

UNIT 13

Idioms from Clothes



Reading

Read the story. Then discuss the questions.

In the Boss's Shoes

Some people get angry easily. You have to be careful and **handle them with kid gloves**. My boss is always angry. He's always **hot under the collar** about something. If sales are bad, he gets very nervous. He's afraid that he's going to lose everything. He thinks he's about **to lose his shirt**. But the business never makes very much money. We always run **on a shoestring**. In business, you have to be calm and keep your temper. You have **to keep your shirt on**. Our business might be better if my boss could stay calm. Still, I prefer to be me than to have my boss's job. I don't want **to be in his shoes**. He's under too much pressure.

1. If you get **hot under the collar**, how do you feel? What makes you get hot under the collar?
2. If you **keep your shirt on**, do you get hot under the collar?
3. Many people would like **to be in someone else's shoes**. Whose shoes would you like to be in?

Meanings

Each example has an idiom with clothes. 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.

to be in someone else's shoes	I wouldn't like to be in Leroy's shoes when Dad comes home and sees that broken window.
dressed to kill	Blodwyn went to the party dressed to kill in his new black suit, silk shirt, and red tie.
a feather in one's cap	Passing the driver's test on the first try was a real feather in my cap .
to handle someone with kid gloves	The president has a difficult personality, and she gets angry easily. You have to handle her with kid gloves .
hot under the collar	Mike had an important meeting in another city. He got hot under the collar because the plane was late taking off.
to keep one's shirt on	I'll finish using the computer in a minute. Just keep your shirt on , and you'll get your turn.
to keep something under one's hat	I'm getting married, but keep it under your hat . I don't want anyone to know yet.
to lose one's shirt on a shoestring	Bob invested a lot of money in stocks and lost his shirt . Alice started a business although she didn't have very much money. She's running it on a shoestring .
a stuffed shirt	Higgins is such a stuffed shirt . He always wears a tie, and he even eats chicken with a knife and fork.
tied to someone's apron strings	Basil never does anything unless his mother says it's okay. He's tied to her apron strings .

1. _____ angry
2. _____ with very little money
3. _____ not to get angry, to be patient
4. _____ to be careful not to anger someone
5. _____ to lose a lot of money
6. _____ to be in the place of someone else
7. _____ in one's best clothes and looking good

8. _____ always following a stronger person

9. _____ someone who lives by the rules and is
very formal
10. _____ something to be proud of and to feel
good about
11. _____ to keep something secret

Practice

A. Answer each question with **yes** or **no**. Explain your answer.

1. Is getting a speeding ticket a feather in your cap?
2. Is it a waste of energy getting hot under the collar?
3. If you handle someone with kid gloves, do you treat the person well?
4. If you do something on a shoestring, do you spend a lot of money?
5. If you want a more interesting job like one a friend of yours has, do you want to be in someone else's shoes?
6. Would you call a rock singer a stuffed shirt?
7. Is a strong person tied to someone else's apron strings?
8. If you go on a picnic, do you dress to kill?
9. If you tell someone to keep his or her shirt on, are you telling the person to hurry up?
10. You told everyone the news. Did you keep it under your hat?
11. If you lose your shirt, are you an untidy person?

B. Complete each example with an idiom from this unit.

1. Clarence is no fun. He's just a
_____.
2. Winning the contest is a real
_____ for you.
3. Dave _____ gambling
on the stock market.

4. I sometimes wish I were
_____.
5. It's no use getting
_____ for nothing.
6. Tex is such a wimp. He's still
_____ to his mother's
_____.
7. When I was a student, I always lived
_____.
8. You can tell Jane my secret. You know that she'll
_____.
9. _____. I'll be ready in
a minute.
10. Gloria looks great tonight. She's
_____.
11. Mom is angry about something. We'd better
_____.

Conversation

Practice each conversation with a partner.

SITUATION 1

Two workers are talking.

ANDY: Are you afraid of Mr. Parker?

RINGO: No. Why?

ANDY: You always seem to treat him with kid gloves. That's why.

SITUATION 2

The conversation continues.

RINGO: Well, Parker is a stuffed shirt.

ANDY: Yes, but that's no reason to look as if you're tied to his apron strings.



SITUATION 3

The conversation continues.

RINGO: Would you like to be in my shoes? I have to do everything he asks and more.

ANDY: Keep your shirt on. I didn't ask you to take the job.

RINGO: Okay. Let's talk about something else.

On Your Own

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

Discussion

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

1. The idioms in this unit all use clothes. Do you know any other English idioms that use clothes?
2. Are there clothes idioms in your native language? Are any idioms like the ones in English?
3. Would you like to be in the shoes of a stuffed shirt who was tied to his or her mother's apron strings? Say why not.
4. Describe a situation where you wouldn't like to be in someone else's shoes.