

10 USEFUL IDIOMS AND SET PHRASES

1. On the spot



on the spot

1. immediately

If you're caught without a ticket, you're fined **on the spot**.

We asked for the money and he paid us **on the spot**.

(allí mismo/ en el acto/ en ese mismo momento)

2. in the place where something is happening or has just happened

The police were called and they were **on the spot** within three minutes.

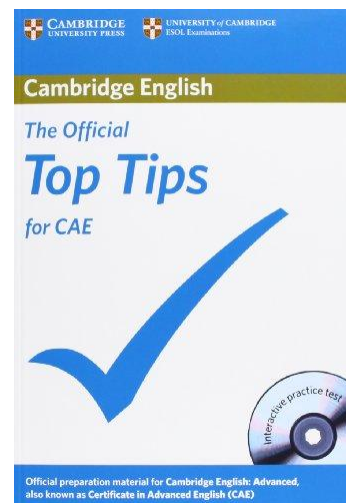
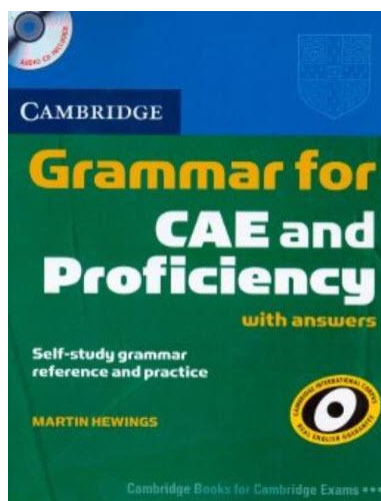
I expect you to be **on the spot** when and where trouble arises.

en el lugar / el lugar de los hechos

3. if you run or turn **on the spot**, you do it without moving away from the place where you are

I ran **on the spot** for ten minutes to warm myself up.

En el sitio / sin moverse



2. have alarm/warning bells going off in your head



have alarm/warning bells going off in your head

if you say that alarm bells are ringing or that something sets off alarm bells, you mean that / alarm bells

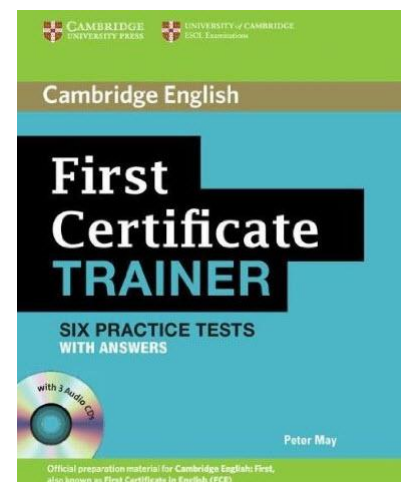
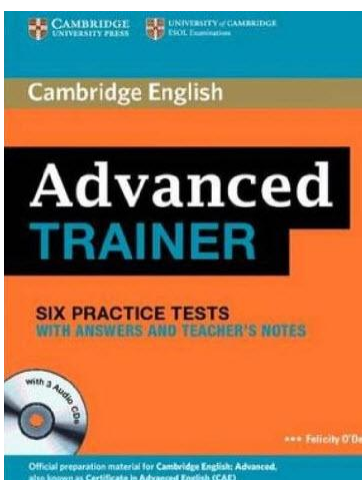
- **(Warning/alarm) bells went off (in my head)** as I read her letter.
[=there was something in her letter that alarmed me]

Alarm bells went off in his head when he saw two men step out of the car and reach for their guns.

Despite the **warning bells going off in her head**, Savannah wanted to be with him.

Be willing to walk away in order to keep any **alarm bells from going off in your customer's head**.

