ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Speak Business English Like an American Lesson 21 Idioms and Expressions Test

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1	A	2	C	3	B	4	A	5	C	6	B	7	B	8	A				

Explanations

1. **Choose the best substitute for the phrase or sentence in bold:**

Kate said she didn't have time to help you? I'm not surprised, since **she has a lot on her plate right now.**
✓ A) she's very busy these days
To **have a lot on your plate** means to have many tasks or problems to deal with, so the speaker means **she's very busy these days**. The idiom is not about food, even though it mentions a plate.

2. Instead of retiring, Joyce decided to keep working and just **scale back her hours.**
✓ C) reduce the number of hours she works
To **scale back** something means to make it smaller or reduce it, so Joyce will **reduce the number of hours she works**. The clue is **instead of retiring**: she keeps working, but less.

3. You've been at the office every night until midnight for the past three months? **Hang in there**. In just a few more weeks, the busy period will probably be over.

✓ B) Be patient.
Hang in there is an informal way of saying don't give up and **be patient** during a difficult time. The clue is that the busy period will soon be over.

4. Tanya works all day and goes to school every evening. No wonder she's **wiped out**.
✓ A) exhausted
Wiped out is informal American English for very tired, or **exhausted**. Tanya works all day and studies every evening, so she is tired, not sick.

5. At the tax consulting firm, March and April are **crunch time**.
✓ C) a very busy period
Crunch time is the period when there is a lot of work and pressure to finish it, so it means **a very busy period**. For tax consultants, March and April are busy because of tax deadlines.

6. You asked me to buy you a bamboo vase on my business trip to Hanoi? I'm sorry, but **it slipped my mind**!
✓ B) I forgot
If something **slips your mind**, you forget it, so the speaker means **I forgot**. Not **I didn't get a chance**, because that means there was no time or opportunity, not that the speaker forgot.

7. Eva is working full-time while studying for her MBA and taking care of her two small kids. **I don't know how she can keep her head above water.**
✓ B) I don't know how she manages.
To **keep your head above water** means to manage a difficult situation, especially when you have too much to do. Eva has a job, studies and two children, so the speaker means **I don't know how she manages**. The idiom has nothing to do with real swimming.

8. If you want to pass the CPA exam, you'd better **keep your nose to the grindstone** and stop going out every night to party.
✓ A) focus on studying
To **keep your nose to the grindstone** means to work or study hard without stopping, so here it means **focus on studying**. Not **keep your nose out of other people's business**, which is a different idiom meaning don't interfere with other people.

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