

LESSON 15

NICOLE PRACTICES HER ELECTION SPEECH

Nicole is running for student body president. She must give a speech next week. She discusses the speech with her mother.

Susan: What's up, Nicole?

Nicole: I pulled an **all-nighter** working on my election speech.

Susan: No wonder you look like a **basket case**! Did you finish your speech?

Nicole: Yes, at 6 a.m.

Susan: That must be a **load off your mind**!

Nicole: It's not. I've got to give the speech tomorrow in front of 1,500 people. I'm a **nervous wreck**!

Susan: Just remember the old **rule of thumb**: Imagine your audience naked.

Nicole: That's gross. Why would I want to do that?

Susan: According to **conventional wisdom**, it'll make you less nervous.

Nicole: Only practice will **do the trick**.

Susan: Okay, let's hear the speech.

Nicole: Good afternoon, everyone. There are four candidates running for president. You think you have several choices. **In reality**, you have just one choice: me!

Susan: You can't say that. You'll **turn off** your audience immediately.

Nicole: It sounds like I have a **big head**?

Susan: **I'll say!**



IDIOMS – LESSON 15

basket case [slang] – someone or something in a useless or hopeless condition

EXAMPLE 1: After working a 12-hour day and then coming home and cooking dinner for her family, Tanya felt like a **basket case**.

EXAMPLE 2: After running the marathon, Brian felt like a **basket case**.

NOTE: You may also see the expression “economic basket case” to describe an economy that is doing very poorly. Example: After years of dictatorship, North Korea is an **economic basket case**.

(to have a) big head – arrogant; too proud of oneself

EXAMPLE 1: Stop bragging so much about the award you got at work! People will think you've got a **big head**.

EXAMPLE 2: Jenny has such a **big head**. No wonder nobody wants to be friends with her!

SYNONYM: to be full of oneself. Example: Joan is really **full of herself**. She's always talking about how smart she is.

conventional wisdom – a widely held belief

EXAMPLE 1: According to **conventional wisdom**, a diet high in salt can cause high blood pressure.

EXAMPLE 2: Challenging **conventional wisdom**, the psychologist said that sometimes it's healthy to be in a bad mood.

(to) do the trick – to achieve the desired results

EXAMPLE 1: Juan changed the light bulb and said, “That should **do the trick!**”

EXAMPLE 2: My house is difficult to find, so I’ll put 10 large balloons on my mailbox on the day of the party. That should **do the trick.**

I’ll say! – yes, definitely!

EXAMPLE 1: “Did you enjoy the Madonna concert?” – “**I’ll say!**”

EXAMPLE 2: “Your sister must’ve been very happy after winning \$50,000 in the lottery.” – “**I’ll say!**”

in reality – in fact; actually

EXAMPLE 1: Ted thinks it’ll be easy to become a rock star. **In reality**, it will take years of hard work.

EXAMPLE 2: I know you think it’ll be easy to get cheap tickets to a Broadway play. **In reality**, we’ll have to wait in line for hours!

load off one’s mind – a relief

EXAMPLE 1: When Amber called Ted to tell him that she arrived home safely, it was a big **load off his mind.**

EXAMPLE 2: Finishing her English essay was a **load off Nicole’s mind.**

look like – have the appearance of

EXAMPLE 1: Before agreeing to go out on a date with her, Keith wanted to know what my cousin Maria **looked like.**

EXAMPLE 2: Please tell me what the cover of that new book **looks like** so it will be easier for me to find it in the bookstore.

NOTE: The expression “it looks like” can mean “it is likely that...”

Example: It’s snowing, so **it looks like** the schools will be closed today.

nervous wreck – a person feeling very worried

EXAMPLE 1: Ted was a **nervous wreck** before his chemistry test.

EXAMPLE 2: Whenever Nicole rides on the back of her friend’s motorcycle, Susan is a **nervous wreck.**

no wonder – it’s not surprising

EXAMPLE 1: Brian’s entire body is in pain. It’s **no wonder** since he ran a marathon yesterday!

EXAMPLE 2: **No wonder** you’re cold — it’s January and you’re walking around outside without a coat!

