina fell out with Dave last week, and now they're not talking to each other at all.*
Bill fell out with Sally over the question of buying a new car.
Bill fell out with John about who would sleep on the bottom bunk.

Cry wolf

Meaning: call for help when it is not needed, with the effect that one is not believed when one really does need help.

Examples: *They have been known to cry wolf so if anything goes wrong they can say they warned everyone.*
Farmers have cried wolf in the past but this time, the industry really is at crisis point.
I'm sure there's no real crisis—Janet is always crying wolf so that we'll do her work for her.

Eavesdrop

Meaning: to secretly listen to a conversation.

Examples: *I began to seek out sources of comprehensible input, eavesdropping (harmlessly!) when alone on trains or in coffee shops.*
Have you heard that paranoid tale about how Google, Facebook and other tech giants are actually eavesdropping on you through your phone all the time to deliver targeted ads.
He added that the company uses advanced technology to block eavesdropping or hacking into 5G networks.

Feral

Meaning: wild, savage.

Examples: *That beast looks so feral that I would fear being alone with it.*
Left on their own for survival, the horses turned "feral"— a term for domestic animals that become wild.
If there are food shortages, if Britain goes feral, that's not how she wants to be remembered.

A wolf in sheep's clothing

Meaning: a person or thing that appears friendly or harmless but is really hostile.

Examples: *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*
Don't trust Dana—she's a wolf in sheep's clothing who will try to steal your position.
The politician portrayed himself as moderate, but turned out to be a wolf in sheep's clothing with a radical agenda.

Bury one's head in the sand

Meaning: to try to avoid, a particular situation by pretending that it does not exist.

Examples: *Stop burying your head in the sand. Don't pretend that everything's all right.*
Lou, you can't bury your head in the sand about your health—please, make an appointment with your doctor and get that rash checked out!
A: "How has Peter been handling the break-up?" B: "Oh, just burying his head in the sand and ignoring his feelings."

Inveterate

Meaning: (adj.) stubbornly established by habit

Examples: *I grew up in a family of matriarchs. They were all inveterate storytellers.*
I'm the first to admit that I'm an inveterate cider drinker—I drink four pints a day.
In televised exchanges, she accused her opponent, a stalwart of the Chicago political establishment, of running a "corrupt organization" and being an inveterate liar.

Keep one's finger on the pulse

Meaning: be aware of all the latest news or developments.

Examples: *He claims that he has his finger on the pulse of the computer industry.*
I have to keep my finger on the pulse of the city if I want to be a good reporter.
It is hard to keep your finger on the pulse of Washington, D.C. but a U.S. senator must do it.

Erudite

Meaning: well educated, knowledgeable, well read ,well versed, cultivated, civilized, intellectual.

Examples: *The great Flemish painter who dominated European art in the first half of the 17th century was sociable and connected, charming and erudite.*
My English teacher is such an erudite scholar that he has translated some of the most difficult and abstruse Old English poetry.
Mizrahi describes his mother, Sarah, erudite and a devotee of high fashion.

Move the goalposts

Meaning: to change the rules while someone is trying to do something in order to make it more difficult for them.

Examples: *We'd almost signed the contract when the other guys moved the goalposts and said they wanted more money.*
Claiming victory after cutting the tax by a small fraction when in fact you had said you'd abolish it altogether is really moving the goalposts, isn't it?

Despotism

Meaning: tyranny, dictatorship, totalitarianism, authoritarianism, absolutism.

Examples: *To surrender them, though, surely would doom us to despotism.*
The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism.
Does anyone imagine that the people who fought to bring an election to DR Congo will now relax and allow for despotism as usual?

not cricket

Meaning: It isn't fair, sportsmanlike, or legitimate.

Examples: *I know you want to avoid confrontation, but it's not cricket to break up with someone by text message.*
I don't see why you think it's not cricket—everyone else does it all the time.
you ought to be ashamed of yourselves; it's not cricket to bash your own gender.

Embezzle

Meaning: to steal money by falsifying records.

Examples: *The accountant was fired for embezzling €10,000 of the company's funds.*
He was accused of embezzling government funds and taking kickbacks for fighter-jet purchases, and fled the country.
Carter admitted to embezzling money from the company and depositing the money into his personal account.

Throw in the towel

Meaning: abandon a struggle; admit defeat.

Examples*:* *After trying their hand in the mobile market for just a few years, the company is already throwing in the towel after finding very little success.*
There are times when the difficulties appear too great and we just throw in the towel.
I've been working on this book for over a year, and I'm getting nowhere with it. I think I'm ready to throw in the towel.

Iron out

Meaning: to clear up, resolve or settle

Examples: *The bill is headed for a conference committee to iron out several differences.*
Negotiators might require four more weeks to finish ironing out the deal.
Hopefully, over time, there's more standardization and these design issues get ironed out.

Fool’s paradise

Meaning: a situation when someone is happy because they’re ignoring a problem or fail to realize its existence.

Examples*: He’s been living in fool’s paradise since he started trading stocks, expecting to make millions even though he doesn’t have investing experience.*
We were living in a fool's paradise thinking that the financial successes of the early 2000s would last forever.
Fred is confident that he'll get a raise this year. He seems to be living in a fool's paradise.

Eloquent

Meaning: expressive, articulate, moving.

Examples: *The best man gave such an eloquent speech that most guests were crying.*
He defied stereotypes: Shen is educated and eloquent, and he provides for himself.
His songs, like his presentation, were direct, eloquent, understated and communicative.

Punch/ Blow/ Hit under the belt

Meaning: to unfairly target one's weakness or vulnerability.

Examples: *That's not fair! You told them I was the one who ordered the wrong-size carpet. That's hitting me below the belt.*
But they have never hit below the belt, their tweets have been critical, of course, but highly witty, satirical and fun to read.
The Armenian authorities hit below the belt of the people when they sank the fact of the gas tariff growth.

Check your progress (18)

1. It is more manly and just because it is done under provocation and it does not ……
a. throw in the towel b. eavesdrop c. hit the boss below the belt

2. And it's better to know the truth than to live in a ……...
a. fool's paradise b. despotism c. wolf in sheep's clothing

3. We hope they can …… their differences and get on with working together.
a. iron out b. fall out c. embezzle

4. It is forbidden to ……. or divert the land compensation fees and other expenses.
a. eavesdrop b. cry wolf c. embezzle

5. It was a filthy trick, totally unsporting and certainly ……
a. feral b. not cricket c. eavesdropping

6. The answer to failure and sin is not to ……. but to repent and try again.
a. eavesdrop b. move the goalposts c. fall out

7. She was …….. from childhood, good at writing and melody.
a. erudite b. inveterate c. feral

8. Many ……. smokers are never able to quit completely.
a. erudite b. inveterate c. feral

9. They are …… and when they bear fruit they are full of thorns also.
a. erudite b. inveterate c. wolves in sheep's clothing

10. They often ……. over some trifling matters.
a. fall out b. cry wolf c. hit under the belt

Answers; 1.c 2.a 3.a 4.c 5.b 6.b 7.a 8.b 9.c 10.a

Intrepid

Meaning: brave in the face of danger.

Examples: *Scaling a live volcano prior to its eruption, the explorer was praised for his intrepid attitude.*
His explorations put him and his less intrepid companions in danger, but his concern was always for his instruments.
Last year, for the first time, we sent one intrepid traveler, Jada Yuan, to all 52 destinations on our Places to Go list.

Run over

Meaning: To hit or drive over someone or something with a vehicle, typically a car.

Examples: *Anderson then ran over Faram while fleeing police, according to the district attorney's office.*
The car ahead of us nearly ran over that family on the sidewalk!
I think I ran over a plastic bottle.

Achilles heel

Meaning: a weakness or vulnerable point; shortcoming, imperfection, flaw, defect.

Examples: *Fifteen years ago, he warned: "Privacy is the Achilles' heel of Internet travel planning.*
The Achilles heel of the case for nuclear power remains the issue of the disposal of waste.
Malaysia's Achilles' heel is the high level of foreign ownership of its government bonds.

Pandora’s box

Meaning: a process that once begun generates many complicated problems**.**

Examples: *Trying to fix the bug opened a Pandora's box of other issues with the computer.*
Giving time-scale promotions to the college teachers would open Pandora's Box, encouraging other provincial cadre employee to demand the same,
We've been getting hundreds of messages from listeners from around the country who have been affected by it.

The Midas touch

Meaning: the ability to make money out of anything that you undertake.

Examples: *A smart accessory is all you need to give your home the Midas touch.*
The couch had the Midas touch as he led his undefeated team through a perfect season.
And creating a golden egg from Beckham's Miami venture might take some doing - even for a man who possesses the Midas touch.

A Trojan horse

Meaning: Something that initially seems innocuous but is ultimately malicious.

Examples: *That personable new hire turned out to be a Trojan horse—she stole our intellectual property and sold it to the competitor!*
This small reduction in the basic tax rate was merely a Trojan horse for the far more drastic cutting of the top rate from 70 to 28 per cent.

Insular

Meaning: separated and narrow-minded; tight-knit, closed off.

Examples:*It will focus its charges on insular acts like sharing passwords or hacking.*
In many ways the US is an insular society, and people there are less likely to study foreign languages than those who live in other parts of the world.

The sword of Damocles

Meaning: a constant and imminent peril, danger or trouble.

Examples: *Since her diagnosis, it is as if a sword of Damocles is hanging over our family.*
Individuals implanted with it live under a sword of Damocles: They risk electrocution and possible death if they leave the Sprint Fidelis alone.
Cooking while striving to maintain the Michelin rating was like "working under the sword of Damocles."

Pay off

Meaning: 1. to repay a debt or bill in full. 2. to yield profits or benefits. 3. to bribe.

Examples: *I should have enough in my account to pay the phone bill off this month.*
We just finished paying off the car, and you want to start looking at a newer model?
Wow, those private lessons have really paid off—your Spanish sounds totally fluent!
If this venture doesn't pay off, we'll be forced to declare bankruptcy.
Despite the clear evidence, the criminal was still acquitted. He must have paid off the jury!
We paid off the committee members, so our application should go through without a hitch.

Leave no stone unturned

Meaning: to make every possible effort, use every possible source or resource; to search in all possible places.

Examples: *In the difficult weeks ahead, we'll leave no stone unturned in our search for a peaceful solution to the crisis.*
The chief promised that no stone would be left unturned in the hunt for the killer.
My goal is to leave no stone unturned in our effort to dramatically increase sales and, of course, maintain adequate margins and profitability.

Fiddle while Rome burns

Meaning: to occupy oneself with unimportant matters and neglect important ones during a crisis.

Examples: *The Australian community understands the seriousness of the situation. It is the Federal Government that has been fiddling while Rome burns.*
With the world's population growing fast and millions getting hungrier every day, the leaders of the rich nations just seem to be fiddling while Rome burns.
The account was falling through, but he was more worried about missing his golf game-talk about fiddling while Rome burns!

Give off

Meaning: to emit, discharge, or radiate something.

Examples: *The heater is giving off a strange smell these days.*
She really gives off an angry vibe, so I thought she disliked me for the longest time!
While metabolizing, or turning the nutrients into energy, the bacteria give off gaseous waste that make you go "toot.

Petrified

Meaning: very frightened, especially when you cannot move or decide what to do.

Examples*: In the "Harry Potter" series, Ron Weasley is petrified of spiders.*
a colleague brought her baby into the office and she hid in the loo because she was so petrified of holding it.
I was absolutely petrified. I couldn't move, I was frozen.

Run/ come across

Meaning: meet or find by chance; find or see accidently.

Examples: *They ask that people running across pay them money.*
But there are other, perfectly innocent ways spouses run across each other's stuff.
While I am there, I run across a book called Offline – which promises to help me "avoid the potentially disastrous side-effects of digital pollution".

Ambivalent about

Meaning: feeling two different things about someone or something at the same time.

Examples: *He's ambivalent about quitting his job to start his own business; he wants his freedom, but there are risks.*
he's "very ambivalent" about seeking justice for what he said was "obviously a war crime."
I was ambivalent about our tryst and feeling fragile about where it might lead.

The (hand)writing on the wall

Meaning: The very apparent signs that something bad will happen in the future.

Examples: *The President refuses to see the handwriting on the wall (= that he will soon be defeated).*
You need to resign now. The writing on the wall says the company is going to fold, and there's no reason you need to go down with it.
The handwriting on the wall bodes poorly for many aquatic species, but there is hope that we can make some changes to save some of them.

Halcyon days

Meaning: A tranquil period of happiness, especially in the past.

Examples: *Ah, those were the halcyon days, before our country was at war.*
I doubt whether the wool industry will ever see those halcyon days again.
I had the sense of peace and lightness that I associated with the halcyon days at La Chorr.

Deride

Meaning: to laugh at mockingly, scorn.

Examples: *The native speaker often derided the other teacher's accent.*
To deride this series as uneven would falsely imply that it shows the least interest in steadiness.
Mr. Cain frequently derides Democrats in web videos and on social media.

