

Mastering Conversation Idioms.

When it comes to speaking and in some cases informal writing tasks, the use of idioms can really help to add a more authentic feel to your English and also help to get a higher mark. Keep reading to discover some really easy to use idioms for your speaking exams:

1. **Sitting on the fence (be unsure about making a decision)**

In part 3 of the speaking in both Cambridge and LanguageCert the candidate has to have a conversation with either a partner or the exam interlocutor about a situation or a topic. In these situations, it is key to show your ability to agree, disagree and also express your opinion clearly. Because of this, “sitting on the fence” could be a great expression to use if you are unsure about which option could be best and sounds a lot better than just saying “I don’t know”. Here is an example of it in use:

“I’m **on the fence** between opening a new gym or a new library in the town centre.”

2. **Let the cat out of the bag (tell a secret)**

When talking with friends either in a speaking format or when writing to a friend or colleague, this expression could come in handy. Another similar expression would be to “spill the beans” which also means to reveal a big secret. Here is an example sentence:

“I’m going to buy James a present for his birthday but please don’t **let the cat out of the bag!**”

3. **A piece of cake (something that is very easy)**

When it comes to idioms, I’m sure that you’ve heard this one before but that doesn’t mean that you can’t use it! Try and incorporate it with a conditional structure to get boost your level like this:

“If you study hard, I’m sure that the exam will be **a piece of cake!**”

4. **Once in a blue moon (something that very rarely happens)**

This is also a good expression to use to talk about rare occurrences such as talking with a mutual friend or doing something special.

“I go to the cinema **once in a blue moon** so let’s go there this weekend!”

5. **See eye to eye (to agree)**

This is a great way to express agreement with your partner and for C1 or even B2 students, it's a great way to use more complex structures other than "I agree" or "You're right". Here is an example:

"I **see eye to eye** with my brother on almost everything except for who is the best at football!"

6. Take it with a pinch of salt (don't take it too seriously)

If you're referring to something or someone that is prone to exaggeration then this is the expression for you:

"I wouldn't believe everything he says if I were you, **take it with a pinch of salt.**"

7. The ball is in your court (you decide/ it's your turn)

This is a good way to interact with your partner and give them the opportunity to speak and potentially express their opinion:

"We could go to the cinema or maybe to the football game, what do you prefer? **The ball is in your court.**"

8. Twist someone's arm (persuade/convince someone to do something)

If you feel obliged to do something then you could use this expression in your speaking or writing:

"I didn't want to go but my parents **twisted my arm.**"

To conclude, using idioms in speaking exams or informal texts are great ways to add another level of complexity to your English so next time you're writing or speaking in English make sure to use some of these idioms!

Now let's test your knowledge! Match the idioms (1-8) with their meanings (a-h) below:

1. Once in a blue moon
 2. The ball is in your court
 3. Take it with a pinch of salt
 4. Sit on the fence
 5. A piece of cake
 6. Twist someone's arm
 7. See eye to eye
 8. Let the cat out of the bag
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- A. You decide
 - B. Very easy
 - C. force/convince someone to do something
 - D. Agree
 - E. Tell a secret
 - F. Very rarely do something
 - G. Be unsure about something
 - H. Don't take something too seriously

Answer key:

1. F
2. A
3. H
4. G
5. B
6. C
7. D
8. E