



Learn English Through Stories

Intermediate Idioms

**Adopted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

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Banta in England by K S Sandhu

Banta came to England in 1975. He was very happy to be there. He arrived in London with a big smile and a small suitcase. Everything was new and exciting. The streets were busy, the buses were red, and people spoke English very fast. Banta felt thrilled to bits. He thought, "This is my new life!"

At first, Banta was on cloud nine. He found a small room to live in and started working in a factory. The work was hard, but he did not mind. Every evening, he walked in the park and felt on top of the world. He wrote letters to his family in Punjab: "I am over the moon here! England is wonderful."

Banta also got a real kick out of small things. He loved drinking tea in a café and listening to English music on the radio. Sometimes he jumped for joy when he received money from his job. "I can send some home!" he said. He felt like he was floating on air.

But after some years, things changed. In 1980, the factory closed. Banta lost his job. He looked for new work, but it was difficult. Many people said no. He felt very sad. He was down in the dumps every day. He sat in his room and did not want to go out.

His friend Jaswant told him, "Don't be a misery guts, Banta! Things will get better." But Banta found it hard to smile. He was out of sorts and complained a lot. "Nothing goes well," he said. Sometimes he felt like crying his eyes out, but he tried to be strong.

One day, his old boss from the factory called. "Banta, I have a new job for you in a shop. Come tomorrow." Banta could not believe it. He jumped for joy again! He felt thrilled to bits. "This is not the end of the world," he thought. "I must grin and bear it when things are hard."

Banta started the new job. He worked with kind people. Slowly, he felt better. He even laughed again. When his sister visited from India, he was in seventh heaven. They ate Punjabi food and talked about home. Banta said, "Life has ups and downs, but I am happy now."

Some friends were jealous when Banta got a better job later. One said, "It's not fair!" Banta smiled and answered, "Don't have sour grapes. Work hard and good things come."

Now, many years later, Banta still lives in England. He tells young people his story. "Be patient," he says. "When you are sad, remember it will pass. And when you are happy, enjoy it! Life is like that."

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Happiness and sadness

A Extreme happiness

There are many informal idioms which mean *extremely happy*.

I'm **thrilled to bits**.

I am/feel **on top of the world**.



I'm **on cloud nine**.

I'm **over the moon**.

I'm **in seventh heaven**.

B Other happiness idioms

idiom	meaning	example
get a (real) kick out of something	very much enjoy doing something (informal)	I get a (real) kick out of going for a run first thing in the morning before anyone else is up.
do something for kicks	do something because it is exciting, usually something dangerous (informal)	Kate is keen to have a go at bungee-jumping – just for kicks.
jump for joy	be very happy and excited about something that has happened	Rowena jumped for joy when she heard that she'd won first prize.
be floating/walking on air	be very happy about something good that has happened	I've been walking on air ever since Chris and I started going out together.
something makes your day	something makes you feel very happy	It's great to hear from you. It's really made my day.

C Sadness

Dear Louise,

Hope all goes well with you. Unfortunately, everyone here is **out of sorts**¹. Will is **down in the dumps**² because he doesn't like his teacher this year. I've told him that **it's not the end of the world**³ and that he'd better **just grin and bear it**⁴, but I think he likes being **a misery guts**⁵ and so he complains about her every night. Pat is also suffering from **sour grapes**⁶ because I got the role in the school play that she wanted. This **puts a damper on**⁷ every meal, so I'm really looking forward to staying with you at the weekend.

Love,
Amelia



¹ slightly unhappy or slightly ill

² unhappy (informal)

³ what has happened won't cause any serious problems

⁴ accept a situation you don't like because you can't change it

⁵ someone who complains all the time and is never happy (very informal)

⁶ being jealous about something you can't have

⁷ stop an occasion from being enjoyable (sometimes *dampener* is used instead of *damper*)

Exercises

- 3.1** Combine the words in the box in order to make five expressions meaning *extremely happy*. Use each word once only.

bits	cloud	heaven	in	moon	nine	of	on	on	over	seventh	the
the	thrilled	to	top	world							

- 3.2** Which idioms do these pictures make you think of?

1



3



5



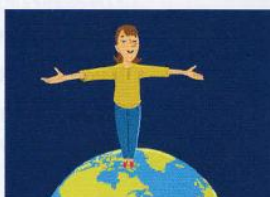
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- 3.3** Correct the mistakes in these idioms.

- The child was thrilled for bits to have her photo in the paper.
- I felt as if I was floating in air as I ran down the hill into his arms.
- Why does Marti look so out of sort today?
- Don't make such a fuss. It's not the finish of the world!
- Your telephone call has really done my day!
- Jill said she was on cloud seven and Jack agreed that he was in ninth heaven.
- Why does Mark always have to be such a misery guts?
- Stereotypically, happy footballers say that they are over the sun.

- 3.4** Answer these questions.

- Would a piece of good news or a piece of bad news be more likely to make your day?
- If you got top marks in an exam, would you feel down in the dumps?
- Are people more likely to get a kick out of hot-air ballooning or cleaning their boots?
- Do you have to grin and bear it when you are happy or unhappy about something that has happened?
- If you are at someone's birthday party, what would be more likely to put a damper on the event – news of the illness of a close friend or a heavy shower of rain?
- Do people usually enjoy or not enjoy being in the company of a misery guts?
- You have a beautiful new sports car that a colleague is rather envious of. What is your colleague more likely to say out of sour grapes? 'I love its green colour!' or 'Of course, that model is very unreliable!'
- A damper is literally a thing put on piano strings to make the sound less loud. How does knowing this help you to understand the idiom using the word *damper*?
- Do you notice anything that a number of the images in the happiness idioms have in common?

Answers

Unit 3

- 3.1** in seventh heaven on cloud nine on top of the world over the moon
thrilled to bits
- 3.2**
- 1 jump for joy
 - 2 grin and bear it
 - 3 be floating on air
 - 4 do something for kicks / get a kick out of something
 - 5 sour grapes
 - 6 be on top of the world
- 3.3**
- 1 The child was thrilled **to** bits to have her photo in the paper.
 - 2 I felt as if I was floating **on** air as I ran down the hill into his arms.
 - 3 Why does Marti look so out of **sorts** today?
 - 4 Don't make such a fuss. It's not the **end** of the world!
 - 5 Your telephone call has really **made** my day!
 - 6 Jill said she was on cloud **nine** and Jack agreed that he was in **seventh** heaven.
 - 7 Why does Mark always have to be such a **misery** guts?
 - 8 Stereotypically, happy footballers say that they are over the **moon**.
- 3.4**
- 1 Good news – if something makes your day, it makes you feel happy.
 - 2 No – down in the dumps means miserable.
 - 3 Hot-air ballooning – boot cleaning is not something that many people find exciting.
 - 4 Unhappy – when you grin and bear it, you try to make the best of a situation that you are not happy with.
 - 5 News of the illness of a close friend. A heavy shower of rain might make you damp (wet), but it wouldn't put a damper on the event.
 - 6 No one enjoys the company of a misery guts – being with a miserable person can make you feel miserable too.
 - 7 'Of course, that model is very unreliable!' is the sort of unpleasant remark that someone might make out of sour grapes.
 - 8 Just as a damper makes a piano quieter, so something that puts a damper on an event quietens it down, makes it less fun.
 - 9 Quite a lot of the images are based on the concept of happiness making you feel as if you are not on the ground but up in the air.