



Everyday Expressions

Overview

Spoken language is full of fixed expressions that are not necessarily difficult to understand but have a fixed form that does not change. These have to be learned as whole expressions. These expressions are sometimes difficult to find in dictionaries, so it is important to be on the lookout for them.

Conversation Building Expressions

Here are some common expressions that help to modify or **organize what we say**.

Expression is underlined; → *function / meaning of the expression is italicized*

- As I was saying, I haven't been back to London, Ontario for years.
→ *Takes the conversation back to an earlier point*
- Speaking of good tennis players, have you ever seen Mark Duffield play?
→ *Starting a new topic but linking it to the current one*
- If you ask me, he's going to get himself into trouble.
→ *If you want my opinion (even if no one has asked for it)*
- That reminds me, I need to start looking for a birthday gift for my brother.
→ *Something in the conversation brings something else to mind*
- Come to think of it, I don't think that I paid my credit card bill this month.
→ *You realize there may be a problem/question about something*

Common Expressions for Modifying Statements

Expression is underlined; → *function / meaning of the expression is italicized*

- If worst comes to worst, we'll have to cancel the trip. [*if the situation gets really bad*]
- If all else fails, we could fax them. [*if nothing else succeeds*]
- What with one thing and another, I haven't had time to reply to her letter. [*because of a lot of different circumstances*]

- When it comes to restaurants, this town's not that good. [*when considering something*]
- As far as I'm concerned, we can eat at any time. [*as far as it affects me or from my point of view*]
- As luck would have it, she was home when I called. [*an unexpected good thing*]

Practice Exercise

Exercise 1

Complete the fixed expressions in these sentences:

1. Come _____, I don't remember giving her the key. I'd better call her and check, just in case.
2. If you _____, the economy's going to get much worse before it gets any better.
3. _____ of vacations, what are you planning to do on yours?
4. That _____, I have a message for you from Maria.
5. As _____ before the telephone interrupted us, we plan to take a long vacation next summer.

Exercise 2

Fill in the blanks with one of the expressions from the words below:

- a) **Never mind** = forget about it, don't worry about it
 - b) **Postpone** = put off something temporarily
 - c) **Pass away** = die
 - d) **Ring a bell** = to be reminded of something
 - e) **Been there, done that** = already did something like that
 - f) **Put up with** = to deal with someone or something that is unpleasant
 - g) **Lame excuse** = bad or illegitimate answer for not doing something
 - h) **Pissed off** = very angry
 - i) **Go on strike** = to stop working
 - j) **No wonder** = when something does not come as a surprise, obvious
- 1) Emily was telling me about how much money she had spent on her children's back-to-school supplies. Since I also have two young kids attending the same school, I said to her: " _____!", because I had bought materials for my kids just the day before!

- 2) I get _____ when I see someone disrespecting an elderly person!
- 3) When someone _____, it's polite to extend your sympathies to the grieving family.
- 4) Sally called me to ask whether I wanted to spend the weekend at a spiritual retreat with her. I'm not into such things, so I told her I couldn't go because I had already planned to visit my great-grandmother at her nursing home during the weekend. After I hung up, I thought to myself: "What a _____! But it was the first thing I thought of, because Sally caught me by surprise with this invitation!"
- 5) I was having dinner at Monica's yesterday when she asked me if I had remembered to bring her the CD I had promised to lend her. I said: Oh, no. I forgot it on top of my desk, at the office! Lucy replied: _____! You can bring it tomorrow.
- 6) My dentist appointment was on Tuesday but I had to _____ it till next Wednesday.
- 7) Jennifer has a really demanding boss, and although she has to _____ a lot at work, she really likes what she does and enjoys her job.
- 8) Mary didn't eat anything today. Later at the gym _____ she felt dizzy when she was walking on the treadmill.
- 9) Does the name Professor Hall _____? He was our biology professor in first year.
- 10) Dissatisfied employees _____ to demand higher wages.

Answers

Exercise 1

Come to think of it; If you ask me; Speaking of; That reminds me; As I was saying

Exercise 2

- | | | |
|------|------|-------|
| 1) e | 5) a | 9) d |
| 2) h | 6) b | 10) i |
| 3) c | 7) f | |
| 4) g | 8) j | |