ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Speak English Like an American Review for Lessons 1-5 Idioms and Expressions MCQ Test

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Explanations

1. After copying from his friend's paper during the test, Ted was on _____ ice with his chemistry teacher.
✔ **B) thin**
To be **on thin ice** with someone means you are in a risky position because you have done something wrong and they are unhappy with you. Ted cheated, so his teacher is angry with him. Example: **After missing three meetings, she's on thin ice with her boss.**

2. Ted's teacher hit the _____ on the head. Ted should spend less time playing guitar and more time studying.
✔ **B) nail**
To **hit the nail on the head** means to say exactly the right thing or describe a problem perfectly. The teacher's comment about guitar and studying was exactly right. Not **tack**: the idiom always uses **nail**.

3. I'm not really crazy about my friend's husband. He talks too much, and he never listens to what anybody else is saying. He's just not my cup of _____.
✔ **C) tea**
If someone or something is **not my cup of tea**, I don't like them or it very much. The idiom always uses **tea**. Example: **Horror movies aren't my cup of tea.**

4. If Ted has his _____ set on going to New York University, he's going to have to buckle down and start studying more.
✔ **C) heart**
To **have your heart set on** something means to want it very much and be determined to get it. Ted really wants to go to New York University. Not **mind**-type words like **brain**: the fixed expression uses **heart**.

5. It's not surprising that Nicole gets such good grades. She's as _____ as a tack.
✔ **B) sharp**
As sharp as a tack means very intelligent and quick to understand. A tack is a small, sharp nail, so the idiom uses **sharp**. Not **smart** or **clever**: they have the right meaning, but the fixed comparison is **sharp as a tack**.

6. When Peter _____ his temper, it's very scary. He throws furniture everywhere.
✔ **A) loses**
To **lose your temper** means to suddenly become very angry. The clue is that Peter throws furniture, which shows strong anger. The opposite is **keep your temper**.

7. After Jane started hitting the _____, her grades started improving immediately.
✔ **B) books**
To **hit the books** is an informal American idiom meaning to study hard. Jane studied more, so her grades improved. Example: **I have a test tomorrow, so I need to hit the books tonight.**

8. Nicole said something _____ her breath, but I couldn't hear it. When I asked her to repeat it, she refused.
✔ **C) under**
To say something **under your breath** means to say it very quietly so others can't hear it clearly. The clue is **I couldn't hear it**.

9. Will Ted ever be the best student in his class? Sure, when _____ fly!
✔ **C) pigs**
When pigs fly is a humorous way of saying that something will never happen. The speaker thinks Ted will never be the best student. The idiom always uses **pigs**.

10. A positive attitude leads to success. When things get difficult, it's important to keep your _____ up.
✔ **A) chin**
Keep your chin up means stay positive and brave when things are difficult. The clue is **A positive attitude** and **When things get difficult**. Not **neck** or **nose**: these words are not used in this idiom.

11. Bob was all stressed _____ because the traffic was making him late for a doctor's appointment.
✔ **B) out**
Stressed out means very worried and nervous. Bob was anxious because the traffic was making him late. Not **stressed up**: the correct particle is **out**.

12. Frank knew that the judge had already decided he was guilty. There was no point _____ arguing with him.
✔ **A) in**
There's no point in doing something means it is useless to do it because it won't change anything. The judge had already made up his mind, so arguing was useless. The expression uses **in** + verb-ing.

13. Some people think Nicole and Susan are sisters. That really _____ Nicole crazy!
✔ **C) drives**
To **drive someone crazy** means to annoy someone very much. Nicole hates it when people think she and Susan are sisters. Not **causes** or **does**: the fixed expression is **drive someone crazy**.

14. Ted has been slacking _____ since the first day of high school, so it's not surprising that he's doing so poorly.
✓ B) off
To **slack off** means to work or study less hard than you should. The clue is that Ted is **doing so poorly**. The correct particle is **off**: **Stop slacking off and finish your homework!**

15. During the Depression in the 1930s, many families in America were living from hand to _____.
✓ B) mouth
To **live from hand to mouth** means to have only just enough money to buy food and other basic things, with nothing saved. During the Depression, many families were very poor. The idiom always uses **mouth**.

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