Check your progress (19)

1. It's easy enough to …… this advice from a vantage point of false pragmatism.
a. give off b. deride c. come across

2. The increase in electricity prices is …… for many small businesses.
a. the writing on the wall b. the Pandora's box c. the Achilles heel

3. By pure accident he had …… the very man who could solve the mystery.
a. run over b. come across c. derided

4. Some animals …….. an unpleasant odor that deters attackers.
a. give off b. pay off c. are ambivalent about

5. Both sides agreed to …… in their efforts to end the dispute.
a. run over b. fiddle while Rome burns c. leave no stone unturned

6. Unemployment, like …….. was always accompanying the workers.
a. the sword of Damocles b. Pandora's box c. Achilles heel

7. You let Tom buy lottery tickets for you. He has …….
a. a Trojan horse b. the Midas touch c. the sword of Damocles

8. The corrupt minister is regarded as the government's … and is expected to resign.
a. Halcyon days b. sword of Damocles c. Achilles heel

9. Even the most …….. social workers were aghast at the enormity of it all.
a. insular b. petrified c. intrepid

10. It mixes humour and sentiment in a characteristically ……. way.
a. insular b. petrified c. intrepid

Answers; 1.b 2.a 3. b 4.a 5.c 6.a 7.b 8.c 9. c 10. a

Pyrrhic victory

Meaning: a victory that is won by incurring terrible losses.

Examples: *She won the court case, but it was a Pyrrhic victory because she had to pay so much in legal fees.*
Winning a trade war by destroying both imports and exports would be a Pyrrhic victory.
Ultimately, the tax proposal failed — becoming a Pyrrhic victory for health advocates and a new talking point for the tobacco company.

Insatiable

Meaning: incapable of being satisfied.

Examples: *Can worldwide caviar stocks support this insatiable demand?*
When we finally realize that we are in this together, that is when we will move away from our insatiable appetite for more.
The human costs of the country's insatiable ambitions would be a worthy subject.

Demure

Meaning: quiet, modest, reserved.

Examples: *The nuns tried everything to turn me into a demure and obedient little girl who would grow up to do needlepoint, but it didn't work.*
Though everyone else at the party was dancing and going crazy, she remained demure.
Clothing trends moved toward edgy, casual looks, away from Mr. Wu's, ladylike styles.

Deferential

Meaning: showing respect for another's authority.

Examples: *Donata is always excessively deferential to any kind of authority figure.*
Many state courts are deferential to their legislatures.
I'm a 27-year-old woman from a culture that is hugely deferential to parental opinion.

Big Brother

Meaning: a person or organization exercising total control over people's lives.

Examples: *Big Brother will be watching you from this week when spy cameras start to operate in Essex.*
"Having Gigi alongside me is nothing but beneficial," said Areola of the competitor he now describes as a "big brother".
Any comprehensive peace deal with Kim must deeply involve China, the political and economic big brother of the North.

Wanton

Meaning: undisciplined, lewd, lustful.

Examples: *Joanna's wanton demeanor often made the frat guys next door very excited.*
Their behavior was "extreme, malicious, wanton, and outrageous", the complaint says.
Jail records show he's held on murder, arson, wanton endangerment and public intoxication charges.

Jekyll and Hyde

Meaning: someone with two personalities - one good and one evil.

Examples: *Thomas claimed that his wife started behaving like "Jekyll and Hyde" and would immediately snap for no apparent reason.*
He said that Chief Leonard was known as "Jekyll and Hyde" in the department.
Prosecutors described Matthews as a "Jekyll and Hyde" character, forcing a sad look on her face when police and media were around.

Push the right buttons

Meaning: to do the things that are needed to produce a desired effect or result.

Examples: *It is hard to know if you're pressing the right buttons because one reader's fantasy is another reader's yawn.*
Our challenge is to push the right buttons and focus on areas where we can add value.
The coach knows how to push all the right buttons to get his players ready for the game.

At the cutting edge

Meaning: at the forefront of technological developments or advancements.

Examples: *Our routers have been amazingly stable, while running protocols that are at the cutting edge of Internet development.*
Lower speeds reduce friction heat at the cutting edge, and therefore reduce overall wear.
The company has always prided itself on being on the cutting edge of computer technology.

Hot off the press

Meaning: newly-circulating bit of news or a gossip. Freshly printed or just released.

Examples: *Did you hear that Mara dumped Jim? It's hot off the press!*
Hey, it's hot off the presses—Greg got the promotion over Paul.
Here is a copy of the new Perry Hodder novel. It's hot off the press.

Vociferous

Meaning: loud, boisterous, vehement, outspoken, vocal, forthright, frank, candid.

Examples: *I'm tired of his vociferous whining so I'm breaking up with him.*
Russia and Belarus are allies with close political, economic and military ties, but they regularly engage in vociferous trade arguments.
Metsker insisted on buying these machines despite vociferous opposition from election integrity advocates and independent computer science experts.

Gas guzzler

Meaning: a large car with very high petrol consumption.

Examples: *In Oregon, people who drive bigger gas guzzlers actually pay less tax through the program.*
Remember when we all sold our gas guzzlers for fuel efficient models.
Ironically, bikeshares would need more gas guzzlers on the road to get more funding.

Oil the wheels

Meaning: to facilitate, expedite, ease, or aid something or some process.

Examples: *The clients have been reluctant to sign on for another year, so we're offering a cash incentive to help oil the wheels.*
Hopefully, this shift in public opinion will help oil the wheels of immigration reform.
Credit cards greased the wheels of the consumer boom by allowing us to buy what we want, when we want.

Figure out

Meaning: to investigate or think something through in order to understand it.

Examples: *Researchers are ramping up efforts to figure out why some vaccines protect for mere weeks but others work for life.*
The war wasn't going to last forever, we foolishly thought, and someday we needed to figure out what it all meant.
They filled five poster boards with 100 sticky notes to help figure out the logistics of the show order and cues.

Innate

Meaning: inborn, native, inherent

Examples: *She was motivated by an innate desire to rid the world of pain and oppression.*
His incredible athletic talent is innate, he never trains, lifts weights, or practices.
Often, confidence requires believing that a talent is learnable rather than innate.

Crowd puller

Meaning: (noun) an event, person, or display that attracts a large audience.

Examples: *The camels, one of whom had a month-old baby, were a crowd puller as they ambled towards a bucket of nuts at the end of the arena with their jockeys hanging on.*
For that reason, I am very proud that we have created a worldwide crowd puller with this SUV model from the main plant in Ingolstadt.
AN annual ploughing contest aims to be a real crowd puller when it gets underway today.

Inhibit

Meaning: to prevent, restrain, stop.

Examples: *This approach to work does not inhibit his personal happiness or stability.*
Moreover, the experiment employed a chemical that inhibited overall brain activity.
A sense of loyalty seems to inhibit him from discussing that divergence too openly.

Waiting in the wings

Meaning: not yet active or important, but are ready or likely to be so soon; to be ready and available to help or replace someone.

Examples: *The team has several talented young players waiting in the wings.*
My assistant is waiting in the wings to take my job once I retire. We'll be waiting in the wings, so just signal us if you need anything during your speech.

Check your progress (20)

1. Angels are always ……, pardon the pun, waiting for any of us to ask for assistance.
a. pushing the right buttons b. hot off the press c. waiting in the wings

2. Over the 25 years, the Mardi Gras had been a big money spinner and huge …….
a. crowd puller. b. Jekyll and Hyde c. gas guzzler

3. Officials and organizations are still …… how to provide relief.
a. oiling the wheels b. waiting in the wings c. figuring out

4. Americans are embracing …… thanks to rock-bottom prices at the pump.
a. gas guzzlers b. crowd pullers c. Big Brothers

5. The book is …….. and will not be available in bookstores until January.
a. innate b. hot off the press c. at the cutting edge

6. The Mets would once again ..... to get the right bench boss for the right moment
a. wait in the wings b. push the right buttons c. inhibit

7. Gyarados is known for its fierce temper and …… destructive tendencies.
a. wanton b. insatiable c. deferential

8. She was constantly criticized by the press for not being …….. enough.
a. wanton b. insatiable c. deferential

9. Wall Street's appetite for technology investments still seems ……..
a. insatiable b. deferential c. vociferous

10. …… reactions by distraught owners account for some of the headlines.
a. Deferential b. Vociferous c. Insatiable

Answers; 1.c 2.a 3.c 4.a 5.b 6.b 7.a 8.c 9.a 10. b

Vex

Meaning: to confuse or annoy.

Examples: *Part of what vexes Republicans is Trump's unpredictability*
His tendency to embrace uphill battles sometimes vexed his more pragmatic colleagues.
He would set me free from the people and circumstances that vexed me.

Spitting image

Meaning: a perfect likeness or counterpart.

Examples: *Like the speakers, the touchpad is a spitting image of the original Blade.*
Following claims the man was the "spitting image" of David Schwimmer.
He just wants to remould her into the spitting image of his fantasy woman.

Fair-weather friend

Meaning: a person whose friendship cannot be relied on in times of difficulty.

Examples: *Bill stayed for lunch but he wouldn't help me with the yard work. He's just a fair-weather friend.*
A fair-weather friend isn't much help in an emergency.
A fair-weather friend might try to corner you into loaning them something precious.

Rub shoulders with

Meaning: associate or come into contact with another person.

Examples: *These conferences always have a meet-and-greet portion so you get a chance to rub shoulders with the heads of the tech industry.*
During the three-day conference, business students listen to and rub shoulders with veteran venture capitalists and successful young entrepreneurs.
It is pricey, but the new owners could rub shoulders with celebs such as Robin Williams.

Use up

Meaning: to consume, use up or finish something

Example: *Your brother used up the last of the tea bags so we had to buy some more!*
We used up the paper products in no time and bought more.
These experiences are fast, private to you, and use up less battery.

Through thin and thick

Meaning: through good times and bad times in spite of all the difficulties.

Examples: *He’s been a good friend to her through thick and thin.*
Our company has survived through thick and thin, and we'll be able to get through this ordeal as well.
Over the years, we went through thick and thin and enjoyed every minute of it.

Stand by

Meaning: 1. not act or do anything. 2. be loyal to.

Examples: *He just stood by when the police beat up the demonstrators.*
we are simply not willing to stand by while too little is done by football authorities and social media companies to protect players from this disgusting abuse.
She stood by her husband in times of trouble.
I agree and absolutely stand by the decision made.

Old flame

Meaning: a former lover.

Examples: *I saw my old flame the other day and she looked great.*
Yeah, Ben is her old flame—they dated last summer.
Last week Alec was seen dining with his old flame Janine Turner in New York.

Muster up

Meaning: to gather or bring together.

Examples: *Finally last week, she mustered up the courage to escape.*
Legislators should muster up the compassion - if not for the animals, then for their taxpaying constituents - to pass this act.
I was silent for a while before I mustered up the courage to politely decline his offer.

Footloose and fancy-free

Meaning: having no attachments, especially romantic ones; free to do as one pleases.

Examples: *Now that I have a family and a mortgage, I miss being footloose and fancy-free.*
When I was in my twenties, footloose and fancy-free, I would travel at the drop of a hat .
All the rest of them have wives, but John is footloose and fancy-free

Inept

Meaning: not suitable or capable, unqualified; clumsy; not graceful in expression.

Examples: *She proved how inept she was when she forgot two orders and spilled a pint of cider in a customer's lap.*
He also called the investigation "inept and incomplete".
The offenses were consistently brilliant and the defenses consistently inept, the perfect recipe for excitement.

A mine of information

Meaning: Someone or something that contains a lot of knowledge about a topic.

Examples: *You should ask Amanda for advice about your cake recipe—she's a mine of information about baking.*
My grandmother was a mine of information on the family's history.
People criticize television, but for children it's a mine of information.

Gobble up

Meaning: 1. or eat hastily or hungrily in large pieces. 2. . to use or deplete something quickly and in its entirety.

Examples: *The wolf said that he was going to gobble the little girl up.*
Now that the baby is eating solid food, she just gobbles up anything we put in front of her.
Liberal newspapers gobbled up thousands of new subscribers.
I gobbled up every word of that book, and now can't imagine ever returning to it.

Complacency

Meaning: (noun) self-satisfaction; ignorance of danger.

Examples: *Simon tried to shock his friends out of their complacency by painting a frightening picture of what might happen to them.*
Ben stressed that complacency and overconfidence were the enemies of scientific progress.
We are launching this deliberately bold, audacious campaign to jolt our world leaders from their complacency.

A man of many parts

Meaning: a man with great ability in many different areas.

Examples: *He was a man of parts—a painter, Egyptologist, and biographer.*
Preston was recalled as being 'a man of many parts—scientist, scholar and musician.
Parkinson was a man of many parts; he was active in politics, writing pamphlets under the pseudonym of "Old Hubert" and was a knowledgeable natural scientist.

Face up to

Meaning: to confront with courage someone or something representing a threat or unpleasantness; accept responsibility, blame, or a particular reality.

Examples: *You are simply going to have to admit your mistake and face up to the boss.*
You must face up to the authorities if you have done something wrong.
The manager finally faced up to the problem of theft.

A whizz kid

Meaning: a child or young adult, who is exceptionally skilled or intelligent**.**

Examples: *He was developing software by the time he was 10 years old—he's a total computer whiz kid.*
Those whiz kids at the spelling bee are always so impressive to watch.
Sarah's the new whiz kid in accounting. She'll help you tackle the budget in no time.