SYNONYM: small wonder

(to) pull an all-nighter – to stay up all night to do work

EXAMPLE 1: Ted **pulled an all-nighter** to study for his chemistry test and ended up falling asleep in class the next day.

EXAMPLE 2: I've got a 20-page paper due tomorrow morning, and I haven't even started writing it yet. I guess I'll be **pulling an all-nighter!**

rule of thumb – a useful principle

EXAMPLE 1: When cooking fish, a good **rule of thumb** is 10 minutes in the oven for each inch of thickness.

EXAMPLE 2: "Ted, as a **rule of thumb**, you should always plan to study for your chemistry tests for at least two hours."

(to) turn off – to cause to feel dislike or revulsion

EXAMPLE 1: I used to be friends with Monica, but she gossiped all the time and it really **turned me off**.

EXAMPLE 2: At first, Sara really liked Jacob. But when he started talking about all his ex-girlfriends, she was really **turned off**.

NOTE: The noun form, turn-off, is also common and usually describes something that causes the opposite sex to respond negatively. Example: When Jake started talking about all his ex-girlfriends, it was a real **turn-off** for Sara.

what's up? – see *Lesson 10*

PRACTICE THE IDIOMS

Choose the best substitute for the phrase in bold:

- 1) Ted didn't start studying for his chemistry test until the night before. Then he had to **pull an all-nighter**.
 - a) get plenty of rest before an exam
 - b) stay up all night studying
 - c) sleep late
- 2) After working on it for months, I finally gave my presentation this morning. That was certainly a **load off my mind!**
 - a) a relief
 - b) difficult
 - c) easy

- 3) Nicole was **turned off** when Todd, her date, started picking his teeth with a toothpick during dinner.
- left the room
 - became interested
 - lost all interest
- 4) According to **conventional wisdom**, you shouldn't ask about salary on your first interview.
- accepted beliefs
 - outdated beliefs
 - smart people
- 5) Ted had to perform his music before one of the most important talent agents in the country. It's not surprising that he was **a nervous wreck**.
- confident
 - very worried
 - exhausted
- 6) Girls cheered and blew kisses whenever Ted performed his music. Amber worried that he'd **get a big head**.
- get a headache
 - become arrogant
 - find a new girlfriend
- 7) People keep telling Fred that he looks **like a basket case**. Maybe it's because he hasn't slept in weeks.
- really great
 - angry
 - terrible
- 8) Do you have a headache? Here, take two aspirin. That should **do the trick**.
- make you feel better
 - perform magic
 - make you feel worse



Review for Lessons 11-15

Choose the best substitute for the phrase or sentence in bold:

- 1) Nicole didn't want to go to the party, but her friend **twisted her arm**.
 - a) persuaded her
 - b) hurt her arm
 - c) agreed with her

- 2) Amber needs to go on a diet and lose 10 pounds, but it's difficult for her because **she has such a sweet tooth**.
 - a) she has a loose tooth
 - b) she has emotional problems
 - c) she likes to eat sweets

