

ArivArk General English Video Series

Idioms, Phrases and Phrasal Verbs: Practice Questions

Group 2/2A Prelims: General English, Vocabulary

Real questions: TNPSC previous year questions (Group 2 2022, Group 2 2024, Group 2/2A Prelims 2025 and Group 4 2025 as marked in the PYQ bank; 2025 official tentative key). Meanings, word lists and practice questions: ArivArk Academy, checked against standard dictionaries (Oxford Learner's, Cambridge, Merriam-Webster).

The basics

Idiom = a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the single words. *It rains cats and dogs* has no cats and no dogs in it: it means **it rains very heavily**.

Phrase (in these questions) = a short fixed group of words with its own meaning, like *at large* (free, not caught) or *given to* (in the habit of).

Phrasal verb = a verb + a small word (up, in, off, out, after, into ...). The small word changes the meaning: *give up* = stop doing something, *give in* = stop resisting and agree.

The one-line rule: never translate an idiom or a phrasal verb word by word. Learn it as one unit, with one example sentence.

How often does this come? Recent TNPSC papers asked **13 questions** on idioms, phrases and phrasal verbs (all printed in this PDF): 4 on idioms, 4 on the meaning of a phrase and 5 on phrasal verbs. Most are "choose the meaning", "match" or "fill the blank".

Study plan: learn the PYQ items first (marked PYQ in the tables), then one table a day. Say each one aloud in your own sentence.

Idioms from real papers

Idiom	Meaning	Example
rain cats and dogs PYQ	rain very heavily	<i>It rained cats and dogs all night.</i>
browbeat (someone) PYQ	frighten or bully someone with stern words or looks	<i>He browbeat the clerk into signing.</i>

Idiom	Meaning	Example
knit the brow (knit your brows) PYQ	frown, in worry or anger	<i>She knit her brows over the hard sum.</i>
at large PYQ	(of a criminal or a dangerous animal) free, not caught	<i>The thief is still at large.</i>
pass the buck PYQ	shift the responsibility or blame to someone else	<i>Do not pass the buck; own your mistake.</i>
sleep like a log PYQ	sleep very deeply	<i>After the long trip, he slept like a log.</i>
upset the apple cart PYQ	spoil a plan or an arrangement	<i>One late payment upset the apple cart.</i>
a kettle of fish PYQ	a difficult or awkward situation; "a different kettle of fish" = a completely different matter	<i>Speaking is a different kettle of fish from writing.</i>

More idioms to know

Idiom	Meaning	Example
a piece of cake	something very easy	<i>The test was a piece of cake.</i>
once in a blue moon	very rarely	<i>He visits us once in a blue moon.</i>
break the ice	start a conversation in a shy or tense group	<i>A joke broke the ice.</i>
bite the bullet	face something unpleasant bravely	<i>She bit the bullet and told the truth.</i>
hit the nail on the head	say exactly the right thing	<i>You hit the nail on the head.</i>
burn the midnight oil	work or study late into the night	<i>Before the exam, he burnt the midnight oil.</i>
in hot water	in trouble	<i>He is in hot water for coming late.</i>
spill the beans / let the cat out of the bag	tell a secret (often by mistake)	<i>Who spilled the beans?</i>
cry over spilt milk	be sad about something that cannot be changed	<i>It is no use crying over spilt milk.</i>
a blessing in disguise	something that seems bad but turns out good	<i>Missing the bus was a blessing in disguise.</i>
add fuel to the fire	make an angry situation worse	<i>His remark added fuel to the fire.</i>

Idiom	Meaning	Example
turn a deaf ear	refuse to listen	<i>He turned a deaf ear to our advice.</i>

Phrases from real papers

Phrase	Meaning	Example
cast down PYQ	sad, dejected	<i>She was cast down by the result.</i>
given to PYQ	in the habit of, accustomed to	<i>He is given to telling long stories.</i>
reconcile (yourself) to PYQ	accept something unpleasant that you cannot change	<i>He reconciled himself to the loss.</i>
at large PYQ	free, not caught	<i>The tiger is still at large.</i>
in the context of time: run out PYQ	have no time left; be used up completely	<i>Time ran out before I finished.</i>

