

Lesson 4

t a r g e t

a steal

at hand

get better

more or less

on hand

on one's own

refer to A as B

take one's time

think highly of

try out

□ a **steal** = very cheap; a very good price

My friend sold me his old car. It was a steal!
The land next to the river is a steal! You should buy it.

A: I just bought a DVD player for \$95!
B: Wow! What a steal!



□ **at hand** = near (time or space)

Christmas is at hand. I have to buy gifts for my family.
When I was a child, my mother was always close at hand.

A: I fear that war is at hand.
B: Don't worry. I'm sure the countries will reach an agreement.



□ **get better** = improve

His cold got better after he took a day off work.
Her singing will get better if she practices every day.

A: This movie is boring!
B: Don't worry. It gets better.



□ **more or less** = approximately; almost

My cousin and I are more or less the same age.
The airline tickets were more or less the same price.

A: Which shirt is better?
B: They are more or less the same quality.



□ **on hand** = near and ready for use

Do you have any bandages on hand? I cut myself.
There is a representative on hand twenty-four hours a day to help customers.

A: There's going to be five extra people at the party.
B: No problem. We have plenty of food on hand.



□ **on one's own** = without help from others

She has lived on her own since she was twenty-two.
He cooked this whole meal on his own without any help from his mother.

A: Do you need help fixing the sink?
B: No, thanks. I can do it on my own.



□ **refer to A as B** = use the name B for A

He referred to his classmate as his friend even though they only studied together.

Many people refer to this book as the author's greatest work.

A: What did your teacher say about your paper?

B: He referred to it as the work of a genius!



□ **take one's time** = slowly; in a relaxed way

She took her time and made sure she did not make any mistakes on the test.

He is taking his time getting ready. He wants to look nice.

A: I'll be there as soon as I can!

B: Take your time. The movie doesn't start until 3:00.



□ **think highly of** = have a good opinion of

Her teacher thought highly of her ability to draw.

He doesn't think very highly of his neighbors.

A: Mr. Henry is such a great teacher!

B: Yes. All the students think highly of him.



□ **try out** = do or use to see if something works correctly

Don't buy the bike until you try it out first.

I tried out several software programs, but none of them were good.

A: Your skateboard looks really fun.

B: It is! Why don't you try it out?



Practice

Choose the best answer.

1. He often _____ his wife as his best friend.
 - a. refers to
 - b. tries out
 - c. thinks highly of
2. I want to _____ that new language program for learning English while sleeping.
 - a. try out
 - b. take my time
 - c. get better
3. It has been six years, _____, since I visited my hometown.
 - a. more or less
 - b. at hand
 - c. a steal
4. Keep plenty of coffee _____ because this is going to be a long meeting.
 - a. more or less
 - b. on hand
 - c. on your own
5. She _____ her supervisor, so she does not mind when he offers her suggestions.
 - a. takes her time
 - b. thinks highly of
 - c. is on her own
6. Wherever the president goes, his bodyguards are close _____.
 - a. on their own
 - b. a steal
 - c. at hand
7. There is no rush, so you can _____ getting ready.
 - a. get better
 - b. refer to
 - c. take your time
8. This computer is _____ at this price. You should buy it before the sale finishes.
 - a. on hand
 - b. a steal
 - c. refer to
9. We had to study most of the material _____ because the professor only wanted to talk about his theory in class.
 - a. try out
 - b. more or less
 - c. on our own
10. You will never _____ if you don't rest and do as the doctor says.
 - a. think highly of
 - b. get better
 - c. refer to

Dialog

Fill in the blanks.

take your time
more or less

refer to him as
getting better

on my own
thinks highly of

In the hospital:

Bob: How are you feeling, Mark?

Mark: I think I'm _____. At least I can move my fingers today.

Bob: Great! Everyone _____ the doctor who is treating you. They say he is the best.

Mark: Yeah. He is good. I heard the nurse _____ Dr. Miracle.

Bob: Well, everyone at work is hoping you can come back soon, but _____. Do you know how long you will be in the hospital?

Mark: Actually, I am going home tomorrow. And since my wife has to work, I'll be _____ there all day.

Bob: Will you be OK?

Mark: I think so. I can manage things with my left hand _____.

Bob: If you need anything, just call. I'll be close at hand. I'll come over and give you a hand. Just hand over all your problems to me. I can handle them. I'll be on hand.

Mark: OK! OK! I get it. Very funny! Thanks, Bob!



Idioms in Context

Read the following story.

My Brazilian friend has only lived in the United States for six months, but his English is great. Before he came to the US, he studied in a language school, but mostly he learned English *on his own* from reading English books and watching movies. He had learned basic conversation before he arrived in the US. Then, after he got here, his vocabulary and listening *got better* very quickly. I would say that he is now *more or less* fluent in English. However, sometimes he still has trouble with idioms.

² One day, he asked me to help him buy some jewelry for his girlfriend back in Brazil. Her birthday was close *at hand* and he wanted to get something nice. He showed me a picture of his girlfriend before we went shopping. When I saw the picture I said, "Wow! Your girlfriend is a real spring chicken."

³ My friend asked me, "Why do you *refer to* my girlfriend *as* a chicken?"

I explained to my friend, "I just mean your girlfriend is very young and beautiful."

⁴ At the jewelry store, they had several very nice necklaces *on hand*. I suggested that we *take our time* and look at several stores, but my friend found a diamond necklace that was *a steal*. He called the saleswoman over to buy it.

⁵ As the saleswoman was taking out the necklace, my friend decided to *try out* the new idiom he learned. He showed the saleswoman the picture of his girlfriend and asked, "Don't you think she is a chicken noodle?"

My friend's English may not be perfect, but I still *think highly of* it.

