

1. Achilles' heel

A weakness or vulnerability that can lead to a downfall.

Example A: When I was in school, maths was always my Achilles' heel.

Example B: He's good guy, but his short temper is his Achilles' heel.

Question: What is your Achilles heel?

Conversation:

Penny: "I can't believe the foreign minister has been charged with corruption."

Leonard: "Tell me about it. This could prove to be the governments Achilles' heel in the future."

Penny: "You're right. I read online that he's being forced to resign."

2. be on (one's) last leg(s)

Of a machine, near complete breakdown or loss of functionality; of a person, near physical collapse or death.

Example A: The blender stopped working last night. It must be on its last legs.

Example B: I was so glad when I saw the finish line because I was on my last legs.

Question: What was the last appliance you had that was showing it might be on its last legs?

Conversation:

Sheldon: "Do you think you could drive me to work tomorrow?"

Amy: "My car is at the garage; it might be on its last legs judging from the noise its making."

Sheldon: "I see, sorry to hear that. My neighbor is selling her car if you're interested."

3. (someone) will cross that bridge when (they) come to it

To address something only when it arises or becomes an issue.

Example A: It might rain tomorrow, but we'll cross that bridge when we get to it.

Example B: We might not have enough chairs, but we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

Question: Do you prefer to cross bridges when you come to them or deal with them right away?

Conversation:

Howard: "It's getting late and we've been driving all day. Let's find a hotel in the next town."

Bernadette: "What if all the hotels are fully booked?"

Howard: "Let's cross that bridge when we come to it. Keep your eyes open for a B&B."

4. all hell breaks loose

A sudden chaotic and uncontrollable situation, often with lots of noise, arguing and fighting.

Example A: When she found out that he was flirting with other girls, all hell broke loose.

Example B: Suddenly, all hell broke loose upstairs! I have no idea what the kids were fighting about.

Question: Have you ever seen all hell break loose?

Conversation:

Tony: "Do you want try that bar on 8th street again?"

Lucy: "Don't you remember what happened last time. That one guy pushed another guy?"

Tony: "Oh yeah, and then all hell broke loose. That's why we left wasn't it?"

5. get to the bottom of (something)

To determine the cause or source of a problem or solve the mystery of something.

Example A: I have every confidence that our detectives will get to the bottom of this crime.

Example B: We need to get to the bottom of what is causing these extra costs in production.

Example C: It will be wise for us to get to the bottom of problem before it's too late.

Conversation:

Cammy: "Do we have any idea why the presentation slides weren't working yesterday?"

Kaley: "No, we're still checking over everything, but we're determined to get to the bottom of it."

Cammy: "Good, because it was embarrassing for the company and can't happen again."

Exercises:

Use an idiom and complete the following sentences:

Chocolate _____

I was watching TV and _____

Ten bottles of detergent arrived instead of 1 _____

Writing exercise: Use at least two idioms in a story using the context below.

Context: You went on a cruise and enjoyed a fancy party. Explain some positive and negative points.