Put someone down

Meaning: to criticize, belittle, disparage, deprecate, denigrate.

Examples: *The teacher is always putting me down for small mistakes.*
The boss is always putting me down in front of everyone in the office. It's really making my life miserable.
Tommy, don't put your brother down like that—if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything.

Check your progress (21)

1. Genuine laughter can pull us up; ridicule ……...
a. puts us down b. stand by us c. use us up

2. You will encounter times when you are wise to ……. your sins and errors
a. use up b. muster up c. face up to

3. Doctors have warned against …… in fighting common diseases.
a. whizz kids b. complacency c. old flames

4. The mounting legal costs quickly ……. their savings.
a. gobbled up b. face up to c. put down

5. Economists have proved notoriously …… at predicting upturns and downturns.
a. to be a man of many parts b. to be a mine of information c. inept

6. If he could ……. more strength, he might pull through.
a. gobble up b. muster up c. vex

7. He would not …….. and let his pet project be killed off.
a. stand by b. gobble up c. use up

8. She'd stuck by Bob …… no matter what happens.
a. footloose and fancy-free b. fair-weather friend c. through thick and thin

9. The more we …… …. her, the more we come to appreciate her excellent qualities.
a. vex b. rub shoulders with c. gobble up

10. I'd know you anywhere. You're the ……. of your mother.
a. spitting image b. fair-weather friend c. old flame

Answers; 1.a 2.c 3.b 4.a 5.c 6.b 7.a 8.c 9.b 10.a

Clandestine

Meaning: (adj.) kept secret or done secretively, especially because illicit.

Examples: *We are injured and sometimes killed by clandestine procedures.*
A foreign agent is a person who is knowingly engages in clandestine activities on behalf of a foreign power.
New controls on the fishery are expected to clamp down on clandestine sales.

String to one’s bow

Meaning: to have more than one interest, skill, or resource.

Examples: *With all this varied job experience under my belt, I have more than one string to my bow if this particular career path isn't to my liking.*
I've got a job interview next week, but I'm still handing out my résumé so that I'll have more than one string to my bow.
In order to stand out as an artist in this overcrowded genre, it is necessary to have at least one outstanding - or at least distinctive - string to one's bow.

Ham up

Meaning: to exaggerate or overdo, especially with extravagant emotion.

Examples: *This is a serious play, so please don't ham up your part.*
When we realized we were being filmed, we all started behaving differently, hamming it up for the cameras.
Hamming up the eulogy was disgraceful, especially since he didn't even know the deceased.

Indolent

Meaning: (adj.) wanting to avoid activity or exertion; lazy; inactive, inert.

Examples: *But he's as determined as his manner is indolent.*
My MST classmates are so indolent, they wouldn't read the book for homework.
Suddenly, indolent cells become cancers that spread and kill.

Circumspect

Meaning: wary and unwilling to take risks; cautious.

Examples: *Klobuchar was generally more circumspect in her interview.*
They are now arguing internally for Barr to be more circumspect in public statements.
We were as circumspect as possible about actually giving away season 2 plot points.

Highly strung

Meaning: very nervous and easily upset.

Examples: *I determined to say nothing about the former to my wife, for she is a nervous, highly strung woman.*
She's highly strung as she breaks down, saying her husband's death was all her fault.
Glasgow-born Laura plays highly strung executive Lydia Rodarte-Quayle in the US drama about a science teacher who cooks up illegal drugs.

Chide

Meaning: scold or rebuke.

Examples: *He lives with his two sisters and his mother, who often chide him to be more strict with the boys.*
They chided him over his interactions with the human resources official.
Liu chided U.S. officials for bringing cases against Chinese nationals without first informing their Chinese counterparts.

Make mincemeat of

Meaning: defeat decisively in a fight, contest, or argument.

Examples: *If he doesn't stop teasing me, I'm going to make mincemeat of him.*
You better practice for Sunday's match, or your opponent will make mincemeat out of you.
The professor made mincemeat of the speaker at the conference.

Appease

Meaning: to calm, satisfy; make peace with.

Examples: *When Jerry cries, his mother gives him chocolate to appease him.*
The announcement is part of a series of recent decisions by the administration aimed at appeasing the sector.
it’s not going to appease the crowds. Their first demand is that Bouteflika step down.

Loose cannon

Meaning: someone who has the propensity to act unpredictably or to lose their temper very quickly.

Examples: *You really have to be mindful of what you say to Jake. He's a loose cannon, and the smallest things will send him into a fit of rage.*
The star quarterback's reputation as a loose cannon hurt his chances of being signed by a new team.
He has a reputation as a loose cannon whose comments sometimes upset Wall Street.

Incisive

Meaning: clear, sharp, direct; intelligently analytical and clear-thinking.

Examples: *I think that is such an incisive question, and I think about it all the time.*
The lyrics are as incisive as always, hilarious, and filled with bathos and joy.
The veteran journalist was one of the most incisive critics of the new autocratic wave.

Callous

Meaning: (adj.) harsh, cold, unfeeling.

Examples: *The murderer's callous lack of remorse shocked the jury.*
the reported details are a reminder of the arbitrary and callous administration of the country's immigration laws.
His latest comments, though, might be just as callous and ignorant.

Stock up

Meaning: to build up a supply of something.

Examples: *I hadn't stocked up on food, so I wasn't ready to feed Kate and her friends.*
We stocked the house up with food, so you should have plenty to eat while we're gone.
The kitchen is running low on a few things, but Brady's coming round to stock us up tomorrow.

Brusque

Meaning: (adj.) short, abrupt, dismissive.

Examples: *Simon’s brusque manner sometimes offends his colleagues.*
Some people I talked to were nice, but others were vague and brusque, even rude.
They also were measurably numbed to intrusive or brusque touches.

Wet blanket

Meaning: a dull or depressing person who spoils other people's enjoyment.

Examples: *Jack's fun at parties, but his brother's a wet blanket.*
Don't invite Nicole to the party. She's such a wet blanket that she'll probably just complain the whole time.
David was tired of being called a wet blanket by his friends just because he doesn't drink alcohol.

Connive

Meaning: to plot, to scheme; encourage or assent to illegally or criminally.

Examples: *She connived to get me to give up my plans to start up a new business.*
He is elusive and conniving, earnest and manipulative, brutal and desperate.
Nixon schemed, connived, and did everything he thought was necessary to achieve victory.

Glad rags

Meaning: clothes for a special occasion; smart or showy clothes.

Examples: She changed out of her glad rags and tugged on old jeans.
This isn't a formal event, so there's no need for your glad rags.
Let's put on our glad rags and go out on the town.

Sniff out

Meaning: 1. to discover where something or someone is by smelling. 2. to uncover, reveal, or expose someone or something through some form of investigation.

Examples: *At customs, dogs are used to sniff out drugs in passengers' luggage.*
We've sent a pack of dogs to sniff the fugitive out.
If the company is up to anything fishy, the auditor will sniff it out.
Our lead investigative journalist sniffed out the politician leaking information to foreign intelligence agents.

Check your progress (22)

1. A police dog, trained to ….. explosives, found evidence of a bomb in the apartment.
a. ham up b. sniff out c. appease

2. Their purpose is to …….. at wars of aggression and to profit by them.
a. chide b. stock up c. connive

3. He had ranged ahead, limiting himself to ….. commands and a variety of signals.
a. brusque b. circumspect c. highly strung

4. We were shocked at the ……. disregard for human life.
a. brusque b. callous c. incisive

5. Because of his restless behaviour, he was regarded as a …….
a. wet blanket b. glad rag c. loose cannon

6. Send me a quick signal—and then sit back and watch me ……. them for you.
a. making mincemeat of b. chide c. ham up

7. She has a little bit of a screw loose, maybe too ……..
a. circumspect b. indolent c. highly strung

8. When Williams left college early, he became fat and …….
a. indolent b. brusque c. incisive

9. Lots of people learn to teach English so they'll have another ……..
a. loose cannon b. string to their bow. c. **wet blanket**

10. Videos may be rented from ……. companies that offer home delivery.
a. indolent b. highly strung c. clandestine

Answers; 1.b 2.c 3.a 4.b 5.c 6.a 7.c 8.a 9.b 10.c

Implacable

Meaning: 1. being appeased, unforgiving or mitigate. 2. unable to be stopped; relentless.

Examples: *Watch out: once you shun Grandmother's cooking, she is totally implacable.*
He went to great lengths to protect himself against the implacably hostile investigators.
Hers is a vision of implacable change, but also domestic tranquility.
With implacable authority, Mary Seacole introduces herself through a series of scenes.

Harp on

Meaning: to dwell on; talk or write about to a tedious and excessive extent.

Examples: *She kept harping on the fact that she had no household help at all.*
I wish you would quit harping on Jeff all the time.
He couldn't be all that bad. Stop harping on my mistakes and work on your own.

Down-at-heel

Meaning: having a poor, shabby appearance.

Examples: *A lot of so-called hipsters try to affect a down-at-heel look, a sort of "shabby-chic" appearance out of second-hand clothing.*
John has been looking increasingly down-at-heel ever since he lost his job last year.
When I was a down-at-the-heels detective, I couldn't afford to eat here.

Alacrity

Meaning: brisk and cheerful readiness; eagerness, willingness.

Examples: *Often technology that doesn't totally work is embraced with alacrity.*
It's great that the coalition began this conversation 18 months ago, and it's important that it move forward with alacrity.
So there is no reason to be moving with too much alacrity.

Inside job

Meaning: a crime committed by someone working or living at the scene of the crime.

Examples: *There was little doubt that it was an inside job, thought the inspector.*
It's a particularly cunning way to carry out an inside job.
The robbery must have been an inside job—only three people have access to the safe.

Pick at

Meaning: 1. to nag, hassle, or berate one; to be very critical of or negative about one. 2. to pull at something with one's fingertips. 3. to eat a small amount of food in tiny bites and without much interest.

Examples: *Why are you always picking at Jimmy? You know how sensitive he is.*
If you keep picking at those scabs, that scrape is never going to heal!
I always pick at the bottom of my shirt when I get nervous like that.
Why are you picking at your food? Did you eat something earlier and spoil your appetite?

Impertinent

Meaning: 1. rude, insolent. 2. not pertinent to the matter under consideration.

Examples: *Most of your comments are so impertinent that I don't wish to dignify them with an answer.*
Some impertinent man sinks low and goes as far as accusing our ancestors of thievery.
Today, Khashoggi is no longer able to ask such impertinent questions.
He made himself available to the Buzz to answer a few impertinent questions.

Cumulative

Meaning: increasing by successive addition.

Examples: *And I haven't even gotten to issues concerning the deficit or cumulative debt.*
There's also been a blurring of the line between test prep coaching and conventional, cumulative learning of material.
She talks instead of the cumulative effect of spending years on the road.

Pull the wool over one's eyes

Meaning: to deceive someone by telling untruths.

Examples: *He tried pulling the wool over our eyes by hiding the profits in separate accounts, but we were quick to catch onto his scheme.*
Be prepared for your kids to try to pull the wool over your eyes when they're teenagers.
Don't try to pull the wool over her eyes. She's too smart.

Put forth/ forward

Meaning: To offer or propose something for consideration.

Examples: *The newly elected mayor has put forth a number of plans for dealing with the housing crisis in the city.*
I want each of you to put three new ideas forth by the end of every week.
Who first put forth the idea that the Earth is round rather than flat?

Take for a ride

Meaning: to con, swindle, or deceive one.

Examples: *That get-rich-quick guru took tens of thousands of people for a ride, lining his own pockets with their investments.*
I can't believe I let that guy take me for a ride like that.
You really took those people for a ride. They really believed you.

Impudent

Meaning: casually rude, insolent, impertinent.

Examples: *She battles to suppress her attraction to this impudent man.*
The impudent young woman looked her teacher up and down and told him he was hot.
He was, in Smith's words, "pushy, wild, charismatic, street-smart, impudent, often hilarious."

Decry

Meaning: to criticize openly; to express strong disapproval of.

Examples: *The leader of the Defense party decried the appalling state of Polish roads.*
The Democratic Movement held a news conference Thursday to decry the amendments.
live newsreaders around the world decried the tragic loss of this 12th-century marvel.

Impeccable

Meaning: exemplary or flawless.

Examples: *He was known as the 'super-smart Brit' with impeccable manners.*
Langston was self-effacing and mischievous, with a warm smile and impeccable English.
Gantz's Blue and White Party says the former army chief of staff's conduct was "impeccable."

A Free ride

Meaning: an unfair advantage or special treatment that a person receives without earning it or paying for it.

Examples: *Even though his grades were poor, Gary thought he should get a free ride to college because he was a football star.*
You're getting a free ride living with your parents. You don't even have to pay rent!
I never wanted anyone to think I was getting a free ride or special treatment from the boss.

Crank out

Meaning: to produce something in large amounts, like a machine does.

Examples: *With the deadline looming, the staff was able to crank out the layout in just a few hours, thank goodness.*
I write a novel every few years, but that author seems to crank one out every few months!
The automated production line could really crank out parts, but the quality was shoddy.

Acquiesce

Meaning: to agree without protesting.

Examples: *Mexico is acquiescing to the U.S. and handling this in a law enforcement.*
They accused Democratic leaders of acquiescing to their party's most liberal voices.
Providers must acquiesce to a 40% reduction in reimbursements.