Phrasal verbs: one verb, a small word, a new meaning

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
give up	stop doing or having something	<i>He gave up smoking.</i>
give in	stop resisting; agree to what someone wants	<i>The child cried, and his mother gave in.</i>
put off	postpone	<i>The meeting was put off.</i>
put up with	tolerate	<i>I can't put up with this noise.</i>
put out	stop a fire or a light burning	<i>They put out the fire.</i>
call off	cancel	<i>The match was called off because of rain.</i>
carry out	do, perform (a plan, an order, a test)	<i>The doctors carried out tests.</i>
bring up	raise a child; mention a subject	<i>She was brought up by her aunt.</i>
turn down	refuse (an offer or a request)	<i>He turned down the job.</i>
take off PYQ	(of a plane) leave the ground	<i>The plane took off on time.</i>
ring (someone) up PYQ	telephone someone	<i>You'd better ring her up.</i>
drop in PYQ	make a short, casual visit	<i>Drop in any time.</i>
do without PYQ	manage without something	<i>If you can't afford it, do without it.</i>
try out PYQ	test something to see how good it is	<i>Try the car out on the road first.</i>

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
get along with PYQ	have a friendly relationship with	<i>She gets along with everyone.</i>
come across PYQ	meet or find by chance	<i>I came across an old friend.</i>
run out (of) PYQ	be used up completely; have none left	<i>We have run out of milk.</i>
go away PYQ	leave a place	<i>Please go away.</i>

The FALL family

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
fall out (with) PYQ	quarrel	<i>The brothers fell out over land.</i>
fall for PYQ	be attracted to, be charmed by; also, be tricked by	<i>She fell for the city.</i>
fall flat PYQ	fail completely to have the effect you wanted	<i>His joke fell flat.</i>
fall foul of PYQ	come into conflict with (a rule, a person)	<i>He fell foul of the law.</i>

The LOOK family

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
look after PYQ	take care of	<i>She looks after her mother.</i>
look into PYQ	investigate	<i>The officer will look into the matter.</i>
look up to PYQ	respect, admire	<i>Children look up to their teachers.</i>
look up PYQ	search for a word or a fact in a dictionary or a book	<i>Look up the word in a dictionary.</i>
look out PYQ	be careful (used as a warning)	<i>Look out! A car is coming.</i>
look for	try to find	<i>I am looking for my keys.</i>
look forward to	wait for something with pleasure	<i>I look forward to the holidays.</i>
look down on	think you are better than someone	<i>Never look down on anyone.</i>

How to solve these questions

Step 1. Read the whole sentence first. The sentence tells you which meaning fits.

Step 2. Ask: what fits here? Put each option in place of the idiom and read the sentence again. Only one makes sense.

Step 3. Drop the word-by-word option. The examiners always add an option that translates the words literally (cats and dogs = animals; fall flat = fall on the floor). An idiom always has a hidden meaning.

For a match: fix the pairs you are sure of first, then look for the one code that has them. Often two sure pairs are enough.

Common mistakes

Do not mix up	The difference
fall flat	NOT "fall on the floor": it means fail completely (a plan, a joke, a speech).
look after vs look into	look after = take care of (a person, a thing); look into = investigate (a matter, a complaint).
give up vs give in	give up = stop doing something (a habit, a try); give in = stop resisting and agree.
look up vs look up to	look up a word = search for it; look up to a person = respect them. One small word changes the meaning.
put off vs put out	put off = postpone; put out = stop a fire or a light.
at large	NOT "big" or "in general" in these questions: a criminal at large is free, not caught.
pass the buck	NOT money: it means shifting the blame or the duty to someone else.

TNPSC PYQs: all 13 questions with answers

1. [TNPSC PYQ Group 4 2025] Find out the suitable word for the underlined collocation in the following sentence.

It rains cats and dogs.

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| (A) Strongly | (B) Heavily |
| (C) Speedily | (D) Fast |

Answer: (B) Heavily. It rains cats and dogs = it rains very heavily. The paper calls it a collocation; it is a standard idiom. (The opening question of the video.)

2. [TNPSC PYQ Group 2/2A Prelims 2025] Identify the incorrect pairs of Idioms and phrases in the given pairs.

1. To browbeat, bully 2. To be at large, to blame each other 3. To knit the brow, to frown 4.

To pass the buck, free

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| (A) 1 and 3 | (B) 2 and 4 |
| (C) 1 and 2 | (D) 3 and 4 |

Answer: (B) 2 and 4. The meanings of 2 and 4 are swapped: at large = free; pass the buck = shift the blame to someone else. Pairs 1 and 3 are correct.

