

# Idioms, Adages, and Proverbs

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Score: \_\_\_\_\_ / 10



## Quick Review

An **idiom** is a phrase whose meaning isn't the literal meaning of its words (*spill the beans* = reveal a secret). An **adage** is a short, well-known saying that gives advice (*A stitch in time saves nine*). A **proverb** is similar — a short saying that states a general truth (*The early bird catches the worm*). Don't read these literally!

## PRACTICE

Choose the meaning of each idiom, adage, or proverb as it would be understood by an English speaker. Distractors include LITERAL readings and other near-sounding sayings.

1. What does the idiom *spill the beans* most likely mean?
  - A. to drop food on the floor
  - B. to make a mess at the dinner table
  - C. to reveal a secret
  - D. to share a meal with friends
2. What does the proverb *Don't count your chickens before they hatch* most likely mean?
  - A. Don't make plans based on something that hasn't happened yet.
  - B. Don't keep chickens in your house.
  - C. Be careful when counting eggs.
  - D. Wait until the chicks are big to feed them.
3. What does the idiom *raining cats and dogs* most likely mean?
  - A. Pets are running around in the rain.
  - B. It is raining very heavily.
  - C. Animals fall from the sky in storms.
  - D. Pet owners should bring pets indoors.
4. What does the adage *A stitch in time saves nine* most likely mean?
  - A. Sewing should be done quickly.
  - B. Nine stitches make the strongest seam.
  - C. It's better to count stitches as you sew.
  - D. Fixing a small problem now prevents a bigger problem later.



5. What does the idiom *break the ice* most likely mean?
  - A. to start a friendly conversation in an awkward situation
  - B. to use a tool to crack frozen water
  - C. to fall through thin ice on a pond
  - D. to add ice to a drink
6. What does the proverb *The early bird catches the worm* most likely mean?
  - A. Birds wake up earliest.
  - B. Worms come out at dawn.
  - C. People who start early have an advantage.
  - D. It is better to eat worms than other foods.
7. What does the idiom *let the cat out of the bag* most likely mean?
  - A. to free a real cat from a paper sack
  - B. to accidentally reveal a secret
  - C. to lose an animal at the store
  - D. to set up a surprise party
8. What does the adage *Don't judge a book by its cover* most likely mean?
  - A. Books with plain covers are usually boring.
  - B. Always read the back of a book first.
  - C. Library books should be wrapped to protect their covers.
  - D. Don't judge people or things by appearance alone.
9. What does the idiom *under the weather* most likely mean?
  - A. feeling slightly sick
  - B. standing outside in a storm
  - C. wearing too many clothes
  - D. feeling nervous about a test
10. What does the proverb *Actions speak louder than words* most likely mean?
  - A. People should shout when they take action.
  - B. Speaking quietly is rude.
  - C. What you do matters more than what you say.
  - D. Loud people get more done.



## Answer Keys

- 1  A  B  C  D
- 2  A  B  C  D
- 3  A  B  C  D
- 4  A  B  C  D
- 5  A  B  C  D


- 6  A  B  C  D
- 7  A  B  C  D
- 8  A  B  C  D
- 9  A  B  C  D
- 10  A  B  C  D

### Explanations

1. C	<b>spill the beans = reveal a secret.</b> A and B are literal misreadings (no real beans involved); D confuses sharing food with sharing information.
2. A	The proverb warns: <b>don't make plans based on something that hasn't happened yet.</b> B, C, and D all read the chicken/egg image literally and miss the life advice.
3. B	<b>raining cats and dogs = raining very heavily.</b> A and D add story details that aren't there; C reads the idiom literally (it isn't actually raining animals).
4. D	The adage gives advice: <b>fix a small problem early to avoid a bigger one later.</b> A, B, and C all stay too close to the literal sewing image.
5. A	<b>break the ice = start a friendly conversation in an awkward situation</b> (the awkwardness is the <i>ice</i> ). B is the literal action; C and D add unrelated details.
6. C	The proverb means <b>people who start early have an advantage.</b> A and B describe bird/worm habits literally; D reads the food image too literally.
7. B	<b>let the cat out of the bag = accidentally reveal a secret.</b> Compare with <i>spill the beans</i> , which is on purpose; this idiom suggests an accident. A is literal; C is unrelated; D mixes up cause and effect.
8. D	The adage means <b>don't judge people or things by appearance alone.</b> A, B, and C all stay literal — they're about real books, missing the wider message.
9. A	<b>under the weather = feeling slightly sick.</b> B is the literal image; C and D describe other physical or emotional states.
10. C	The proverb means <b>what you do matters more than what you say.</b> A, B, and D all read <i>louder</i> as literal volume and miss the comparison of deeds vs. talk.



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