Sospechar / preocuparse / poner en alerta



3. Alarm bells ring / start ringing. Set off / sound/ ring alarm bells



alarm bells ring / start ringing set off /sound/ring alarm bells

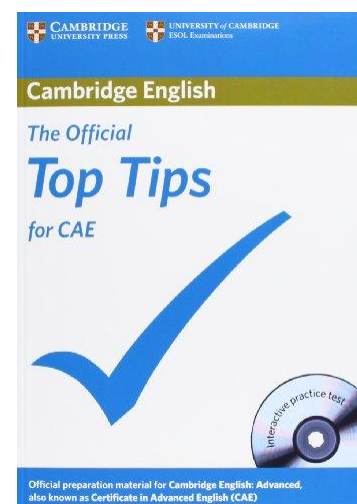
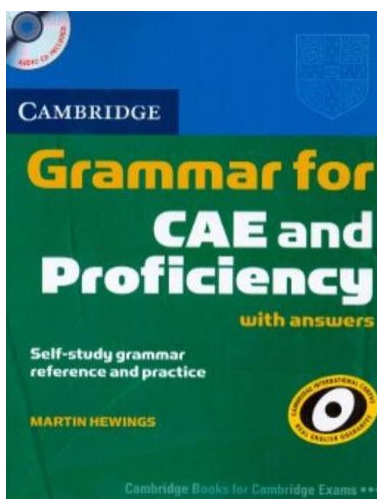
to warn of trouble and the need for action /
to start feeling worried and suspicious

The report about worldwide climate change should
sound alarm bells in every community.

When Frank suggested coming to stay for a couple of days,
alarm bells started to ring in my head.

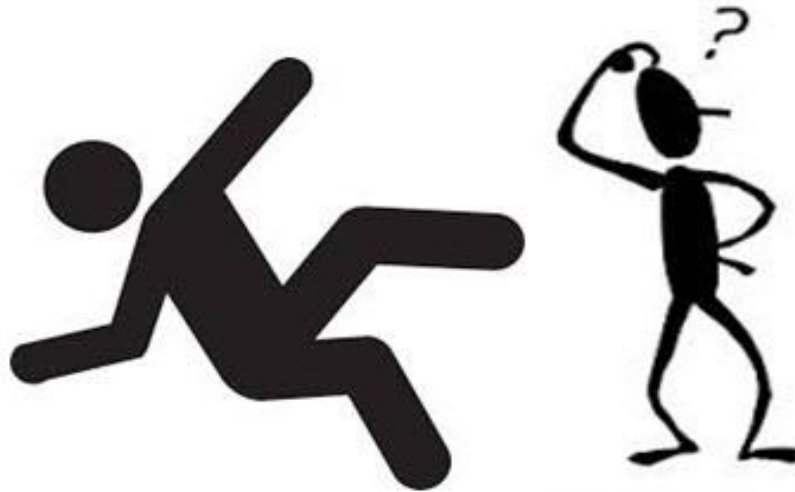
The government's proposal has **set alarm bells ringing for**
People on low incomes.

Sospechar / preocuparse/ poner en alerta



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www.aprendeinglesenleganes.com

4. throw someone off balance



throw someone off balance

1. *Lit.* to cause someone to falter (and probably fall).

The cyclist bumped into me and **threw me off balance**.

I was **thrown off balance** by the gust of wind.

Hacer perder el equilibrio a alguien

2. *Fig.* to confuse or disorient one.

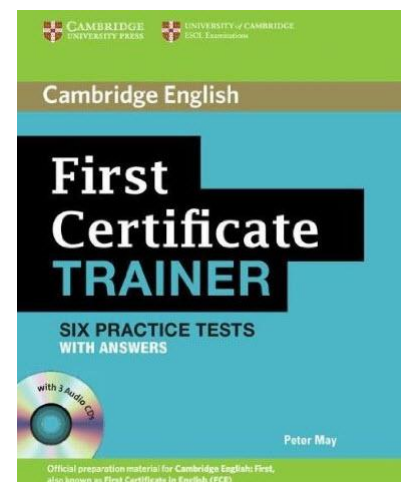
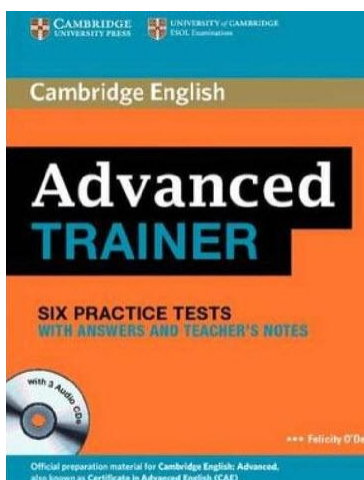
Your last question sort of **threw me off balance**.