3. [TNPSC PYQ Group 4 2025] Match the following idioms in Column A with their meanings in Column B:

(a) Fall out (b) Fall for (c) Fall flat (d) Fall foul of

1. to collapse 2. to come into collision 3. yield to its charms 4. to quarrel

(A) 4 3 1 2

(B) 2 4 3 1

(C) 1 3 4 2

(D) 2 3 1 4

Answer: (A) 4 3 1 2. fall out = quarrel (4), fall for = be charmed by (3), fall flat = fail, "collapse" (1), fall foul of = come into conflict (2).

4. [TNPSC PYQ Group 2 2022] Choose the correct meaning for the phrase "Look After".

(A) Watch out

(B) Investigate the matter

(C) See carefully

(D) Take care of

Answer: (D) Take care of. look after = take care of. "Investigate the matter" is look into; "watch out" is look out.

5. [TNPSC PYQ 2025] Match the phrasal verbs with their meanings: look out, look into, look up to, look up.

Answer: (D) 4 3 2 1 (official tentative key). Our copy has only the four verbs and the key, not the meanings column or the codes. Learn the meanings: look out = be careful; look into = investigate; look up to = respect; look up = search for a word or fact.

6. [TNPSC PYQ 2025] Match the idioms with their meanings: sleep like a log, kettle of fish, upset the apple cart (and one more idiom).

Answer: (B) 3 4 1 2 (official tentative key). Our copy has only the idioms and the key; the fourth idiom could not be read clearly in our copy, so it is not printed. Learn the meanings: sleep like a log = sleep very deeply; a kettle of fish = a difficult situation (a different kettle of fish = a different matter); upset the apple cart = spoil a plan.

7. [TNPSC PYQ Group 2/2A Prelims 2025] Complete the blanks using the phrasal verbs given in the options:

1. You'd better ring her ____ and tell her you'll be late. 2. I invited her to drop ____ any time she was passing for a cup of tea. 3. If you can't afford it, you'll have to do ____ it. 4. He won't buy the car without trying it ____ on the road first.

(a) out (b) in (c) up (d) without

(A) 1-(c) 2-(d) 3-(b) 4-(a)

(B) 1-(b) 2-(c) 3-(a) 4-(d)

(C) 1-(a) 2-(c) 3-(d) 4-(b)

(D) 1-(c) 2-(b) 3-(d) 4-(a)

Answer: (D) 1-(c) 2-(b) 3-(d) 4-(a). ring her up (telephone), drop in (a short visit), do without (manage without), try it out (test it).

8. [TNPSC PYQ Group 4 2025] Fill in with the correct phrase: The airhostess instructed the passengers to fasten the seat belts during the ____.

(A) shut down

(B) work out

(C) take off

(D) warm up

Answer: (C) take off. take off = the moment a plane leaves the ground.

9. [TNPSC PYQ Group 2 2022] Choose the correct meaning of the phrase "Cast Down".

(A) Release

(B) Dejected

(C) Continue

(D) Appeal

Answer: (B) Dejected. cast down = sad, dejected. (This is the question from the end of the video.)

10. [TNPSC PYQ Group 2 2022] Choose the correct meaning of the phrase "Given to".

(A) Withdraw

(B) Accustomed to

(C) Progress

(D) Escape

Answer: (B) Accustomed to. given to = in the habit of, accustomed to: He is given to exaggeration.

11. [TNPSC PYQ Group 2 2024] Choose the correct meaning of the phrase. Reconcile to

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| (A) Maintain | (B) Accept half heartedly |
| (C) Arrive suddenly | (D) Continue |

Answer: (B) Accept half heartedly. The answer marked in the PYQ bank. **Note:** a dictionary gives "reconcile yourself to" = accept something unpleasant that you cannot change; "half heartedly" is the paper's own wording. (B) is still the only option close to "accept".

12. [TNPSC PYQ Group 2 2024] Match the words with their phrases:

(a) Friendly relationship (b) Meet by chance (c) Use completely (d) Leave from the place

1. ran out 2. get along with 3. go away 4. come across

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| (A) 3 2 1 4 | (B) 3 1 4 2 |
| (C) 2 4 3 1 | (D) 2 3 4 1 |

Answer: (C) 2 4 3 1. The answer marked in the PYQ bank. **Note:** by dictionary meaning the match is 2 4 1 3 (friendly relationship = get along with, meet by chance = come across, use completely = ran out, leave = go away), which is none of the four codes. (C) has the first two pairs right. Check the official key when it is published.

