

## Idioms from People



### Reading

Read the story. Then discuss the questions.

### The Real McCoy

Our boss Virgil is a very original person. He started a business from nothing, and now he's a millionaire. Although he is such a **man of means**, he remains a sincere, helpful person. If any of his friends needs help, he's the first to give it. He's a true friend, **the real McCoy**.

He does all sorts of jobs in his company, from typing out his own letters to repairing big machines. He's a **jack of all trades**. And he doesn't bother about **keeping up with the Joneses**. He doesn't care what people think of his life-style; he doesn't have to have a lot of expensive things. He still drives the old car that he bought ten years ago, and he sometimes wears jeans to work.

1. If someone is a **man or woman of means**, what does the person have a lot of?
2. What can a **jack of all trades** do?
3. If you want to **keep up with the Joneses**, what do you do?

# Meanings

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Each example has an idiom with people or a person's name. Read the example carefully to find the meaning of the idiom. Then look at the definitions that follow the examples. Write the idiom next to its definition. **Note:** You will use the same definition for two idioms.

**to go Dutch**

When I go out to eat with my friends, we usually **go Dutch**. This way everyone knows what he or she is spending.

**a jack of all trades**

Louise can fix TVs, paint houses, and build shelves. She's **a jack of all trades**.

**to keep up with the Joneses**

Kate and Ken just bought the same car as Mavis and Mick, the same drapes as Dinah and Dick, the same chihuahua as Antonio and Antonia. They're really **keeping up with the Joneses**.

**a man/girl Friday**

Griselda wants to get some work experience, and she likes to do a lot of different things. So she's gotten a job as **a girl Friday** at the local TV studio.

**a man/woman of means**

My cousin has a business that makes a large profit every year. He's **a man of means**.

**the real McCoy**

The large diamond in her ring isn't an imitation. It's **the real McCoy**.

**to run in the family**

Omar and his sister are both very thin. Being skinny must **run in the family**.

**a smart aleck**

Alexandra is such **a smart aleck**. She always thinks she's right about everything and always makes you think that you're wrong.

**Tom, Dick, or Harry**

The boss was very careful about whom he hired for the job, and he interviewed several people. He didn't just hire any **Tom, Dick, or Harry**.

**a wise guy**

Don't be such **a wise guy** and act as if you know it all. Other people won't like you.

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|----------|--|
| 1. _____ | a true example of something  |
| 2. _____ | to want the same nice things that other people have                          |
| 3. _____ | a person who can do many things  |
| 4. _____ | a rich person  |
| 5. _____ | to share the cost, to pay one's own bill                                     |
| 6. _____ | someone who acts as if he or she knows everything and is often rude about it |

7. \_\_\_\_\_ nobody special, just any person
8. \_\_\_\_\_ someone who does a large variety of tasks on the job
9. \_\_\_\_\_ to be characterized by something common to many members of a family

## Practice

- A. Answer each question with **yes** or **no**. Explain your answer.
1. When the neighbors bought a Mercedes, Frieda told her husband they had to have one too. Is Frieda trying to keep up with the Joneses?
  2. George always wears the same old pants and shirt, and he drives a broken-down old car. Does George look like a man of means?
  3. Fabian spends a lot of time and money trying to look different from anyone else. Does he want to look like Tom, Dick, or Harry?
  4. Kevin and Mary went out on a date, and Kevin paid for the meal and movie. Did they go Dutch?
  5. Chung is always polite and is willing to listen to other people's opinions in discussions. Is Chung a wise guy?
  6. Emma is a very good plumber, but she can't do painting or carpentry or other things around the house. Is Emma a jack of all trades?
  7. Elaine's father and mother are doctors, and Elaine is studying to become one. Does being a doctor run in the family?
  8. This wooden bed is a genuine antique. It's two hundred years old. Is it the real McCoy?
  9. Mathilda's only job at the office is to answer the telephone. Is she a girl Friday?
  10. When I suggested that we go to a restaurant for our class party, Liz said that I had made a stupid suggestion, as usual. Was Liz being a smart aleck?

- B. Each example has the correct idiom, but there is one error with each idiom. Find the error and correct it.

1. This ring is real McCoy. It's genuine.



2. Bart is broke because he wants to keep up with the Jones.
3. The president of our company is a woman of mean.
4. What we need in this office is a girl on Friday.
5. Be careful with Ben. He's somewhat of wise guy.
6. Being good at math goes in my family.
7. I don't like to work with her. She's such smart aleck.
8. I don't lend my car to just any Tom, Dick, and Harry.
9. At last I found Andy the handyman. He's a jack in all trades.
10. Amanda asked Richard to go on a date, but she said that they would run Dutch.

## Conversation

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Practice each conversation with a partner.

### SITUATION 1

Two friends are having a conversation.

MOSES: That's a beautiful watch!

LAURA: Thank you, Moses. I got it for my birthday.

MOSES: Is it a real Mucci?

LAURA: Oh yes, it's the real McCoy.

### SITUATION 2

At the office, Rebecca is talking to her secretary, Janet.

JANET: Okay, the copier is running again.

REBECCA: I can't believe you fixed it! You're really a jack of all trades.

### SITUATION 3

Two friends are talking about someone they know.

YUKO: Did you hear about Kathy?

PAM: Yes, I heard she's going to get married, but I don't know who he is.

YUKO: Well, he's a man of means, I can tell you that.

PAM: I guess we all know Kathy wouldn't marry just any Tom, Dick, or Harry.

YUKO: I wonder where she found him?

### On Your Own

Work with a partner. Choose three idioms. Write a short conversation for each idiom. Then act out your conversations.

## Discussion

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Work with a partner or in a small group. Do the following activities.

1. Are there idioms in your native language with people or people's names? Are any idioms like the ones in English?
2. **The real McCoy** is a true example of something. Describe two things that are the true example of something and say where you can find them.
3. Some people like to **keep up with the Joneses** and want to have what their friends or neighbors have. Describe a situation and use **keeping up with the Joneses**.