

LESSON 13

AMBER COMES OVER TO BAKE COOKIES

Ted's girlfriend Amber comes over to help with the cookies. Amber has experience baking cookies from a former job. Susan leaves the kitchen so they can work better.

Ted: Mom, Amber is here to **lend a hand** with the cookies.

Susan: Hi Amber. Nice to see you again.

Amber: Good to see you too, Mrs. Johnson.

Susan: That's an interesting hairstyle.*

Amber: Thanks. I'm glad you think it's cool. Blue hair is **all the rage** this season.

Susan: Well, I'm going to **take a break** now and let you kids **take over**.

Ted: Don't worry, Mom. Your business is **in good hands** with Amber. She really **knows her stuff**.

Amber: That's true. I used to work at Mrs. Field's Cookies** in the mall.

Susan: You don't work there anymore?

Amber: No, I got fired. I have a real **sweet tooth**, and they told me I was eating too many cookies.

Susan: Well, I'm sure you haven't **lost your touch**.

Amber: I might be a bit **out of practice**.

Ted: Mom, you can watch Amber bake if you want. You might **pick up a few tricks of the trade**.

Amber: Yes, **feel free**. As a singer, I'm used to performing before an audience!

Susan: Thanks, but I'm going to **get out of the way**. You know what they say: **too many cooks spoil the broth!**

Amber: Will I see you later tonight?

Susan: Yes, I'll be back in a few hours.

Ted: Mom, why don't you just **call it a night** and go to bed. You've been **working your tail off** all day.

* When somebody says something is "interesting" it often means they don't like it, but they want to be polite.

** Mrs. Field's Cookies are gourmet cookies that are sold in malls across the United States.



IDIOMS – LESSON 13

all the rage – the latest fashion; popular right now

EXAMPLE 1: Have you seen those new alligator-skin cowboy boots?

They're **all the rage** this season!

EXAMPLE 2: At Nate's high school, salsa dancing is **all the rage** this year.

(to) call it a night – to stop an activity for the rest of the night

EXAMPLE 1: We spent a few hours walking around downtown Chicago. It was so cold that we were ready to **call it a night** by nine o'clock.

EXAMPLE 2: Let's **call it a night** and meet back at the office at seven o'clock tomorrow morning to finish preparing our report.

NOTE: There is also the expression "to call it a day" which means to stop activity for the day.

feel free – go ahead and do something; don't hesitate (to do something)

EXAMPLE 1: “**Feel free** to interrupt me and ask questions during my lecture,” said the professor to his students.

EXAMPLE 2: If you need legal advice, **feel free** to call my cousin Fred. He's a lawyer.

(to) get out of the way – to move out of the way; to stop interfering with someone's plans or activities

EXAMPLE 1: If you're not planning on helping us prepare dinner, please **get out of the way**. The kitchen is crowded.

EXAMPLE 2: **Get out of the way!** That truck is backing up and it might run you over.

(to be) in good hands – in good, competent care

EXAMPLE 1: Don't worry — your dog will be **in good hands** while you're on vacation. We'll take her to the New York Dog Spa & Hotel.

EXAMPLE 2: You're **in good hands** with Tony. He's an excellent driver.

(to) know one's stuff – to have an expertise in a field

EXAMPLE 1: Steve has been an auto mechanic for 25 years. He really **knows his stuff**.

EXAMPLE 2: When it comes to cooking, Kristen **knows her stuff**. She spent two years studying at the Culinary Institute of America.

(to) lend a hand – to help

EXAMPLE 1: When Amber saw Susan washing the cookie sheets, she offered to **lend a hand**.

EXAMPLE 2: Would you mind **lending a hand** in the garden? We need to finish planting these flowers before it starts raining.

(to) lose one's touch – to no longer be able to do something well

EXAMPLE 1: I used to make delicious pies, but this one tastes terrible. I think I've **lost my touch**.

EXAMPLE 2: Dr. Stewart used to be a very good doctor, but recently several of his patients have died. He seems to have **lost his touch!**

(to be) out of practice – no longer good at doing something

EXAMPLE 1: Susan studied French in high school, but she hasn't spoken it since. She's really **out of practice**.

EXAMPLE 2: I used to play tennis every day, but I haven't played in years. I'm **out of practice**.

(to) pick up – to acquire; to learn

EXAMPLE 1: Bob **picks up** languages quickly. After two weeks in Spain, he was already speaking Spanish.

EXAMPLE 2: Diana **picked up** some great new ideas at the workshop.

NOTE: “Pick up” has several other meanings, including:

- 1) To take from the floor or ground. **Pick up** the pen you dropped.
- 2) To buy. I’ll **pick up** some burritos on my way home.
- 3) To clean up. Let’s **pick up** the bedroom before the guests arrive.
- 4) To retrieve someone. I’ll **pick you up** at seven for our date.

sweet tooth – an enjoyment of sugary foods

EXAMPLE 1: Amber’s got a real **sweet tooth**. Last night, she ate a whole box of Godiva chocolates.

EXAMPLE 2: No wonder Liz is so overweight. She’s got such a **sweet tooth!**

(to) take a break – to stop and rest from an activity

EXAMPLE 1: Bob always worked 10 hours straight, never **taking a break**.

EXAMPLE 2: Let’s **take a break** from our work and go get some ice cream.

(to) take over – to assume control

EXAMPLE 1: After 11 hours of driving, I was getting tired. Fortunately, my friend offered to **take over**.

EXAMPLE 2: My new boss will be **taking over** some of my projects.

too many cooks spoil the broth – too many people involved in an activity can ruin it

EXAMPLE 1: After Bob and Susan edited Nicole’s college applications, they were worse than when she started. **Too many cooks spoil the broth**.

EXAMPLE 2: You don’t need to help us. We have enough people helping already, and **too many cooks spoil the broth**.

NOTE: Broth is a clear liquid that forms the base for soups.

tricks of the trade – clever shortcuts gained by experience

EXAMPLE 1: The new teacher learned some **tricks of the trade** from Mrs. Blackstone, who’d been teaching at the school for 40 years.

EXAMPLE 2: My new job will be easier once I learn some **tricks of the trade**.

(to) work one’s tail off [slang] – to work very hard

EXAMPLE 1: Don **worked his tail off** to save money for his son’s education.

EXAMPLE 2: Bob **worked his tail off** at the furniture store, but his boss fired him anyway.

PRACTICE THE IDIOMS

Fill in the blank with the missing word:

- 1) When Susan was having trouble lifting her heavy mixer, Bob offered to lend a _____.
a) finger b) foot c) hand
- 2) Nicole used to play the piano, but she hasn't practiced in five years. She's really _____ practice.
a) about to b) into c) out of
- 3) You've been working in the kitchen for hours. Why don't you go and _____ a break?
a) take b) give c) do
- 4) Amber picked up many _____ of the trade while working at Mrs. Field's Cookies in the Stamford Mall.
a) bits b) tricks c) pieces
- 5) Your shoulder massages are still the best. You haven't _____ your touch.
a) found b) lost c) spoiled
- 6) After two weeks in Italy, Tom started to pick _____ a few words of Italian, including *cappuccino* and *pizza*.
a) up b) out c) in
- 7) When Jill got tired of chopping the onions, Jack took _____.
a) over b) off c) away
- 8) Whenever we need financial advice, we call Suze Orman. She really knows her _____.
a) things b) stuff c) matter

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Come here and give me a kiss!

Give me a break, Amber! We don't have time for that now!