The teacher was **thrown off balance** by the students' difficult questions.

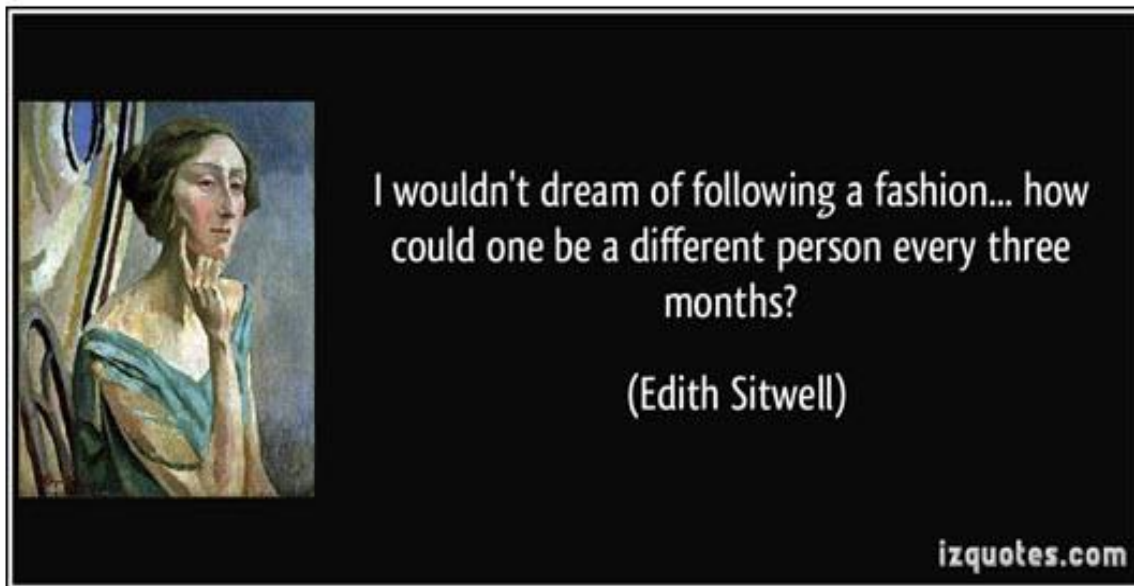
I wasn't expecting any interaction with the audience and was

thrown off balance by his question.

Confundir / desorientar / desconcertar



5. wouldn't dream of (doing something)



wouldn't dream of (doing something)

if someone wouldn't dream of doing something, they would not even consider doing it, because they think it is wrong or silly.

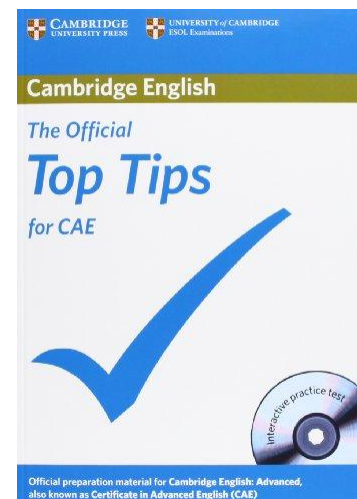
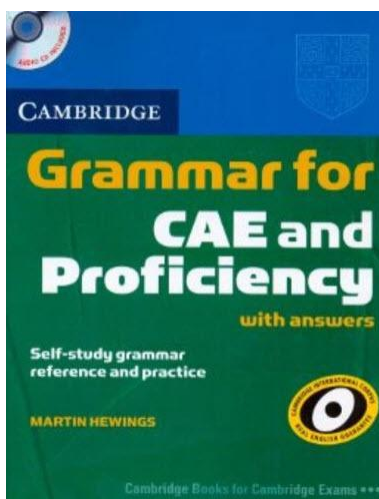
I wouldn't dream of asking my father for money.