Rat on

Meaning: to inform an authority figure of one's bad or illegal behavior.

Examples: *The hoodlum ratted on the rest of the gangsters.*
I can't believe you ratted on me like that to mom and dad—I'm never telling you anything ever again!
The criminal ratted on his accomplices to avoid jail time.

Check your progress (23)

1. However, under pressure, he is forced to …….. his cousin.
a. rat on b. crank out c. acquiesce

2. Normally he …….. about 1, 000 pieces and then mixes them together.
a. decries b. takes for a ride c. cranks out

3. Throughout, she has been a stunning singer with ……. taste for material.
a. cumulative b. impeccable c. impudent

4. On the cover was a picture on an ……. boy sticking out his tongue.
a. impudent b. implacable c. cumulative

5. Arguments were …….. for changing some of the rules of the game.
a. cranked out b. acquiesced c. put forth

6. Depression is often caused by the …… effects of stress and overwork.
a. cumulative b. impeccable c. impudent

7. Bush, having already had cereal, usually …….. a bowl of fruit.
a. harps on b. cranks out c. picks at

8. The militia are turning out with great …….. both in Maryland and Pennsylvania.
a. inside job b. alacrity c. free ride

9. I note this, and …….. her imperfections, as a defence mechanism.
a. harp on b. pick at c. crank out

10. The government faces ……. opposition on the issue of nuclear waste.
a. cumulative b. impudent c. implacable

Answers; 1.a 2.c 3.b 4.a 5.c 6.a 7.c 8.b 9.a 10.c

Haughty

Meaning: disdainfully proud.

Examples: *The superstar's haughty dismissal of her co-stars will backfire on her someday.*
She seemed both weak and imperious, helpless yet haughty.
Even unconscious, he looked proud and haughty, but there was nothing to be afraid of.

Do a runner

Meaning: leave or escape from somebody/a place, often after doing something wrong.

Examples: *They were arrested after doing a runner from an expensive restaurant.*
'What happened to his wife?' 'She did a runner. Nobody's seen her for months.'
The young man did a runner when the police went up to question him.

Aberration

Meaning: something that differs from the norm.

Examples: *It allows the public to see the threat as a trend rather than an aberration.*
They were even more emphatic in their condemnation of the decision as an aberration.
Trump's conduct in Paris was anything but an aberration.

Gratuitous

Meaning: uncalled for, unwarranted.

Examples: *Repressive tactics seem unnecessary, gratuitous, and wrong.*
Every evening the guy at the fish and chip shop gives me a gratuitous helping of vinegar.
There was a lot of gratuitous meanness and sort of misguided decision-making.

Gluttony

Meaning: *(n.)* overindulgence in food or drink.

Examples: *In fact, I think that keeping the whole pie for oneself is sheer gluttony.*
Helen's fried chicken tastes so divine, I don't know how anyone can call gluttony a sin.
Both men felt guilty about their gluttony that day and challenged each other to do better.

By no stretch

Meaning: unable to happen (within, at, or beyond the limits of the imagination).

Examples: *By no stretch do I think our team has a chance of winning tonight.*
By no stretch will we be able to pull this off.
By no stretch of the imagination does the factory operate efficiently.

Prescriptive

Meaning: relating to the imposition or enforcement of a rule or method.

Examples: *These guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive.*
Other financial firms are asking the BoE to provide more prescriptive recommendations.
This week's report marked a minor revolution in the academy's traditionally prescriptive approach.

A Poacher turned a gamekeeper

Meaning: someone who now protects the interests which they previously attacked.

Examples: *He used to represent an oil company but now works for an environmental organization; a real case of the poacher turned gamekeeper.*
That was very enjoyable at the time but perhaps I am a poacher turned gamekeeper now that I'm back in the city centre.
In the security business you need to employ someone who is a poacher turned gamekeeper.

Temperance

Meaning: 1. abstinence from drinking alcohol. 2. the trait of avoiding excesses.

Examples: *Max has become an advocate of complete temperance.*
Kelly might value normalcy and temperance over chaos and impulse.
We remember Franklin as the apostle of hard work, temperance, and self-control.

The straight and narrow

Meaning: a straight and law-abiding route through life.

Examples: *The threat of a good beating should keep him on the straight and narrow.*
You should have no trouble with the police if you stick to the straight and narrow. Roger was the kind who followed the straight and narrow every day of his life.

Forsake

Meaning: to abandon.

Examples: *The town was forsaken because the nearby volcano threatened to erupt.*
The Lord goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.
She is no longer hailed as a moral icon, but condemned for forsaking the oppressed.

Avarice

Meaning: excessive greed.

Examples: *The banker's avarice led him to amass an enormous personal fortune.*
Avarice drives the search for the smallest advantage in the cutthroat world of high finance.
Some people's avarice extends to hoarding the food for later, ignoring that it's generally only intended to feed you while you're at work.

Cushy number

Meaning: a job that is easy, stress free, and typically well paid.

Examples: *Since I got this cushy number managing a toy store, I've gotten to sit around playing with toys all day.*
Since Sarah got that cushy number with the bank, she has been driving a sports car and is buying a second home!
I get to work from home and spend a lot of time with my kids; it's certainly a cushy number.

At the top of the ladder

Meaning: In the highest or most important position in a group or organization.

Examples: *With her new promotion, Jill is now at the top of the ladder as CEO.*
Your expenses are so high and the returns are so low - unless you're at the top of the ladder.
They are a really good team and they deserve their position at the top of the ladder.

Distraught

Meaning: (adjective) very agitated and upset from mental conflict

Examples: *He was so distraught that he chopped off his inked finger.*
Mary became distraught when she found out that her son was being sent into war.
Olivia is still distraught and embarrassed. She hasn’t been home much.

Get a foot in the door

Meaning: to have a chance to do something that could lead to further opportunities.

Examples: *An internship might not sound very interesting, but it's a great way to get your foot in the door at this company.*
I really wanted to be a photographer and the only reason I took the job was because I thought it might help me get a foot in the door.
Temping is a good way to get your foot in the door.

Disarmament

Meaning: (noun) the reduction of military or weapons

Examples: *The protestors called for a complete disarmament.*
The diplomatic talks meant to provide the North with concessions in return for disarmament.
A 2003 disarmament law effectively prevented most Brazilians from buying guns.

Sleeping partner

Meaning: a partner in a business who does not play an active role, esp one who supplies capital.

Examples: *He made up his mind to be a sleeping partner in the Opera.*
The same day I was placed in a shop in Broadway, belonging to a firm of which I now understood the colonel was a sleeping partner.
I'll just invest in your company as a silent partner.

Check your progress (24)

1. I'll just invest in your company as a ……
a. sleeping partner b. cushy number c. poacher turned a gamekeeper

2. Making contacts can help you …….. when it comes to getting a job.
a. by no stretch b. do a runner c. get a foot in the door

3. Some people are ……, some are in the middle, still more are at the bottom
a. haughty b. at the top of the ladder c. gratuitous

4. Ambition often spends foolishly what ……. had wickedly collected.
a. temperance b. avarice c. gluttony

5.This will help you, both physically and psychologically, to get back on to …….
a. the straight and narrow. b. avarice c. disarmament

6. Exercise, ……., fresh air, and needful rest are the best of all physicians.
a. gluttony b. disarmament c. temperance

7. Proponents of what are inevitably radical solutions must be unfashionably …….
a. haughty b. gratuitous c. prescriptive

8. The seven deadly sins are covetousness, envy, …….., lust, pride, anger and sloth.
a. gluttony b. gluttony c. temperance

9. A childless woman was regarded as …….., almost a social outcast.
a. an aberration b. cushy number c. sleeping partner

10. The …… attitudes of the pre-war era were slow to disappear.
a. distraught b. haughty c. prescriptive

Answers; 1.a 2.c 3. b 4.b 5.a 6.c 7.c 8.a 9.a 10.b

Commemorate

Meaning: to remember and show respect (in a ceremony).

Examples: *The nameless victims of mass killings are also commemorated at the exhibition.*
Veterans' Day is a day to commemorate soldiers who have honorably served their country.
He announced that the firefighters would receive a medal commemorating their bravery.

Track record

Meaning: a history of someone's or something's performance.

Examples: *This applicant has an excellent track record.*
The mayor brought in the new police chief because he has a strong track record of reducing crime in inner-city neighborhoods.
The company had an almost perfect track record before the scandal, which made it even more shocking.

Furtive

Meaning: *(adj.)* secretive, sly.

Examples: *She clearly thinks I am insane, pointedly ignoring my furtive readjustments.*
Other times during the trial, he glanced around the room in a furtive manner.
It seemed suspicious, so she shot a short, furtive video of them walking with it backstage.

Precipitate

Meaning: (verb) to cause to happen suddenly or sooner than expected

Examples: *Extremely high gas prices precipitated the demise of the SUV.*
A Feb. 27 loss at Villanova that precipitated a 1-6 slide to end the season.
The Six Cities study precipitated another evolutionary step in air management.

Golden handshake

Meaning: a large sum of money given to somebody when they leave their job, or to persuade them to leave their job.

Examples: *The directors will each get a large golden handshake and a pension.*
She offered me a golden handshake to get me to leave quietly, which I did.
With a dwindling school population, the town decided to offer golden handshakes to some of the teachers.

Incite

Meaning: (verb) to stir up or encourage (violent or unlawful behavior).

Examples: *Max incited the other students to rebel against the teacher.*
"Terrorist content" includes material that incites or advocates for terrorist offences.
He's trying to incite hatred, Islamophobia and, I would argue, violence against her.

Go great guns

Meaning: to do something enthusiastically and successfully.

Examples: *He was hesitant at first, but after a month, he was going great guns.*
I'm over my cold and going great guns. Business is great.
We are going great guns selling ice cream.

Disperse

Meaning: (verb) cause to go in different directions.

Examples: *The crowd dispersed as soon as the concert was over.*
When you bring a fun, lively, well-lit and secure entertainment facility, that disperses crime.
They said it was an attempt by security forces to disperse the demonstrators.

Go belly up

Meaning: to have a poor, undesired, or ruinous outcome; to fail completely or not come together at all.

Examples: *We were all set to have our picnic on Saturday, but the weather went belly up and we had to cancel at the last minute.*
Everything started off well, but the business went belly up when one of the partners resigned.
The single currency could well go belly-up within two or three years.

Allege

Meaning: (verb) assert or claim wrongdoing by someone (typically without proof)

Examples: *The teacher alleged that Max cheated on the exam.*
Authorities in the United States are probing Huawei for alleged sanctions violations.
She also alleged that he choked her, damaged her house, and then left with their child.

Go to the wall

Meaning: 1. (of a business) go out of business; fail. 2. support someone or something, no matter what the cost to oneself.

Examples*: Thousands of firms are expected to go to the wall this year.*
Despite putting forth our best effort, we went to the wall and came home losers.
I would go to the wall for you, so I'll certainly endorse you on the campaign trail.
This man will go to the wall for you if you're on his side.

Recant

Meaning: to reject or disavow a formerly held belief, usually under pressure.

Examples: *The authorities forced him to recant his conclusion that the Earth orbits the sun.*
Burton quickly recanted his statement, which was inconsistent with evidence at the scene.
But La Toya later recanted her claims, and nobody in the Jackson family ever confirmed any of these rumors.

Go bust

Meaning: to spend or lose all of one's money : to go broke.

Examples: *I'm going to go bust if I have to pay any more medical bills this month! I'm surprised his business went bust—I really thought it was poised for success.*
Christian Purslow has dismissed fears that the club will go bust.

Fractious

Meaning: 1. troublesome or irritable. 2. stubbornly resistant to authority or control.

Examples: *Within the team, an already fractious debate will become even more heated.*
May was also criticized as focusing on her party and its fractious naysayers.
Rockets were much too fractious to be tested near thickly populated areas.
A fractious animal that would not submit to the harness.

Noxious

Meaning: harmful or unpleasant; injurious to physical or mental health.

Examples: *Be careful applying pesticides. Their fumes are often quite noxious to humans.*
The rest was made up of other noxious gases also monitored by the UBA.
Savage inserted himself directly into a noxious political climate.

Rat race

Meaning: a way of life in which people are caught up in a fiercely competitive struggle for wealth or power**.**

Examples: "*Owning one's moment" is a clever way to rebrand "surviving the rat race."*
I was so wrapped up in the rat race that I was putting an inordinate amount of stress on myself.
Who hasn't dreamed of giving up the rat race up to live on a sunny island?

Nocturnal

Meaning: (adjective) active at night

Examples: *"Nocturnal plants have flowers that open at night and close by day".*
Mountain lions are primarily nocturnal and do almost all of their hunting at night.
Red pandas are nocturnal and are generally found in wooded areas.

Glass ceiling

Meaning: barrier to advancement, especially for women and people of color.

Examples*: There was never a glass ceiling and women had no barriers to break--this was our playing field all along,"*
In many professions a woman cannot break through the glass ceiling to the upper level of management.
Harriet knew she'd never be promoted - she would never get through the glass ceiling.

