

IDIOMS AND PHRASES

From Previous Years NDA/NA (I & II) Question

➤ What are Idioms and Phrases?

Idioms and phrases are expressions whose meanings cannot be understood from the literal interpretation of the individual words. In the NDA exam, such questions test your ability to comprehend figurative language, cultural usage, and the underlying message of an expression.

Types of Idioms and Phrases Asked in NDA Exams:**1. Common Idiomatic Expressions:**

These are widely used expressions that convey figurative meanings.

Example: Kick the bucket

Options: (a) Start working (b) Die (c) Run away (d) Fall ill

Answer: (b) Die

2. Phrasal Verbs as Idioms:

These are verb phrases with meanings different from the individual words.

Example: Call off

Options: (a) Continue (b) Cancel (c) Delay (d) Postpone

Answer: (b) Cancel

3. Proverbs and Sayings:

Sometimes questions include short traditional sayings with metaphorical meaning.

Example: A stitch in time saves nine.

Options: (a) Small tasks are unnecessary (b) Early action prevents bigger problems
(c) It's never too late (d) Patience is a virtue

Answer: (b) Early action prevents bigger problems

4. Context-Based Idioms:

Here, the idiom is part of a sentence and must be interpreted from context.

Example: The coach asked the player to pull up his socks before the final match.

Options: (a) Wear better shoes (b) Leave the game
(c) Improve performance (d) Rest well

Answer: (c) Improve performance

5. Misleading Literal Idioms:

These look literal but have hidden meanings.

Example: Break the ice

Options: (a) Shatter something (b) Initiate conversation
(c) Swim in icy water (d) Destroy peace

Answer: (b) Initiate conversation

I Idioms & Phrases I

 The following list comprises idioms and phrases that have been previously asked in the National Defence Academy (NDA) examination conducted by UPSC. These expressions are frequently tested to assess a candidate's understanding of figurative language, contextual meaning, and usage. Each entry includes the idiom or phrase along with its meaning to aid comprehension and retention. Students are advised to read each item carefully and try to use these in their own sentences for better mastery.

SER	IDIOM	MEANING
[2018 – NDA/ NA II]		
1.	A Red-Letter Day	very important or significant day
2.	The Gift Of The Gab	ability to speak easily and confidently
3.	Walk A Tightrope	to act very carefully
4.	To Be In A Fix	to be in a difficult situation
5.	To Fish In Troubled Waters	to get benefit in bad situation
[2018 – NDA/ NA I]		
6.	Cry Over Spilt Milk	Complaining about a loss in the past
7.	Cut The Mustard	To come up to expectations
8.	Devil's Advocate	To present a counter argument
9.	Don't Count Your Chickens Before The Eggs Have Hatched	Don't make plans for something that might not happen
10.	Give The Benefit Of Doubt	Regard someone as innocent until proven otherwise
[2019 – NDA/ NA I]		
11.	A Dark Horse	A person who wins a race or competition although no one expected him to
12.	A Show-Stopper	A performance that is extremely good
13.	A Jack Of All Trades	Someone who has many skills
14.	Fight Tooth And Nail	To try very hard to achieve something
15.	Fair And Square	In an honest way
16.	Be Over The Hill	To be too old to do things
17.	Bite Your Tongue	To stop yourself from saying something because it would be better not to
18.	Turn A Blind Eye	To choose to ignore behaviour that you know is wrong
19.	Yellow Journalism	using strong language and false information that try to influence people's opinion
20.	To Be In Seventh Heaven	To be extremely happy
[2021 – NDA/ NA I]		
21.	Overstep The Mark	To upset someone by doing/saying more than you should
22.	Palsy-Walsy Friends	Good friends
23.	Open A Pandora's Box	To do something that causes a lot of new problems that you did not expect
24.	Pull Your Socks Up	Improve your work or behavior
25.	To Get Under Somebody's Skin	To annoy someone
26.	Turn Topsy-Turvy	To completely change something
27.	A Clarion Call	An urgent order
28.	Fire In The Belly	Powerful ambition
29.	A Hunky-Dory Situation	There are no problems and people are happy
30.	Give Somebody A Leg Up	To help someone be successful
[2021 – NDA/ NA II]		
31.	Once-Over	To do something quickly
32.	A Bag Of Bones	An extremely thin person
33.	Muddy The Waters	To make the situation complicated
34.	To Level With	To be honest
35.	Show Your Hand	(d) To tell people about your plans
36.	To Pull Up	(b) To come to a halt
37.	Be Out Of Action	(c) To become dysfunctional
38.	Learning From The School Of Hard Knocks	Learning things through difficult experiences
39.	Raise Some Hackles	To annoy
40.	A Man Of Letters	A scholar in literature
[2022 – NDA/ NA I]		
41.	Counting Your Chickens	Confident of success
42.	The Icing On The Cake	Extra benefit over and above an already good deal

I Idioms & Phrases I

SER	IDIOM	MEANING
43.	A Stitch In Time Saves Nine	Timely action that prevents a negative outcome
44.	At Sixes And Sevens	State of total confusion
45.	Talking Twenty To The Dozen	Talking hurriedly and rapidly
46.	Under The Weather	Unwell
47.	To Sit On The Fence	To be undecided
48.	Once In A Blue Moon	Rarely
49.	Through Thick And Thin	Through difficult times
50.	Like Chalk And Cheese	Very different from each other
[2022 – NDA/ NA II]		
51.	A Queer Fish	A strange person
52.	Eat Like A Bird	Eat very little
53.	Lock Horns	Argue about something
54.	Early Bird	First arrival
55.	Be In The Pink	To be very healthy
56.	Be In The Running	In a good position to win
57.	A Sea Change	A complete change
58.	A Pearl Of Wisdom	An important piece of advice
59.	Be In Seventh Heaven	To be extremely happy
60.	Be In The Red	To be in debt, financially weak
[2023 – NDA/ NA I]		
61.	The Lion's Share	The largest and the best part of something
62.	Spill The Beans	Reveal a secret
63.	Cook Someone's Goose	To spoil other's plans
64.	Disappear Into Thin Air	Disappear suddenly
65.	Put The Screws On	Forcing someone to do what you want
66.	Sit On The Fence	Avoid taking sides
67.	Be As Sharp As A Tack	A clever person
68.	From Pillar To Post	Keep moving from one place to another
69.	Heath Robinson	Very complicated system or machine for doing a simple task
70.	As Thick As Thieves	Very close friends who are looked upon with suspicion
[2024 – NDA/ NA I]		
71.	Be bad news	Someone who is considered undesirable
72.	Back to the drawing board	To start planning again because the previous plan has failed
73.	Be in the eye of the storm	To be in the midst of a controversy
74.	Life in the fast lane	An exciting and eventful lifestyle
75.	To pass the buck	To shift the responsibility of something to someone
[2024 – NDA/ NA II]		
76.	A white lie	A lie that you tell to avoid hurting someone
77.	Bad blood	Feelings of hatred between people
78.	Count your blessings	To be grateful for good things in your life
79.	Have the last laugh	To succeed when others thought that you would not
80.	Sit on the fence	To delay making a decision