I wouldn't dream of letting a surgeon anywhere near my eyes.

I wouldn't dream of taking your money!

I'm sure that **John wouldn't dream of complaining to the manager.**

No se me ocurriría (hacer algo)



6. Lose one's shirt



lose one's shirt

Fig. to lose a lot of money; to lose all of one's assets
(as if one had even lost one's shirt).

I almost **lost my shirt** on that deal. I have to invest more wisely.

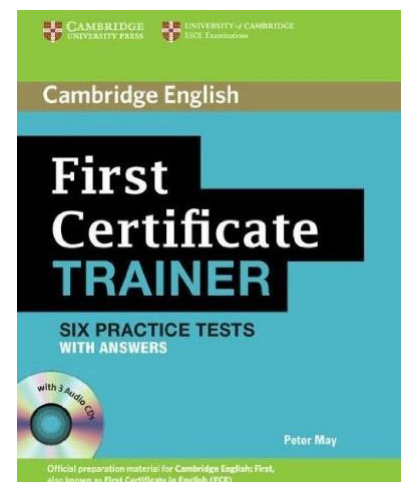
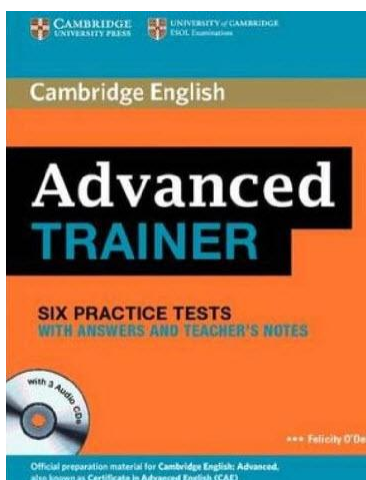
No, I can't loan you \$200. I just lost my shirt at the racetrack.

I **lost my shirt** because I didn't know anything about publishing at the time.

I don't recommend investing in that deal.

It's very risky; you could **lose your shirt**.

Usage notes: usually said about money that was invested
perder (hasta) la camisa



7. Rattle somebody's cage



rattle somebody's cage

to make someone angry on purpose, often in order to make them seem silly

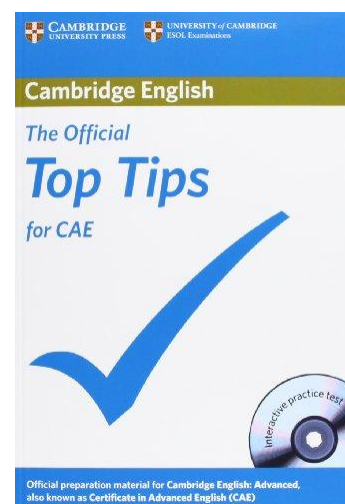
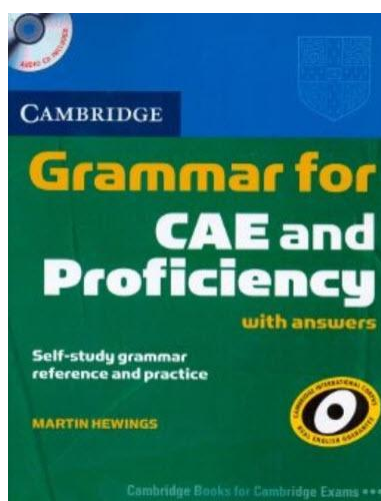
She tried to **rattle his cage** with questions about his failed army career.

I **rattled his cage** by telling him I hated his art.