Check your progress (25)

1. Not all the women who broke the political ……. had an easy start.
a. rat race b. glass ceiling c. golden handshake

2. Children are forced into the ……. for higher salary and prestige.
a. rat race b. glass ceiling c. track record

3. There were no …… sects and gangsters to challenge his authority.
a. nocturnal b. fractious c. noxious

4. Editorials would demand that he either …….. or retire from public life.
a. go bust b. go to the wall c. recant

5. The police …… that the man was murdered but they have given no proof.
a. allege b. recant c. disperse

6. Nasty gases and smoke ……. into the ether; sewage eventually floats out to sea.
a. go great guns b. go belly up c. disperse

7. He used a perverted form of socialism to …… racial hatred.
a. incite b. allege c. recant

8. An invasion would certainly ……. a political crisis.
a. disperse b. recant c. precipitate

9. We're looking for someone with a proven ……. in selling advertising.
a. glass ceiling b. track record c. rat race

10. For the first 400 metres he was ……., but then he fell and that lost him the race.
a. going to the wall b. go belly up c. going great guns

Answers; 1.b 2.a 3.b 4.c 5.a 6.c 7.a 8.c 9.b 10.c

Laud

Meaning: to praise; glorify, or honor.

Examples: *The school's principal lauded the teacher for her ability to discipline her class.*
Prince's was lauded as an icon in Eater's annual list 38 essential American restaurants.
While parents and advocates lauded the step as important and positive, some also described the stark data as troubling.

Cloud on the horizon

Meaning: something that threatens to cause problems or unhappiness in the future.

Examples: *The only cloud on the horizon is the physics exam in June.*
Financial analysts believe that the sudden drop in oil prices points to a cloud on the horizon for the national economy.
Although we are making good profits there is one cloud on the horizon — the government may increase taxes.

Emulate

Meaning: (verb) to imitate or model yourself after; approach or reach equality with.

Examples: *Children often emulate adults that they look up to.*
This effort will show that truly dramatic and material reductions in overdose deaths are possible, and provide lessons and models for other communities to adopt and emulate.
The latest generation is on track to emulate the early 1970s and mid-1990s teams and potentially shape the Champions League talks.

Hit the roof

Meaning: to become extremely angry or upset.

Examples: *My parents are going to hit the roof if they find out we had a party here! The boss hit the roof when he saw that we'd already blown through the budget.*
My dad'll hit the roof when he finds out that I wrecked his car.

Throw a lifeline

Meaning: to provide someone with a means of escaping from a difficult situation.

Examples: *It is absolutely essential that the therapist throw a lifeline to the patient, that he give the patient hope.*
It also expected Moscow to throw a lifeline to the U.S.-Iran policy by supporting the sanctions on Iran.
It was asking a rescue crew if it wanted to throw a lifeline to a shipwrecked survivor.

Callous

Meaning: (adj.) insensitive and unfeeling toward others; emotionally hardened.

Examples*:* *The teacher was particularly callous in her treatment of the children.*
This proclivity begins in childhood with callous and cruel behaviors.
His latest comments, though, might be just as callous and ignorant.

Ballpark figure

Meaning: a rough numerical estimate or approximation.

Examples: *Do you have a ballpark figure for the cost of the renovations?*
That's just a ballpark figure—they don't know exactly how many people will be attending the event.
Ballpark figures are commonly used by accountants, salespersons and other professionals to estimate current or future results.

Taciturn

Meaning: (adjective) reserved, saying little.

Examples: *Max seems to be unusually taciturn today. Something must be bothering him.*
Furnish, a taciturn man, who says he's most comfortable outside on a farm.
Hays' transformation over the years is far less physically radical, and he's relatively taciturn.

Windfall

Meaning: an unexpected, unearned, or sudden gain or advantage.

Examples: *Investors each received a windfall of £3,000.*
UK The government is hoping to collect a windfall tax from British Electric.
The Belridge School, after receiving a financial windfall, purchased computers for all students and teachers.

Permeate

Meaning: (verb) to spread throughout (usually odor).

Examples: *The stench of the rotten food permeated the entire building.*
Dissatisfaction with the government seems to have permeated every section of society.
The table has a plastic coating which prevents liquids from permeating into the wood beneath.

Rein in

Meaning: to control something and stop it increasing.

Examples: *Consumers tend to rein in their spending in a recession.*
Some of the worst Wall Street abuses have been reined in.
We need to rein back on expenditure in the next financial year.

Epitome

Meaning: (noun) a perfect example

Examples: *Some people feel that George Bush is the epitome of arrogance.*
Even now in her sixties, she is the epitome of French elegance.
My poem is a sort of abstract, an epitome, a compendium of the lecture itself.

Tighten the belt

Meaning: to spend less money**.**

Examples: *I've had to tighten my belt since I stopped working full-time.*
Many small businesses are tightening their belts because of the slow economy.
Living on my own during college taught me how to tighten my belt and get by on not very much.

Animosity

Meaning: (noun) strong hostility, hatred.

Examples: *For some reason, Max feels a lot of animosity toward Mary.*
After the animosity of 2017, last year saw a stunning turn to diplomacy.
It quickly escalated, and the animosity between the two men exploded.

Across the board

Meaning: Applying to or impacting every part or individual in a group or spectrum of things.

Examples: *Some senior employees are unhappy that the new dress code applies to everyone across the board.*
The politician is expected to call for tax increases across the board.
Second, and worse, COLAs are applied across the board to all pensioners, no matter how lavishly provided for.

Ad lib

Meaning: (adv.) without advance preparation.

Examples: *At the end of this period the cat was returned to an ad lib diet.*
The next type of speaker, who comes after the pure ad lib speaker, is the library speaker.
Will there be investigations into the way in which hospitals are run, or are five stars just awarded ad lib?

Touch base

Meaning: to contact someone to update them or receive an update from them.

Examples: *I was just calling to touch base since it's been a few weeks since we last spoke.*
Will you please touch base with the marketing team and find out how they're progressing?
John and I touched base on this question yesterday, and we are in agreement.

Window of opportunity

Meaning: a brief time period in which an opportunity exists.

Examples: *This afternoon, I had a brief window of opportunity when I could discuss this with the boss, but she wasn't receptive.*
The summit offers a window of opportunity for the two countries to reach an agreement.
Some fear we may have already missed our window of opportunity to get the development plan approved by the city.

Check your progress (26)

1. They realize their ……. grows smaller with each passing year.
a. window of opportunity b. epitome c. animosity

2. These were not …… remarks; the man was reading from notes.
a. across the board b. ad lib c. callous

3. Its military occupation ignited Palestinian …… and poisoned the Israeli soul.
a. epitomes b. windfalls c. animosities

4. Reagan was the embodiment of leadership, the …… of optimism.
a. epitome b. window of opportunity c. animosity

5. The smell of dirt, excrement and death …… the air.
a. permeated b. tightened the belt c. lauded

6. Schumacher was ……. at the news conference following the race.
a. callous b. ad lib c. taciturn

7. NationsBank attempted to emphasize that it is not a …… institution.
a. taciturn b. ad lib c. callous

8. However, Dishman really ……. on the disparity in the ejections.
a. touched base b. hit the roof c. tightened the belt

9. Even though the level of confidence is high, I think there are some …….
a. animosities b. clouds on the horizon c. windows of opportunity

10. Obviously, I don't need to know exactly, but just …… of what they could do.
a. ballpark figure b. windfall c. epitome

Answers; 1.a 2.b 3.c 4.a 5.a 6.c 7.c 8.b 9.b 10.a

Copious

Meaning: : (adjective) plentiful, abundant in supply.

Examples: *We drank copious amounts of coffee in order to stay awake during class.*
I think a lot of people think Keto is all about bacon salami and copious amounts of cheese.
Though the goal of such games is usually to get from one area to the next, that framework supports copious possibilities.

Cut the mustard

Meaning: come up to expectations; reach the required standard.

Examples: *I need a new worker from the temp agency—the one you sent over keeps mixing up orders and just isn't cutting the mustard.*
This toaster doesn't cut the mustard anymore. No matter what setting you choose, your toast comes out charred!
Truth be told, Donald Sutherland can still cut the mustard as a charismatic TV star.

Prolific

Meaning: : (adjective) very productive.

Examples: *Noam Chomsky is a very prolific author. He's written many books and articles.*
General McMaster was a prolific note-taker, recording details for later reference.
The 100 prolific offenders in the sample were involved in nearly 3,600 criminal cases.

Gloves are off

Meaning: people are arguing or competing without regard to their actions or each other's feelings.

Examples: *In the software price war, the gloves are coming off.*
The gloves are off in this match; both teams are purposely committing fouls against opposing players!
The gloves are off now - Mom and Aunt Gee are screaming at each other in the kitchen.

Finagle

Meaning: (verb) to get something through manipulation or dishonest means

Examples: *Ted attended all the football games he could finagle tickets for.*
He somehow finagled his way into the army as a lieutenant.
How can I finagle a place on the guest list for the big party?

Think outside the box

Meaning: think in an original or creative way.

Examples: *You won't come up with good ideas until you think outside the box.*
Let's think outside the box for a minute and try to find a better solution.
We know that in today's sluggish economy, business owners have to think outside the box.

Candor

Meaning: (noun) the quality of openness and honesty in attitude and expression.

Examples: *In all candor, I think that Max is a complete nincompoop.*
Millsap's candor conveyed a good chunk of the significance attached to this win, but not all of it.
She writes with candor about the strain her running sometimes put on her marriage.

Umbrage

Meaning: *(n.)* resentment, offence.

Examples: *He called me a lily-livered coward, and I took umbrage at the insult.*
Instead of taking umbrage at being offered a senior discount, try a bit of humor.
They channel that umbrage into music that refuses such limitations.

Suck it and see

Meaning: the only way to know if something will work or be suitable is to try it.

Examples: *For other baits, and for different waters, it is a case of suck it and see.*
We have no way of knowing whether it's the right strategy — we're going to have to suck it and see.
The Government's suck-it-and-see approach has led to a level of prosperity which is the envy of the world.

Expedite

Meaning: : (verb) to make something happen sooner (usually an action or process).

Examples: *Aidoc said its technology, approved by U.S. and European regulators, helps radiologists expedite patient treatment*
Max called the cable company to see if they could expedite the installation process.
Vollink said the Corps will work with levee operators to expedite interim repairs.

Venerable

Meaning: *(adj.)* 1. deserving of respect because of age or achievement. 2. impressive by reason of age.

Examples: *I mean, donating a building — one with your family's venerable name on it.*
The venerable Chinese sage Sun Tzu once said that "in the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity."
This venerable institution, a mainstay of America's 19th-century country towns, made land selling a game as popular as poker.

Put off

Meaning: to delay or move an activity to a later time. (antonym: bring forward)

Examples: *I put off a visit to the dentist as long as I could.*
I'm sorry I've been putting you off lately; it's just been really hectic in work and at home.
Has Helen said anything to you about me recently? I feel like she's putting me off.

Truculent

Meaning: (*adj.)* ready to fight, cruel.

Examples*: He was playfully truculent throughout his 20 minutes.*
This club doesn't really attract the dangerous types, so why was that bouncer being so truculent?
But why treat the finger-painting of a truculent toddler as if it were a Picasso?

Gregarious

Meaning: (adjective) sociable, outgoing

Examples: *Max is a very gregarious person. He likes to be around people.*
Bradley Atkins, as someone who "was this gregarious, adventurous, hilarious person.
There's a tremendous amount of energy, a very gregarious personality, loves basketball, loves to coach, loves to work with the kids.

Test the waters

Meaning: to find out whether something is likely to be successful before you do or try it.

Examples*: I want to test the water before I make the proposal at the general meeting.*
Before you start marketing it you should test the waters.
Lenders continue to test the waters, often declining loans which might have been approved in the past.

Credence

Meaning: (noun) belief that or acceptance that something is true

Examples: *Todd accused the attorney general of giving credence to a "conspiracy theory."*
They are giving him great credence because he will tell them what they want to hear.
As a result, the deletion of his recent photos on her Instagram page seems to lend credence to the rumors that he cheated once again.

Live on shoestrings

Meaning: to live within a very tight or limited financial budget.

Examples: *Some of them managed to live on shoestring budgets of only $20 a month.*
"Is she implying that I am going to live my life on a shoestring?"
Don't live on a shoestring. Meeting your basic life expenses is one margin call that you have to meet.

Rebuke

Meaning: (verb) to express strong criticism or disapproval.

Examples: *Mary rebuked her children for not cleaning their bedrooms.*
But New Mexico's attorney general rebuked the militia.
The university also rebuked the video in its own statement on Saturday.

Check your progress (27)

1. He ……. the claim that the military keeps law and order.
a. finagles b. expedites c. rebukes

2. Research by the University of Michigan lends this idea some ……..
a. umbrage b. candor c. credence

3. And where Michel is expressive and …….., Hutler is reserved.
a. venerable b. gregarious c. truculent

4. That deposition probably will be …… until early next year.
a. expedited b. put off c. finagled

5. Once that is determined, winding this up should be ……..
a. put off b. expedited c. finagled

6. Schroeder again took …… and canceled his own vacation in Italy.
a. umbrage b. candor c. credence

7. It inspires you to …….. and use your imagination.
a. think outside the box b. put off c. finagle

8. If action is not taken after yet another example of his improper behavior then …….
a. the gloves are off. b. suck it and see c. think outside the box

9. I knew diet alone wasn't gonna ……. for me.
a. rebuke b. cut the mustard c. test the waters

10. Despite …… sun, temperatures will remain below normal Saturday afternoon.
a. prolific b. copious c. venerable

Answers; 1.c 2.c 3.b 4.b 5.b 6.a 7.a 8.a 9.b 10.b

Breadwinner

Meaning: a person who earns money to support their family, typically the sole one.

