

## LESSON 4

# NICOLE'S DAY AT SCHOOL

*Nicole tells her mother Susan about her successful presentation at school. Her brother Ted overhears and interrupts the conversation.*

*Susan:* How was your day at school today, Nicole?

*Nicole:* It was great, Mom. I gave a presentation on Hillary Clinton in government class. Afterwards, my teacher **paid me a compliment**.

*Susan:* What did she say?

*Nicole:* She said my presentation was **head and shoulders above** the others.

*Susan:* **Way to go!**

*Nicole:* She also said I should **go into** politics, just like Hillary.

*Ted:* You're so **gung ho** about school. It **drives me crazy**.

*Nicole:* Ted, don't **butt in!** You're just jealous.

*Ted:* Right. You **hit the nail on the head**. I'm **green with envy**.

*Nicole:* Would you just **shut up?** You're **on thin ice with me** right now.

*Ted:* Oh no! Look at me. I'm **shaking in my shoes!**



## IDIOMS – LESSON 4

**(to) butt in** [slang] – to interrupt; to interfere

EXAMPLE 1: Nancy is always **butting in** to other people's business.

EXAMPLE 2: Sara is really rude. She always **butts in** to other people's conversations.

**(to) drive one crazy** – to annoy someone very much

EXAMPLE 1: Don't ask Mrs. Smith how old she is. It **drives her crazy**.

EXAMPLE 2: Please stop chewing gum so loudly. It's **driving me crazy**!

SYNONYMS: to drive one nuts; to drive one up the wall

**(to) go into** – to enter a profession

EXAMPLE 1: Lisa enjoys arguing with people, so she decided to **go into** law.

EXAMPLE 2: Do you like solving people's problems? If so, you should consider **going into** psychology.

NOTE: "Go into" has several other meanings, including:

1. Enter. **Go into** the house and get a pen.
2. Enter another emotional state. Sally **went into** hysterics.
3. Discuss details. I don't have time now to **go into** the whole story.

**green with envy** – desiring another's advantages or things

EXAMPLE 1: When Daniel got promoted to vice president of the bank, his colleagues were **green with envy**.

EXAMPLE 2: You won the lottery? I'm **green with envy**!

**gung ho** – very enthusiastic; very excited (about something)

EXAMPLE 1: Heather is really **gung ho** about her new job.

EXAMPLE 2: Sharon really loves college. She's very **gung ho**.

NOTE: If the expression "gung ho" doesn't sound like English to you, there's a reason. It comes from a Mandarin Chinese phrase meaning "working together." A US Marine Corps commander in China adopted this expression as the motto for his battalion during World War 2 and from there it sailed over to the United States and came into common use.

**head and shoulders above** – far superior to

EXAMPLE 1: The Boston Symphony Orchestra is **head and shoulders above** any other orchestra in the area.

EXAMPLE 2: I can't believe you only won second prize in the competition. You were **head and shoulders above** the first-prize winner!

**(to) hit the nail on the head – to be right**

EXAMPLE 1: Dawn **hit the nail on the head** when she said that Tiffany is jealous of Amber.

EXAMPLE 2: Steve **hit the nail on the head** with his idea of moving his company's manufacturing facility to China.

**(to be) on thin ice (with someone) – to be in a dangerous position; to be temporarily on somebody's bad side**

EXAMPLE 1: Joey was **on thin ice** with his mom after he spent his lunch money on candy bars.

EXAMPLE 2: Bill was **on thin ice** with his girlfriend after she saw him at the movie theater with another girl.

NOTE: There is also the variation "to skate on thin ice." Joey knew he was **skating on thin ice** when he bought candy with his lunch money.

**(to) pay (someone) a compliment – to give someone a compliment; to offer someone an admiring comment**

EXAMPLE 1: Professor Russo **paid Jennifer a compliment**. He said she had a beautiful smile.

EXAMPLE 2: Isn't it wonderful to **pay someone a compliment**? It makes them feel good, and it doesn't cost you anything!

**(to) shake in one's shoes – to tremble with fear; to be afraid**

EXAMPLE 1: Brianna is scared of her French teacher, Monsieur Le Monstre. Whenever he speaks to her, Brianna starts **shaking in her shoes**.

EXAMPLE 2: During the storm, Billy was hiding under his kitchen table and was really **shaking in his shoes**.

**shut up**

**1) be quiet, stop speaking**

EXAMPLE: The professor talked for hours. I thought he'd never **shut up**.

**2) Stop speaking!**

EXAMPLE: Nicole kept telling Ted to turn down his stereo. Finally, he got angry and said, "**Shut up!**"

NOTE: Remember that telling somebody to "shut up!" is rude. It's better to say "Be quiet!" or more politely, "Please be quiet!"

**Way to go! – Good work!**

EXAMPLE 1: You won \$2,000 in the poetry writing contest? **Way to go!**

EXAMPLE 2: That was an interesting article you wrote. **Way to go!**

## PRACTICE THE IDIOMS

**Fill in the blank with the missing word:**

- 1) Nicole is in a good mood because her teacher \_\_\_\_ her a compliment.  
a) told                      b) paid                      c) provided
- 2) Nicole's teacher told her she was \_\_\_\_ and shoulders above her classmates.  
a) elbow                      b) neck                      c) head
- 3) When my friend Chad told me he'd just won the lottery, I was \_\_\_\_ with envy.  
a) blue                      b) green                      c) red
- 4) When you do something well, your boss might tell you, "Way \_\_\_\_!"  
a) to come                      b) to go                      c) to act
- 5) When the robbers entered my house, I was in the kitchen shaking in my \_\_\_\_.  
a) slippers                      b) pajamas                      c) shoes
- 6) If somebody is bothering you, you can tell them they're driving you \_\_\_\_.  
a) crazy                      b) angry                      c) unhappy
- 7) If you like power, you might consider going \_\_\_\_ politics.  
a) above                      b) towards                      c) into
- 8) "You've been yelling and screaming for the past two hours. Could you just shut \_\_\_\_ already?"  
a) up                      b) in                      c) off

## ★ BONUS PRACTICE

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

- 1) When her friend Anna got into Yale, Nicole was **green with envy**.
  - a) sick
  - b) happy for her
  - c) very jealous
  
- 2) Bob and Susan are really **gung ho** about the TV show *Survivor*. They watch it every Thursday night.
  - a) enthusiastic
  - b) concerned
  - c) angry
  
- 3) **Shut up!** I can't take any more of your screaming.
  - a) Talk louder!
  - b) Be quiet!
  - c) Get out!
  
- 4) You got a scholarship to attend Harvard? **Way to go!**
  - a) Too bad!
  - b) Good work!
  - c) Oh well!
  
- 5) Please don't **butt in!** We weren't talking to you.
  - a) look at us
  - b) disagree with us
  - c) interrupt our conversation
  
- 6) These cookies aren't very good. I think you **hit the nail on the head** when you said I should add more sugar next time.
  - a) were wrong
  - b) were right
  - c) were confused