I didn't respond, since I knew he was trying to **rattle my cage**. It would have only made him feel better if he got to me; that was what he wanted

Etymology: based on the idea of *rattling* (*making a noise by repeatedly hitting*) the cage to annoy the animal inside it

Hacer enfadar alguien a propósito



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8. Trials and tribulations

In order for faith to grow, adversity must be faced. Through trials and tribulations strength is found.

Faith Tilley Johnson

trials and tribulations

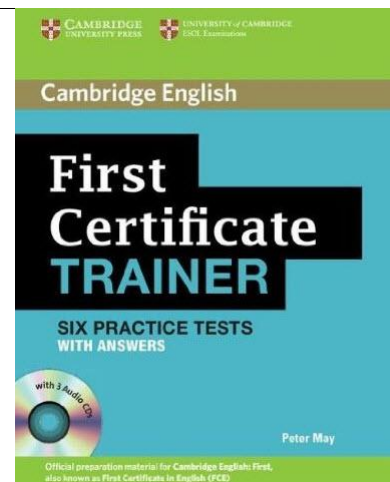
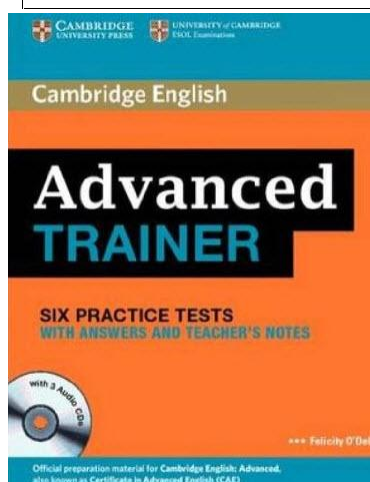
literary / humorous . Problems and tests of one's courage or perseverance.

I suppose I have the normal **trials and tribulations** for a person of my background, but some days are just a little too much for me.

I promise not to tell you of the **trials and tribulations** of my day if you promise not to tell me yours!

Worry, stress, tension, and fear are common reactions to the **trials and tribulations** of modern life.

Vicisitudes / Avatares



9. Up sticks - Pick up sticks



up sticks (British & Australian)

pick up sticks (Australian)

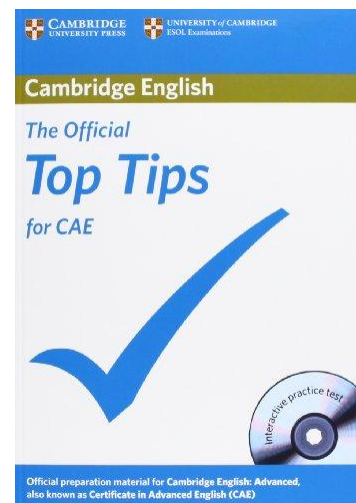
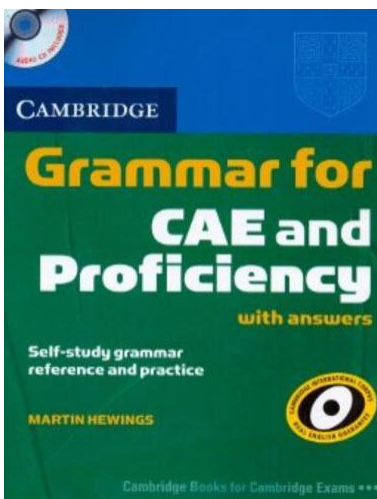
Informal. to leave the place where you have been living

I was even thinking I might **up sticks** and move to somewhere completely new.

This is the fourth time in five years that we've had to **up sticks**.

Another baby means another bedroom is required so, shortly,
we will **up sticks** and move house once again.

Cambiar de casa



10. Scrimp and save Pinch and scrape



scrimp and save pinch and scrape

to be very thrifty; to live on very little money,
often in order to save up for something.

We had to **scrimp and save** in order to send the children to college.
The Smiths **pinched and scraped** all year in order to go on a Caribbean cruise.
We had to **scrimp and save** to buy our first house.

cuidar mucho el dinero