Examples: *Fitri's father died when she was young and she is the breadwinner.*
His wife and children, who are American citizens, remain in West Palm Beach, struggling to survive without the breadwinner of the family.
“With my husband gone, this debt is now an even greater burden for me as he was the main breadwinner.”

Scrutinize

Meaning: (verb) to look over or inspect closely.

Examples: *When you sign the mortgage papers, be sure to scrutinize the fine print.*
Both incidents were heavily scrutinized and greeted with regret by all sides.
Federal agents and prosecutors were scrutinizing his conduct before and after taking office.

Sell one’s own grandmother

Meaning: willingness to do whatever it takes to succeed at something.

Examples*: He sold out the Gypsy Travel Agency, and for his chance to succeed, I believe he'd sell his own grandmother.*
A zealous salesperson is often willing to 'sell their own grandmother, given half a chance.
It is true that using one's social relations does not necessarily mean selling one's own grandmother, or cashing in on one's acquaintances.

Plausible

Meaning: (adjective) believable, possible.

Examples: *It doesn't seem plausible that your dog actually ate your homework.*
But there are few other plausible solutions big enough to tackle a vast problem.
The only plausible explanation is that the self-confidence of the United States really is rapidly rupturing and shrinking.

Pour money down the drain

Meaning: to waste money by spending it on something useless.

Examples: *What a waste! Buying that old car is just pouring money down the drain.*
Don't buy any more of that low-quality merchandise – that's just throwing money down the drain.
Current account customers pour money down the drain by not looking closely enough at the real cost of sticking with existing accounts.

Scrimp

Meaning: (verb) to be thrifty or parsimonious; economize.

Examples*: I have scrimped and saved to give you a good education.*
There is a risk that the debt-ridden airline may be tempted to scrimp on maintenance or security.
She scrimped and saved to care for her two younger sisters.

Against (all) the odds

Meaning: to achieve something although there were a lot of problems and you were not likely to succeed.

Examples: *Against the odds, he was able to survive being stranded in the wilderness for a week with no food.*
His lawyer worked for much less than her normal fee and, against all the odds, she won.
She struggled against all the odds before she died of her burn injuries.

Grassroots

Meaning: the most basic level of an activity or organization. Ordinary citizens**.**

Examples: *The newly elected MP expressed a wish for greater contact with people at grass-roots level.*
The process included restoring the connections between urban and provincial France, introducing more grassroots democracy, and tackling climate change.

Impeccable

Meaning: (adjective) perfect, flawless.

Examples: *He was known as the 'super-smart Brit' with impeccable manners.*
Langston was self-effacing and mischievous, with a warm smile and impeccable English.
Gantz's Blue says the former army chief of staff's conduct was "impeccable."

Public enemy number one

Meaning: a person or concept that is despised or disapproved of by a large portion of the population.

Examples: *The pharmaceutical executive became public enemy number one almost overnight with his decision to hike the price of an inexpensive but lifesaving drug. The newly elected prime minister has stated that the homelessness crisis would be considered public enemy number one under her administration.*
Enlightened citizens who turned a blind eye to religious arguments against inoculation made smallpox into public enemy number one.

Gullible

Meaning: (adjective) easily persuaded to believe something; trusting.

Examples*: Is anyone still gullible enough to believe anything on the first day of April?*
And manipulate a gullible media into amplifying the spin instead of reporting the truth.
The fact is that Cambridge sold snake oil to gullible political campaigns around the world.

The movers and shakers

Meaning: people with a lot of power and influence.

Examples: *A newspaper profile portrayed the man as a mover and shaker on Wall Street.*
He is one of the principle movers and shakers in the political arena.
The conference is going to be full of movers and shakers of the industry, so I want to make a good impression.

Conundrum

Meaning: (noun) a confusing problem or question; brain-teaser, enigma, riddle.

Examples*: A woman is the mother of five children who shared three fathers, "a mathematical riddle and parentage conundrum."*
The EU's biggest conundrum is how to ensure the Irish-UK border does not become a site of transfer of illegal or dangerous goods.
There's no question that the city's elite faces a conundrum in choosing between the two.

The power behind the throne

Meaning: a person who exerts authority or influence without having formal status.

Examples: *The president's charisma and likability got him elected, but his team of advisors is the real power behind the throne.*
Mr. Smith appears to run the shop, but his brother is the power behind the throne.
She was the real power behind the throne, a strong and determined woman controlling a weaker husband for her own aims.

Sycophant

Meaning: *(n.)* one who flatters for self-gain.

Examples: *He also denies he would be a Trump "sycophant."*
Mark is a long-time friend, ally and sycophant to this family.
He surrounded himself with sycophants, people dedicated to his promotion and their advancement.

Snake oil

Meaning: a product, policy, etc. of little real worth or value that is promoted as the solution to a problem.

Examples: *My mom keeps giving me all of these hippie-dippie pills to help my migraines, but I think they're just snake oil, honestly.*
Smooth-talking snake-oil salesmen use the telephone to take money from the foolish and the greedy and then vanish.
Tax professionals need to shut the door on the snake oil salesmen.

Taciturn

Meaning: *(adj.)*not inclined to talk; reserved, withdrawn, introverted.

Examples: *Though Magda never seems to stop talking, her brother is quite taciturn.*
Astley was a man so shy, reserved, and taciturn in his manner.
At dinner the prince usually spoke to the taciturn Michael Ivanovich more often than to anyone else.

Vilify

Meaning: (verb) to write or speak badly or abusively about.

Examples: *It was time to move on from efforts to vilify a political opponent.*
They raided each other's quarries, bribed each other's crews, and vilified each other in print and at scientific meetings.
He was a victim who was vilified and made to appear as a perpetrator as a result of false and inappropriate remarks.

Check your progress (28)

1. Why is he always trying to ……. my reputation?
a. vilify b. scrutinize c. scrimp

2. Selling need not be about ……. and ripping people off.
a. breadwinner b. the movers and shakers c. snake oil

3. People say that the prime minister's wife is …….
a. breadwinner b. conundrum c. the power behind the throne

4. It is …… of the record industry who will decide which bands make it.
a. public enemy number one b. grassroots c. the movers and shakers

5. China may be …… when it comes to internet censorship.
a. sycophant b. public enemy number one c. snake oil

6. Extensive efforts were made to improve public security at the …….. level.
a. grassroots b. conundrum c. breadwinner

7. They ……. and saved for years to buy their own home.
a. sold their own grandmother b. scrimped c. poured money down the drain

8. She could find no …….. explanation for its disappearance.
a. taciturn b. gullible c. plausible

9. Examiners were then chosen to …… the sealed votes and note them down.
a. scrutinize b. scrimp c. vilify

10. Trying to maintain an old car is like …….. to keep it roadworthy.
a. scrimping b. vilifying c. pouring money down the drain

Answers; 1.a 2.c 3.c 4.c 5.b 6.a 7.b 8.c 9.a 10.c

Square meal

Meaning: a substantial, satisfying, and balanced meal.

Examples: *The troops were tired and hadn't had a square meal for five days.*
The hot lunch program at school provides square meals for underprivileged children.
Do you survive on yogurt at lunchtime while your partner wants a square meal?

Malice

Meaning: (noun) the desire to hurt others.

Examples: *Jim has a great amount of malice towards the government.*
There was no overt malice to Durant's work, no forcing of the issue, no commotion.
Jesus didn't call us to respond with malice and vindictiveness to people who mistreat, disrespect, hurt, or offend us—even when it is justified.

Not lose any sleep over something

Meaning: to not let something worry or upset you.

Examples: *It was just a mistake. Don't lose any sleep over it.*
The business does have problems at present but it's nothing I'm going to lose any sleep over.
I'm disappointed about their decision, but I'm not losing any sleep over it.

Disdain

Meaning: (n.) lack of respect accompanied by a feeling of intense dislike.

Examples: *He is well-known for his disdain for unfair labor practices.*
From then on, they were treated as annoyances, with a sprinkling of disdain.
His writings showed a disdain for multiculturalism and hardened a reputation as a rightwing ideologue.

Outstay one's welcome

Meaning: 1. stay as a visitor longer than one is wanted. 2. become unwanted in a particular environment.

Examples: *He makes you feel you've outstayed your welcome before you've even sat down.*
Though wildly popular for a short time, the product simply outstayed its welcome in the market, and can now be found in bargain bins everywhere.
Then spend some time getting to know them but don't make it an inquisition and don't outstay your welcome.

Dichotomy

Meaning: (noun) a division into two groups or parts or two opposing viewpoints.

Examples: *There is a sharp dichotomy of opinion on his ability to lead the government.*
I don't think there's a necessary dichotomy between public defenders and great lawyers.
Most major news outlets tried to capture the dichotomy of the speech.

Creature comforts

Meaning: material comforts that contribute to physical ease and well-being, such as good food and accommodation.

Examples*: The hotel room was a bit small, but all the creature comforts were there.*
You're a long way from home and the only creature comforts you have are a television.
I'm not a camper — I truly like my creature comforts too much.

Cryptic

Meaning: (adjective) mysterious, secret, or obscure in meaning.

Examples: *Mary's comments were so cryptic that I had no idea what she was saying.*
When they cross the line, they usually do so in a clever, cryptic fashion.
You create a chaotic, cryptic language that's ambiguous that allows you to operate under the radar of the things that would detect you.

Superfluous

Meaning: *(adj.)* more than is needed, desired, or required.

Examples: *The report was marred by a mass of superfluous detail.*
Samantha had already won the campaign so her constant flattery of others was superfluous.
Much of the school day is wasted on superfluous activities.

Discord

Meaning: (noun) disagreement or conflict.

Examples: *There was a tremendous amount of discord among the PTA officers.*
These people led the charge to misinform the American people and sew discord in our country.
*Others on Instagram defended them, arguing that the account aimed to sow discord and pillory the pastors***.**

Music to one's ears

Meaning: something that is very pleasant or gratifying to hear or discover.

Examples: *The sound of the car firing up was like music to his ears.*
Her voice is music to my ears, and always gets me "right here" every time she speaks to me!
My mom hired students, and their voices were the sweetest music to my ears.

Ostracize

Meaning: (verb) to exclude from a group.

Examples: *She was declared a witch and ostracized by the villagers.*
His colleagues ostracized him after he criticized the company in public.
Because of this conformist behaviour they were more or less ostracized socially by their classmates.

Rattle one’s cage

Meaning: anger or irritate someone.

Examples: *He knows how to rattle someone's cage and make them rush the bars.*
He makes a point of taunting his opponents before each match in order to rattle their cage.
*The audience member asked a number of embarrassing questions about her past in an obvious attempt to rattle her cage***.**

Pensive

Meaning: (adjective) deep in thought; reflective, contemplative, introspective.

Examples: *She became withdrawn and pensive, hardly speaking to anyone.*
Rösler is pensive as he talks about the man who was part of Malmö’s board for 14 years.
If I’m in a pensive mood, I would maybe gravitate to a Buddha figure, like that weathered Buddha there.

Make one’s blood boil

Meaning: infuriate someone; to make someone extremely angry**.**

Examples: *It made her blood boil every time he came near.*
When I hear stories of cruelty to animals, it makes my blood boil.
It just makes my blood boil to think of the amount of food that gets wasted around here.

Tacit

Meaning: (adjective) understood or implied but not specifically expressed.

Examples: *Your silence may be taken to mean tacit agreement.*
Magic requires tacit cooperation of the audience with the magician.
While they got a frosty public response, officials say the private message was a tacit green light.

Down in the dumps

Meaning: discouraged, depressed, or sad.

Examples: *She's been down in the dumps ever since she lost the match.*
Molly's been moping around all week, and I have no idea why she's so down in the dumps.
Rob has been down in the dumps ever since Gloria broke up with him.

Salient

Meaning: : (adjective) the most noticeable, important, prominent, or conspicuous.

Examples: *The most salient feature of Mary's appearance is her Purple hair.*
She began to summarize the salient features/points of the proposal.
The article presented the salient facts of the dispute clearly and concisely.

Check your progress (29)

1. She pointed out the …… features of the new design.
a. salient b. pensive c. tacit

2. Your silence implies …… consent to these proposals.
a. cryptic b. tacit c. superfluous

3. He became so …….. that she didn't like to break into his thought.
a. salient b. tacit c. pensive

4. He was …… by his colleagues for refusing to support the strike.
a. down in the dumps b. outstayed his welcome c. ostracized

5. There has always been …….. over NATO's role in world conflict.
a. malice b. discord c. disdain

6. He has issued a short, ……. statement denying the spying charges.
a. cryptic b. pensive c. superfluous

7. There is a ……. between the academic world and the industrial world.
a. dichotomy b. creature comfort c. disdain

8. The receptionist looked at me with …… when I walked into the building.
a. discord b. disdain c. dichotomy

9. The ghosts are described as if they bear actual …… towards humans.
a. discord b. dichotomy c. malice

10. The crowd was so well-behaved that the police presence was ……...
a. superfluous b. music to their ears c. pensive

Answers; 1.a 2.b 3.c 4.c 5.b 6.a 7.a 8.b 9.c 10.a

One’s cup of tea

Meaning: Something one prefers, desires, enjoys, or cares about.