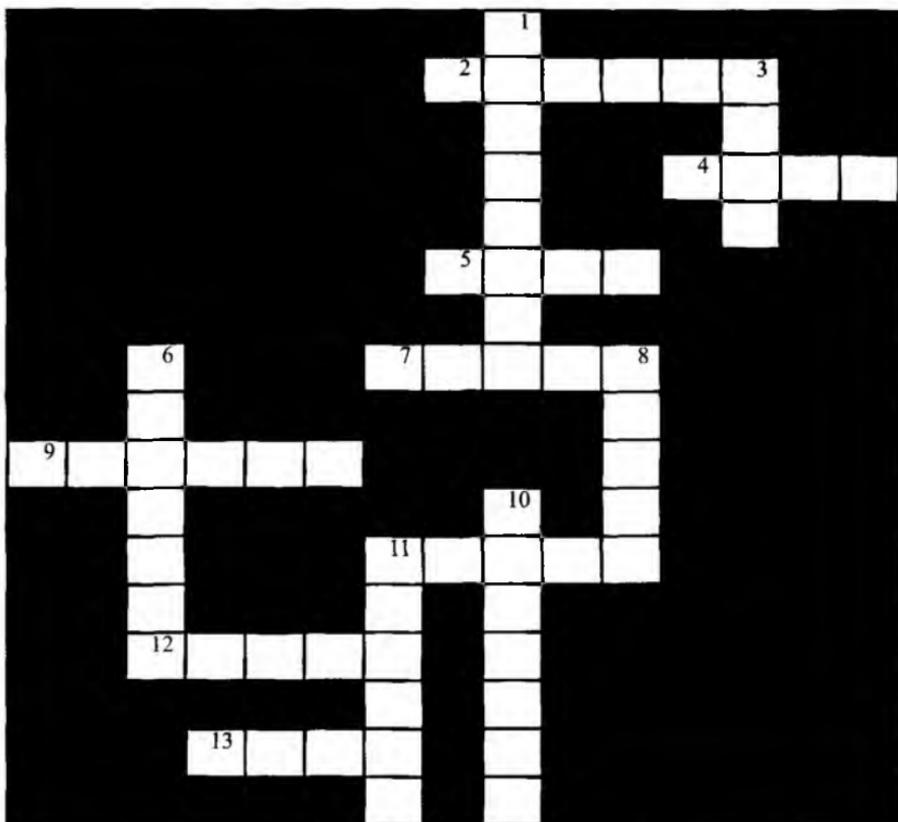
- 3) Amber likes to design handbags as a hobby, but she's not sure she could **make a living at it**.
 - a) do it for the rest of her life
 - b) earn enough money to support herself
 - c) do it all day long

- 4) Ted wanted to travel to Miami for a rock concert. His mother told him it was **out of the question**.
 - a) a good idea
 - b) still a possibility
 - c) not a possibility

- 5) Nicole **worked her tail off**, making hundreds of posters for her campaign.
 - a) worked very hard
 - b) worked until her tail fell off
 - c) made her friends work hard

- 6) **It's crunch time.** Ted has to write six papers in two days.
- It's a very busy time.
 - It's a time to relax.
 - It's a period of time filled with fun and laughter.
- 7) My 95-year old neighbor was cutting her grass on a hot summer day. I offered to **lend a hand.**
- give her my hand
 - help her
 - drive her to the hospital
- 8) Jennifer **treats her husband like dirt.** I don't know why he doesn't just leave her.
- is very nice to her husband
 - asks her husband to do the gardening
 - is nasty to her husband
- 9) Tattoos are **all the rage.** Many kids are getting them.
- something that makes you angry
 - very popular
 - easy to get
- 10) **Things are looking up for Bob.** He's already found a new job working for his wife.
- Bob's situation is getting worse.
 - Bob's situation is improving.
 - Bob always focuses on positive things.
- 11) Susan volunteered to host 45 exchange students from China. Now she fears she's **bitten off more than she can chew.**
- accepted an easy assignment
 - taken on a bigger task than she can handle
 - ordered too much Chinese food
- 12) If Ted doesn't **get going on** his chemistry homework soon, he's going to be up all night.
- start doing
 - stop doing
 - leave the house with

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Across

2. My old job was boring. All I did was ___ numbers all day.
4. Bob went to the Village Market to get the ___ rolling on the cookie business.
5. You didn't take out the garbage yet? Never ___! I'll do it myself.
7. Donna ate the whole apple pie herself. I guess she has a ___ tooth.
9. Jim never thought he could sell designer watches on street corners, but his brother taught him the ___ of the trade.
11. You've been working at the computer for hours. Why don't you take a ___?
12. After her boyfriend broke up with her, Anna was feeling down in the ___.
13. Mini-skirts were all the ___ last summer.

Down

1. Susan used to sing opera, but she hasn't sung in years. She's out of ___.
3. Bill thinks he's the smartest guy in the world. His friends think he just has a big ___.
6. I don't like horror movies, but John ___ my arm and I agreed to see *Murder on Main Street*.
8. My car wasn't running well so I changed the oil. That should do the ___.
10. After the car accident, Betty was a ___ wreck whenever she drove.
11. When I don't get eight hours of sleep, I feel like a ___ case in the morning.

ANSWERS TO REVIEW, p. 164