13. [TNPSC PYQ Group 4 2025] Choose the correct meaning of the given phrasal verb in the context of time: Run out

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| (A) Time given for something to be done | (B) Insufficient time |
| (C) Exceed the allotted time | (D) Finish before the given time |

Answer: (C) Exceed the allotted time. The answer marked in the PYQ bank. **Note:** a dictionary gives "run out (of time)" = have no time left, which is closer to (B). Learn both, and check the official key.

Practice MCQs

1. He decided to give ____ smoking.

- | | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|----------|
| (A) up | (B) in | (C) off | (D) away |
|--------|--------|---------|----------|

2. After a long argument, the manager gave ____ to their demands.

- (A) up (B) in (C) off (D) out

3. The meaning of "put off" is

- (A) tolerate (B) encourage (C) postpone (D) arrive

4. I cannot put up ____ his rude behaviour.

- (A) to (B) on (C) for (D) with

5. The meaning of "look into" is

- (A) investigate (B) take care of (C) respect (D) be careful

6. Children should look up ____ their parents and teachers.

- (A) at (B) to (C) for (D) into

7. "Look out! The floor is wet." Here "look out" means

- (A) go outside (B) search (C) be careful (D) look at the sky

8. The police said the robber is still at large. "At large" means

- (A) famous (B) very big (C) far away (D) free, not caught

9. "Pass the buck" means

- (A) shift the blame to someone else (B) spend money (C) win a race (D) pass an exam

10. "Knit the brow" means

- (A) sew a cloth (B) frown (C) smile (D) sleep

11. After the long walk, he slept like a log. This means he slept

- (A) on the floor (B) badly (C) very deeply (D) in a forest

12. "Upset the apple cart" means

- (A) sell fruit (B) make someone sad (C) drive fast (D) spoil a plan

13. The two friends fell ____ over money and stopped talking.

- (A) out (B) for (C) flat (D) off

14. His joke fell ____; nobody laughed.

- (A) out (B) flat (C) for (D) off

15. The match was called ____ because of rain.

- (A) up (B) in (C) off (D) out

16. We have run ____ of sugar; please buy some.

- (A) off (B) away (C) over (D) out

17. "A piece of cake" means

- (A) something very easy (B) a small share (C) a sweet reward (D) a hard task

18. "Once in a blue moon" means

- (A) every month (B) very rarely (C) at night (D) never

19. The firemen soon put ____ the fire.

- (A) off (B) up (C) out (D) in

20. I came ____ an old photograph while cleaning the room.

- (A) along (B) into (C) over (D) across

Answer key: 1 A, 2 B, 3 C, 4 D, 5 A, 6 B, 7 C, 8 D, 9 A, 10 B, 11 C, 12 D, 13 A, 14 B, 15 C, 16 D, 17 A, 18 B, 19 C, 20 D

Why? Short explanations

No.	Why	No.	Why
1 (A)	give up = stop a habit.	11 (C)	sleep like a log = sleep very deeply.
2 (B)	give in (to) = stop resisting and agree.	12 (D)	It spoils a plan or an arrangement.
3 (C)	put off = postpone; tolerate is put up with.	13 (A)	fall out = quarrel.

No.	Why	No.	Why
4 (D)	put up with = tolerate.	14 (B)	fall flat = fail to have the effect you wanted.
5 (A)	look into a matter = investigate it.	15 (C)	call off = cancel.
6 (B)	look up to = respect.	16 (D)	run out of = have none left.
7 (C)	look out = be careful, a warning.	17 (A)	The test was a piece of cake: very easy.
8 (D)	at large = free, not caught.	18 (B)	Very rarely, not never.
9 (A)	buck = the responsibility, not money.	19 (C)	put out = stop a fire burning.
10 (B)	The brows pull together in a frown.	20 (D)	come across = find by chance.

Your question from the video: Choose the correct meaning of the phrase "Cast Down": (A) Release (B) Dejected (C) Continue (D) Appeal. **Answer: (B) Dejected.** Cast down = sad, low in spirit.

More practice: search **IDIOM** on arivark.com for this PDF, and follow t.me/arivarkacademy for daily questions.