Examples: *I invited you because I thought long-distance cycling was your cup of tea. When I found out that reading wasn't his cup of tea, I knew that there wasn't much of a relationship in store between us.*
A: “Do you like the TV Show Lost?” B: “No, it's not my cup of tea.”

Placid

Meaning: (adjective) tranquil, peaceful, calm.

Examples*: My dog has a very placid temperament. She does not get upset easily.*
Things are going to get calmer, more stable, more placid and predictable in the coming year.
Viewed at a microscopic scale, water no longer seems smooth and placid.

Slap in the face

Meaning: an action or remark which insults and upsets you.

Examples: *His remarks are a slap in the face for the local community.*
The union leader described the payouts to both bosses as `a slap in the face for all the hard-working staff who now find themselves out of work'.
They promoted a colleague who had been with the company for less time than Paola and it was a real slap in the face for her.

Inane

Meaning: lacking sense or meaning; silly; empty; insubstantial.

Examples: *Grassley, who looks and sounds like white male privilege personified, constantly interrupting a woman for somewhat inane reasons.*
We saw their fawning, elementary and sometimes inane questions during those hearings.
That was possibly the most inane greeting in the history of American-Iranian relations.

Pervasive

Meaning: spreading widely throughout an area or a group of people.

Examples: *Reforms are being undermined by the all-pervasive corruption in the country.*
The influence of Freud is pervasive in her books.
Coordination failures are pervasive in financial markets and institutions.

Lose one’s touch

Meaning: no longer be able to do or handle something skillfully.

Examples: *I used to make beautiful cakes but I seem to have lost my touch.*
Dad had a real knack for letting someone down gently, but he's lost his touch.
You only beat me once in the last five games – you're not losing your touch, are you?

Petty

Meaning: of little importance; trivial.

Examples: *I’m not interested in their petty squabbles.*
Prisoners complain that they are subjected to too many petty rules and restrictions.
Village life is full of gossip and petty jealousies.

A chapter of accidents

Meaning: a series of unfortunate events.

Examples: *The whole affair has been a chapter of accidents from start to finish.*
Despite all of our planning, the birthday party was a chapter of accidents.
The reorganization of the company has been a chapter of accidents!

Facetious

Meaning: treating serious issues with deliberately inappropriate humour; flippant.

Examples: *The song is a facetious comment on this act.*
When I said that I agreed with the President's policies, I was just being facetious.
The argument about fishermen is facetious and has no factual basis.

Not to see the wood for the trees

Meaning: cannot see, understand, or focus on a situation in its entirety due to being preoccupied with minor details.

Examples: *The information presented in this textbook is so disorganized that I can't see the wood for the trees.*
The politician's opponents claimed that she couldn't see the forest for the trees, because she spent so much time trying to solve minor problems.
He often helped those who could not see the wood for the trees reach the correct decision.

Staid

Meaning: *(adj.)* sedate, serious, self-restrained; respectable, and unadventurous.

Examples: *The staid butler never changed his expression no matter what happened.*
For a time, the promised bonuses injected a dash of Oprah-style giveaway excitement into the normally staid tax debate.
I was probably the oldest and staidest person present but by no means the unhappiest.

Beyond one’s wildest dreams

Meaning: bigger or better than could be reasonably expected.

Examples: *Stockbrokers command salaries beyond the wildest dreams of most workers.*
Living in Paris was beyond my wildest dreams when I was a broke college student.
He was being paid a salary beyond most people's wildest dreams.

Sedentary

Meaning: requiring sitting or little activity; inactive.

Examples: *Fast-food and sedentary lifestyles are major factors in the obesity problem in the US.*
The authors add that not all time spent sedentary is necessarily "bad" for the brain.
But all of the athletes' heart rates were much lower than is typical for sedentary people.

Conventional wisdom

Meaning: (noun) a generally accepted theory or belief.

Examples: *This, of course, goes against the conventional wisdom.*
Conventional wisdom has it that a book should never be judged by its cover.
Conventional wisdom in Hollywood says that a movie can't succeed unless it stars a famous actor or actress.

Serendipity

Meaning: *(n.)* the occurrence and development of events by chance in beneficial way.

Examples: *It was a bumpy path, with progress both by design and serendipity.*
In an amazing bit of serendipity, penniless Mark found a $50 bill on the back seat of the bus.
He and Sarah Brown, also a geologist and co-author, and his wife, found their evidence by serendipity.

A case in point

Meaning: an instance or example that illustrates what is being discussed.

Examples: *Supermarkets often charge too much for goods. Bananas are a case in point.*
Many of the students are from Latin America. Carlos is a case in point — he's from Colombia.
Meeting the needs of future generations may need action now. Protecting the environment is a case in point.

Diligent

Meaning: having or showing care and conscientiousness in one's work or duties.

Examples: *Their lawyer was extremely diligent in preparing their case.*
As a result of their diligent research, the scientists were able to find a cure for the disease.
They made diligent efforts to carry out their programs.

Butter up

Meaning: to praise or flatter someone to make him or her more receptive or willing.

Examples: *My coworker, hoping for a raise, is always buttering up the boss.*
I tried to butter up my father by mowing the lawn before I asked to borrow the car. At least butter me up before you ask for money.

Check your progress (30)

1. The bank has to …… investors because it is in a fiercely competitive market.
a. to be the cup of tea of b. be a chapter of accidents for c. butter up

2. Many professions feel they deserve higher pay, and nurses are …….
a. losing their touch b. a case in point c. a slap in the face

3. He set out a scenario which ran against the …… at the time.
a. conventional wisdom b. serendipity c. cases in point

4. Our mission reaps rewards far ……..!
a. the wood for the trees b. our cup of tea c. beyond our wildest dreams

5. If you add too many notes to the text, the reader won't be able to …….
a. butter up b. be placid c. see the wood for the trees

6. A black eye, a torn hand, blisters on your feet — my God, what a ……
a. chapter of accidents! b. slap in the face! c. conventional wisdom!

7. This latest movie proves Altman is by no means ……...
a. facetious b. losing his touch c. a case in point

8. Bad acting, weak script and …… dialogue -- this movie is truly awful.
a. inane b. pervasive c. placid

9. His normally …… dog turned on him and bit him in the leg.
a. inane b. placid c. pervasive

10. Jazz just isn't my …….. - I prefer classical music.
a. chapter of accidents b. conventional wisdom c. cup of tea

Answers; 1.c 2.b 3.a 4.c 5.c 6.a 7.b 8.a 9.b 10.c

Tempting fate

Meaning: to take a severe risk.

Examples: *It's tempting fate to start up that mountain so late in the day.*
You're really tempting fate by not taking your car in for service when all these dashboard lights are on.
I'd love to have gone and got my teeth sorted but, in my eyes, it's been tempting fate.

Stick one’s neck out

Meaning: risk incurring criticism or anger by acting or speaking boldly.

Examples: *Look, I'm sticking my neck out for you here. I could get fired if they find out what we're up to!*
When things got really tough, I did think of chickening out. But then I'd think, I'm a Giraffe. I've got to keep sticking my neck out.
The only reason I'm sticking my neck out for you is that you were there when it mattered.

Exempt

Meaning: to free from an obligation or liability imposed on others.

Examples: *Small businesses have been exempted from the tax increase.*
Some degree courses exempt you from certain professional exams.
Local drivers are exempted from paying the tolls.

Savor

Meaning: to enjoy food or an experience slowly, in order to appreciate it as much as possible.

Examples: *He wanted to savor his time with Henrietta and their grown children.*
I sipped my coffee, savouring every mouthful.
Bill savoured the view as he cruised along the coastline.

On thin ice

Meaning: in a precarious or risky situation.

Examples: *Status quo would leave Canadiens on thin ice again.*
He kept reminding traders that the currency is treading on thin ice.
Unless we get the confirmation, we are still skating on thin ice.

Adverse

Meaning: preventing success or development; harmful; unfavourable.

Examples: *Taxes are having an adverse effect on production.*
The match has been cancelled because of adverse weather conditions.
They received a lot of adverse publicity/criticism about the changes.

Cross the bridge when you come to it

Meaning: to delay worrying about something that might happen until it actually does happen.

Examples: "*Don't borrow trouble," and "Don't cross that bridge until you come to it.*
“Don't cross a bridge till you come to it. I learned that in the war.
In the present circumstance, a doubt concerning his ability to fight could get him killed. And if he had to kill, what then? Cross that bridge when you come to it, he thought, which could be any minute now.

Rife

Meaning: *(adj.)(*especially of something undesirable) of common occurrence; widespread.

Examples: *Dysentery and malaria are rife in the refugee camps.*
Graft and corruption were rife in city government.
The office is rife with rumors that many of us will be fired.

Drop a clanger

Meaning: to make a very embarrassing mistake; to accidentally do something embarrassing.

Examples: *Conservatives in Eastleigh dropped a clanger in their election leaflet by admitting that few people will be voting for them tomorrow.*
The presenter dropped a clanger on this morning's show by referring to the singer's long-haired son as a girl.
I dropped a real clanger when I mentioned the party. He hadn’t been invited.

Stringent

Meaning: (of regulations, requirements, or conditions) strict, precise, and exacting.

Examples: *We need to introduce more stringent security measures such as identity cards.*
The most stringent laws in the world are useless unless there is the will to enforce them.
Stringent safety regulations were introduced after the accident.

More by luck than judgment

Meaning: by chance and not because of any special skill.

Examples: *More by luck than judgment he managed to land the damaged plane on the jungle airstrip.*
The casual observer might be forgiven for thinking that the occasional brief successes have occurred more by luck than judgment.
Britain often owed her survival and the relative stability of the home front more to luck than judgment.

Predilection

Meaning: *(n.)* a preference or inclination for something.

Examples: *James has a predilection for eating toad in the whole with tomato ketchup.*
Naturally, his decision reflects political and other considerations including personal biases and predilections.
This elite combined scientific interests with antiquarian predilection for collecting specimens and objects.

Home free

Meaning: assured of success because the most difficult part is over.

Examples: *Oh, we're home free now—that was the hardest part of the repair.*
I'm so relieved that the scans are clean. After months of treatment, I'm finally home free!
Hold on! We aren't home free yet – the car is still there.

Quaint

Meaning: *(adj.)* charmingly old-fashioned.

Examples: *Mary was delighted by the quaint bonnets she saw in Romania.*
In Spain, we visited a cobblestone plaza with quaint little cafés around its perimeter.
The quaint bed and breakfasts of yesterday have been replaced by upscale hotels and inns, and the village has become a mecca for top chefs.

Fat chance

Meaning: very little or no possibility.

Examples: *A: "Maybe the teacher will let us out of class early today." B: "Ha! Fat chance."*
There's fat chance the course of true love will run smoothly.
He wants to be a basketball star, but at 5' 6" there's fat chance of that happening.

Frugal

Meaning: (adj.) 1. sparing or economical as regards money or food. 2. simple and plain and costing little.

Examples: *I'm a bit too frugal to splash out on designer clothes.*
While some companies are moving to hike prices in low inflation Japan due to rising labor and shipping costs, they risk being shunned by frugal consumers.
He plans to finance his travels with savings, credit cards and frugal living on the road while posting it all on his social media accounts.

Same difference

Meaning: said when you agree that what you said was not exactly correct, but you think the difference is not important.

Examples: *A: "I told you to wear a white shirt, not a cream-colored one." B: "White, cream—same difference."*
A: "Do you want to go get the food, or will I?" B: "Eh, same difference."
'She's divorced from her husband.' 'No she's not, she's only separated.' 'Same difference.'

Emulation

Meaning: (noun) effort to match or surpass a person or achievement, typically by imitation.

Examples: *Their success is inspiring emulation from others.*
And elements of his story are still worthy of emulation and admiration.
He knew how to encourage other rabbits and to fill them with a spirit of emulation.

Check your progress (31)

1. The young man worked hard in ……. of his famous father.
a. emulation b. predilection c. same difference

2. They lived a very …… existence, avoiding all luxuries.
a. stringent b. frugal c. quaint

3. Boppard is a small, ……. town with narrow streets.
a. rife b. quaint c. stringent

4. Most readers have had a …….. to dismiss the arguments and speculations.
a. emulation b. same difference c. predilection

5. The Act imposes more ……. regulations on atmospheric pollution.
a. quaint b. adverse c. stringent

6. Los Angeles is …… with gossip about the stars' private lives.
a. rife b. adverse c. frugal

7. Despite the …….. conditions, the road was finished in just eight months.
a. adverse b. rife c. quaint

8. So the next time you ……. a new candy or potato chip, thank the flavorists.
a. exempt b. savor c. drop a clanger

9. I'll ……. and say that Bill is definitely the best candidate for the job.
a. drop a clanger b. be on thin ice c. stick my neck out

10. She felt it would be …….. to try the difficult climb a second time.
a. tempting fate b. home free c. on thin ice

Answers; 1.a 2.b 3.b 4.c 5.c 6.a 7.a 8.b 9.c 10.a

That’s all we need

Meaning: said ironically to indicate that this is something one doesn't want or need at all.

