

Idioms with the Word *As*



Reading

Read the story. Then discuss the questions.

As Fit as a Fiddle

I had the flu last week. I was **as sick as a dog**. After four days in bed, I was **as weak as a kitten**. I barely had the strength to get out of bed. My friend Clarence called me every morning and evening to see if I needed anything. His calls were **as regular as clockwork**. At first, my fever would not go away. It was **as stubborn as a mule**. Then I began to feel better. On day five I was **as hungry as a bear**. All I wanted was food. Now I'm fine. I'm **as fit as a fiddle**.

1. When you're **as sick as a dog**, how sick are you?
2. When you're **as stubborn as a mule**, how stubborn are you?
3. When you're **as hungry as a bear**, how hungry are you?
4. What grammar form do you see in all the idioms in the reading? What meaning do you think the **as . . . as** gives to the adjective (**sick, stubborn, hungry**) in the phrase?

Meanings

Each example has an idiom with a comparison using **as**. Read the example carefully to find the meaning of the idiom. Then look at the definitions below. Write the idiom next to its definition.

- as busy as a bee** Maxine is always working, either at home or at the office. She's **as busy as a bee**.
- as fit as a fiddle** Bart trains two hours every day. At sixty-eight, he's **as fit as a fiddle**.
- as good as gold** Baby-sitting for my little nephew Elrod was no trouble at all. In fact, he was **as good as gold**.
- as happy as a lark** When Marcus got engaged to be married, he was **as happy as a lark**.
- as hard as nails** The teacher is **as hard as nails**. He's strict and accepts no excuses from students who do not do their work.
- as hungry as a bear** Every time I exercise, I'm **as hungry as a bear** afterward, and I eat a big snack.
- as plain as day** Every week they spend more than they earn. It's **as plain as day** that they need to spend less and go on a budget.
- as regular as clockwork** Dylan catches the same bus at the same time every day. He's **as regular as clockwork**.
- as sick as a dog** After I ate that bad shrimp, I was **as sick as a dog**.
- as stubborn as a mule** Maisie is **as stubborn as a mule**. She doesn't like broccoli and she won't eat it even if you pay her.
- as weak as a kitten** After she was ill in bed for three weeks, Penny was **as weak as a kitten**.

1. _____ not willing to change one's mind, very set in one's ideas
2. _____ very healthy
3. _____ very hungry
4. _____ not very strong
5. _____ very unwell
6. _____ always at the same time
7. _____ very good, well-behaved
8. _____ very busy
9. _____ very easy to see or understand

10. _____ very hard and cold, not forgiving
11. _____ very happy

Practice



- A. Answer each question with **yes** or **no**. Explain your answer.
1. Tina's new baby doesn't cry. She sleeps and smiles most of the time. Is the baby as good as gold?
 2. Doug has been in bed for a week now with a very bad flu. Is he as sick as a dog?
 3. Dennis tries hard, but he's never on time. You never know when he's going to appear. Is he as regular as clockwork?
 4. Nina didn't pass her final exam. Do you think she's as happy as a lark?
 5. Louise runs five miles every day, and she watches what she eats. Is she as fit as a fiddle?
 6. Gina is always running around doing something, either at home or in the office. Is she as busy as a bee?
 7. Kim's father never forgave her for taking his car and then getting a speeding ticket. He said he'll never let her use the car again, and he means it. Is Kim's father as hard as nails?
 8. After walking in the fresh country air, Melinda came back and had a small salad for lunch. Was she as hungry as a bear?
 9. We asked Ahmed if he wanted to go to the movies with us yesterday. He didn't really want to, but we persuaded him to come. Was Ahmed as stubborn as a mule?
 10. Max, who weighs 250 pounds and lifts weights, had surgery a few days ago. When we went to see him, he didn't have the energy to get up. Was he as weak as a kitten?
 11. Ed has stayed up every night for a week to do his report. Now he looks very tired and has dark circles under his eyes. Is it as plain as day that Ed needs a rest?
- B. Each example has the correct idiom, but there is one error with each idiom. Find the error and correct it.
1. My sister Katie is as stubborn as mule. You can never change her mind.

2. I started to jog and exercise every day, and now I'm as fit as the fiddle.
3. It's as plain as a day he needs to wear glasses.
4. My brother always comes home as hungry like a bear.
5. My mother is always as busy as bees in the house.
6. I get to work at eight every morning as regular as clockworks.
7. The baby-sitter said little Timmy was as good like gold.
8. Don was as sick as dog yesterday.
9. It's good to see her as happy as a lake.
10. Berta is as hard nails. She's very strict.
11. After the operation, I felt as weak as the kitten.

Conversation

Practice each conversation with a partner.

SITUATION 1

Two friends are talking.

LIN: Is Suzy coming with us?

PAM: I asked her three times already and she said no.

LIN: Forget it then. She's as stubborn as a mule. We'll go without her.

SITUATION 2

Two classmates are talking.

TRAN: Where were you last week?

BOB: Oh, I was as sick as a dog with the flu.

TRAN: Are you better now?

BOB: Sure am. As fit as a fiddle!

SITUATION 3

Ernie comes home after football practice.

ERNIE: What's for dinner, Mom?

MOM: There's roast chicken and ice cream for dessert.

ERNIE: I'm as hungry as a bear. Can I eat now?

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. Do you know any other idioms in English with the word **as**? Make a list.
2. Are there idioms in your native language that use words like **as** to make comparisons? Are any idioms similar to the ones in English?
3. **As sick as a dog, as busy as a bee, as happy as a lark, as hungry as a bear, as weak as a kitten, as stubborn as a mule** are idioms that compare people to animals by using the word **as**. How true are these idioms? Is a lark (a kind of bird) happy? Are mules stubborn?