Examples: *Sally: Bill, the check you wrote to the Internal Revenue Service was returned. There's no more money in the bank. Bill: That's all we need.*
Jane: The dog died and the basement is just starting to flood. Fred: That's all we need.
Bob: On top of having too many bills to pay, now I have car trouble! Mary: That's just what you need!

Drastic

Meaning: (especially of actions) severe and sudden or having very noticeable effects.

Examples: *Many employees have had to take drastic cuts in pay.*
In the desert there’s a drastic change in temperature from day to night.
He is not under pressure from his own electorate to do anything drastic.
The company is taking drastic action to reduce its debt by $14.3 billion.

The plot thickens

Meaning: used when a situation is becoming more and more complicated and puzzling.

Examples: *The plot thickens as Debbie finds out from Simon that the plan to plant drugs at Joe's party failed.*
The plot thickens when von Enke himself disappears and it's up to Wallander to find him.
Now the plot thickens, as police have opened a line of inquiry into the governor's whereabouts on the date of the incident.

Candid

Meaning: (Adj.) openly straightforward and direct without reserve or secretiveness. 2. informal or natural; especially caught off guard or unprepared.

Examples: *I'm forty-four, and, to be candid with you, I never thought that I would be the fourth-youngest person running in this race.*
People are trying to seem candid by posting mirror selfies and photos lounging around.
She addressed the backlash in candid Instagram Live videos and recently called it "a learning experience."

Get a life

Meaning: 1. to start being productive in one's own life; to act independently and responsibly. 2. to do things one finds enjoyable and fulfilling.

Examples: *You can't just live in Mom and Dad's basement playing video games forever—you need to go out and get a life.*
After waking up with another raging hangover, I needed to grow up and start getting a life.
College isn't just about studying and getting good grades. You need to get a life—go to parties, meet new people, join a sports club, anything!

Bewildered

Meaning: perplexed and confused.

Examples: *She was bewildered by his sudden change of mood.*
He seemed weary and bewildered when a car pulled up alongside him.
They were also bewildered by their son imploring his dad to help other hockey players when he was alone on the transport bus.

Fair enough

Meaning: used to admit that something is reasonable or acceptable.

Examples: *The managers want to cut costs, which is fair enough, but they're sacrificing their employees to do it.*
A: "I think this part of the story would work better with less exposition." B: "Fair enough. I'll try to pare it back a bit."
Letting the students work the machines on their own is fair enough, but they do need some training first.

Lenient

Meaning: characterized by tolerance and mercy.

Examples: *He was fined 500 Swiss francs, or about $500, a relatively lenient punishment.*
The case drew national attention and the initial charge was criticized as being lenient.
Judge Jackson tends to be relatively lenient on convicted criminals who appear before her.

Draw on

Meaning: 1. to use something that you have gradually gained or saved. 2. to breathe in smoke from a cigarette. 3. to take money from a bank account by writing a cheque.

Examples: *This essay* ***draws on*** *the expertise of many famous academics and writers.*
Your body draws on its reserves of fat during the times when you are fasting.
He ***drew on*** *his cigarette and then coughed loudly.*
He paid with a cheque drawn on his company's account.

Draw back

Meaning: to move away from (sb) or (sth). 2. to abandon a plan or course of action.

Examples: *The postman drew back when the ferocious dog began to bark.*
She leaned forward to touch the dog but quickly drew back when she saw its teeth.
The government has drawn back from attempting reform.
The troops were so outnumbered that they were forced to draw back.

Draw in

Meaning: (of successive days) become shorter because of the changing seasons.

Examples: *Now it is September you might have noticed that the nights are drawing in.*
Always endless thoughts of season after season, of nights drawing in and out, each chasing the other in continuous movement.
Her time for walking was limited, especially with nights drawing in, so she spent her time in the Inn, pouring over poetry and reading the research.

Draw up

Meaning: 1. to prepare and write something such as a document or plan. 2. if a vehicle draws up, it arrives at a place and stops. 3. draw up a chair to move your chair so that you are sitting closer to someone or something

Examples: *Guidelines have been drawn up for dealing with emergencies.*
Work out what are your priority shots and draw up a schedule for each shooting day.
The police car drew up alongside the speeding car and told them to pull over.
Well then, draw up a seat and tell us what you think.

Time will tell

Meaning: Sooner or later something will become known or be revealed.

Examples: *Who knows what the future will bring? Only time will tell.*
It's hard to predict how this law will really impact people's lives—only time will tell.
Time will tell whether the film is truly considered a success. Some flops go on to become cult favorites.

Menace

Meaning: (noun and verb) a person or thing that is likely to cause harm; a threat or danger. Peril, hazard, jeopardy.

Examples*: A new initiative aimed at beating the menace of drugs.*
Africa's elephants are still menaced by poaching.
Drunk drivers are a menace to everyone.
Dogs running loose are a public menace.
Hurricane Hugo menaced the eastern coast for a week.

In two minds

Meaning: to experience indecision and/or conflicting emotions.

Examples: *I was in two minds about leaving London; my friends were there, but at the same time I really wanted to work abroad.*
The committee is currently in two minds about a suitable punishment, but hopefully they will reach a decision in the morning.

Novice

Meaning: someone new to a field or activity.

Examples: *It's a difficult task for anyone, let alone a novice to the restaurant business.*
Which manager - the acclaimed genius or the popular novice - will handle it better?
Zelenskiy, 41, is a political novice who is promising to build a "new country," free of graft and the old, corrupt political establishment.

Alluring

Meaning: (adj.) powerfully and mysteriously attractive or fascinating; seductive.

Examples: *I didn't find the prospect of a house with no electricity very alluring.*
She was wearing a most alluring dress at Sam's dinner party.
His technique was never perfect, but that was part of the impetuous, wild quality that made him so alluring to audiences around the world.

Pour oil on troubled waters

Meaning: to calm or settle a tense situation.

Examples*: He is an extremely experienced politician, who some diplomats believe may be able to pour oil on troubled waters.*
Friends are a blessing — they pour oil on troubled waters, drag you to parties and make you feel loved.
The twins are quarreling so I'd best go pour oil on troubled waters.

Check your progress (32)

1. He spoke calmly to them trying to ……. but it was useless.
a. get a life b. menace c. pour oil on troubled waters

2. The on-screen manual shows the ……..…. user the basics of the program.
a. lenient b. menace c. novice

3. Shop owners are struggling to combat the …… of armed robbery.
a. menace b. lenient c. novice

4. We had to ……. plans for every conceivable emergency.
a. draw back b. draw up c. draw in

5. Neither side can …… from the agreement once the contract is signed.
a. draw back b. draw on c. draw up

6. They believe that judges are too …… with terrorist suspects.
a. bewildered b. candid c. lenient

7. She packed her bags and left? leaving Matthew ……. and confused.
a. candid b. bewildered c. drastic

8. The two presidents have had …… talks about the current crisis.
a. drastic b. alluring c. candid

9. …… changes are needed if environmental catastrophe is to be avoided.
a. Drastic b. Lenient c. Alluring

10. Only …… whether it can hold its place in this competitive field.
a. the plot thickens b. being in two minds c. time will tell

Answers; 1.c 2.c 3.a 4.b 5.a 6.c 7.b 8.c 9.a 10.c

Scapegoat

Meaning: a person or a thing that is blamed for something that someone else has done.

Examples: *The captain was made a scapegoat for the team's failure.*
When things don't go well, people always look for a scapegoat.
Politicians have used the financial sector as a scapegoat for the global economic crisis.

Muddy the waters

Meaning: to make a situation unnecessarily complicated and less clear.

Examples: *His suggestions just muddied the waters further, rather than helping the situation.*
The contradictory statements will serve to further muddy the waters of the investigation.
But will her information help Wallander find the kidnappers or just muddy the waters even further?

Sedate

Meaning: (adj./ noun) calm, dignified, and unhurried.

Examples: *In the old days, business was carried on at a rather more sedate pace.*
The fight against a chemical storage site has transformed a normally sedate village into a battleground.
She preferred standard ballads and sedate pop tunes to rock music.
They plan to sedate the giant mammal with a tranquilizer.

Barefaced lies

Meaning: a shameless falsehood.

Examples: *Bill could tell a barefaced lie with a straight face .*
My opponent's assertion that I intend to raise the tax rates is baseless; it is nothing but a barefaced lie.
Miss Ophelia was so indignant at the barefaced lie, that she caught the child and shook her.

Dismay

Meaning: (noun/ verb) concern and distress caused by something unexpected.

Examples: *Aid workers were said to have been filled with dismay by the appalling conditions that the refugees were living in.*
The fans watched in/with dismay as their team lost 42–11.
She discovered, to her dismay, that her exam was a whole month earlier than she'd expected.

Pittance

Meaning: (noun) a very small or inadequate amount of money.

Examples: *She then betook herself to the business of packing, for which a small quantity of brown paper sufficed, and, having received her small pittance of wages, she returned home.*
This store was now nearly exhausted, and she had found a milliner who gave her a miserable pittance for toiling with her needle eight or ten hours each day.
Amelia thinks, and thinks, and racks her brain, to find some means of increasing the small pittance upon which the household is starving.

Name of the game

Meaning: the main purpose or most important aspect of a situation.

Examples: *The name of the game is short-term gain.*
I hope you boys know that safety compliance is the name of the game around here. We don't tolerate any tomfoolery.
Specializing is the name of the game when it comes to winning trophies.

Play a waiting game

Meaning: to postpone or delay a decision or course of action so as to first see what might happen or what one's opponent(s) might do.

Examples: *The lawyer advised her to play a waiting game and see if her husband would come up with more alimony.*
The market is rather tumultuous at the moment, so I think we're better off playing the waiting game rather than making any hasty decisions.
If Louise really does want to marry Shane at some point, there's only one course for her to follow: back off, cool down and play the waiting game.

No strings attached

Meaning: with no special rules, conditions or limits.

Examples: *Take advantage of our huge summer sale, where you can earn up to $5,000 cash back. No strings attached!*
I got a loan of $5 000 with no strings attached.
They immediately agreed to donate $1,000, no strings attached.

Second nature

Meaning: if something is second nature to you, you are so familiar with it that you can do it easily without needing to think very much about it.

Examples: *I know this data entry process seems complex now, but it'll be second nature after you do it for a few weeks.*
Don't worry, navigating these winding roads is second nature for me at this point.
Altering a breathing pattern can be very difficult since it has been second nature for so long.

In the back of one’s mind

Meaning: if something is at/in the back of your mind, you intend to do it, but are not actively thinking about it.

Examples*: Despite my success at work, there's always this worry in the back of my mind that I'm doing something wrong. You don't need to do anything about it now—just keep it in the back of your mind going forward.*
It's been at the back of my mind to call José for several days now, but I haven't got round to it yet.

Rule of thumb

Meaning: a broadly accurate guide or principle, based on practice rather than theory.

Examples: *a useful rule of thumb is that about ten hours will be needed to analyse each hour of recorded data*
A good rule of thumb is that a portion of rice is two handfuls.
As a rule of thumb, the ice on the lake should be at least two inches thick to support one person.

Give an edge over

Meaning: give someone/something an/the advantage over someone/something.

Examples: *Training can give you the edge over your competitors.*
In effect, it is what is "thrown in" with the purchase in the form of qualitative added help, support, or attention that provides peace of mind to the customer and gives us an edge over the competition
Adding the dimension of time to our analysis gives us an edge over the competition.

Take a toll on

Meaning: to cause damage or deleterious effects gradually or through constant action or use.

Examples: *The inclement weather in these parts really takes a toll on the exteriors of the buildings. She just doesn't have her usual quickness.*
It seems like the long season has taken a toll.
Years of smoking and drinking has taken a toll on her health.

Check your progress (33)

1. It's true that sleeping with a snorer can …… your health.
a. give you an edge over b. take a toll on c. dismay

2. As ……., funds with durations of one to three years are relatively conservative.
a. second nature b. no strings attached c. a rule of thumb

3. Practice breathing this way for twenty minutes each day until it becomes …….
a. second nature. b. in the back of your mind c. a rule of thumb

4. Aid should be given to developing countries with …….
a. dismay b. a waiting game c. no strings attached

5. People say that in politics the …….. is making the right friends.
a. barefaced lies b. name of the game c. pittance

6. She could barely survive on the ……. she received as a pension.
a. dismay b. pittance c. barefaced lies

7. To her ……., the exam was a whole month earlier than she'd expected.
a. scapegoat b. pittance c. dismay

8. It has also sent the West numerous doubtful and bogus defectors to …….
a. muddy the waters. b. play a waiting game c. take a toll

9. They'll be looking for a ……. if things don't go their way.
a. pittance b. scapegoat c. a rule of thumb

10. Belladonnine can be used to ……., anesthetize, alleviate pain and relieve spasm.
a. dismay b. give an edge over c. sedate

Answers; 1.b 2.c 3.a 4.c 5.b 6.b 7.c 8.a 9.b 10.c

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