



# IDIOMS & PHRASES WITH NUMBERS



**C1-C2**  
Best Grammar  
Sheets & Tables  
Your key to mastering  
advanced grammar  
Perfect for C1 & C2 Cambridge  
English exams

## 1 Look out for number one

To prioritize your own needs or interests before anyone else's; to act in self-preservation.

- After years of being taken advantage of at work, she finally decided to look out for number one.

### Back to square one

If you are back to square one, you have to start working on a plan from the beginning because your previous attempt failed completely:

- If this doesn't work we're back to square one.

**One-track mind** – Obsessed with a single topic or idea.

- Don't bother talking to him during football season — he's got a one-track mind.

**One-trick pony:** someone or something with only one distinguishing feature, skill, or talent

- Don't be a one-trick pony; try to learn new skills and expand your capabilities.

## 3 Three's a crowd

A third person is unwanted in a romantic or intimate setting. I didn't want to join their dinner — three's a crowd.

**Three sheets to the wind** – Drunk.

By midnight, he was three sheets to the wind.

**Third time's the charm** – Success comes after two failures.

He finally passed his driving test — third time's the charm!

## 5 Take five – Take a short break.

- We've been at this for hours — let's take five.

**Give me five / High five** – A gesture of celebration.

- You nailed the presentation — give me five!

### Five-o'clock shadow

This refers to the noticeable stubble that appears on a man's face later in the day, after shaving in the morning.

- Many men find the 5 o'clock shadow to be a desirable look, often cultivated intentionally."

## 7 Seven-year itch – A supposed decline in a relationship after seven years.

- They're trying therapy — the seven-year itch hit hard.

**Seventh heaven** – A state of great joy.

- When he saw his newborn baby, he was in seventh heaven.

## 9 Dressed to the nines – Very well-dressed.

- She arrived at the gala dressed to the nines.

**Be on cloud nine** – be very happy.

- I was on cloud nine after the proposal.

## 11 At the eleventh hour – At the last possible moment.

- They submitted the report at the eleventh hour.

## 22 Catch-22

an impossible situation that you cannot solve because you need to do one thing in order to do a second thing, but you cannot do the first thing until you have done the second

- It's a Catch-22 situation — without experience you can't get a job and without a job you can't get experience.

## 40 forty winks

a short sleep during the day:

- He usually has forty winks going home on the train.

## 2 Two heads are better than one

Collaboration leads to better results.

- Let's solve this puzzle together; two heads are better than one.

**Put two and two together – To deduce something obvious.**

- When I saw her car outside his house, I put two and two together.

**Two peas in a pod – Very similar or close.**

- Those twins are like two peas in a pod — always together.

**Caught between two stools**

Unable to decide between two options and thus failing both.

- He tried to appeal to both audiences and ended up caught between two stools.

**Two-faced – Deceitful or hypocritical.**

- I can't trust her — she's so two-faced.

## 4 On all fours – Crawling.

- The toddler moved across the carpet on all fours.

**Four-letter word** – A swear word.

Watch your language — that's a four-letter word!

**Give (someone) the four-one-one** – To give information.

Can you give me the four-one-one on what happened at the meeting?

## 6 Six feet under – Dead and buried.

- He's been six feet under for years, but people still talk about him.

**At sixes and sevens** – In a state of confusion or disorder.

- The office has been at sixes and sevens since the manager quit.

**Six of one and half a dozen of the other**

said when you think that neither of two choices is better than the other:

- "Shall we give her chocolates or flowers?" "I don't know, it's six of one and half a dozen of the other."

## 8 Behind the eight ball – In a difficult or unlucky situation.

- We missed the deadline and are now behind the eight ball.

**Pieces of eight** – Old coins, metaphorically used.

- The pirate's treasure was full of pieces of eight.

## 10 Ten to one – Very likely.

- Ten to one, he's forgotten our anniversary again.

**Perfect ten** – Something flawless.

- Her dance routine was a perfect ten.

**Wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole** – Avoid entirely.

- That investment sounds risky — I wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole.

## 12 Dime a dozen – Very common or easily available.

- Cheap souvenirs in that market are a dime a dozen.

## 24 24/7 : 24 hours a day, seven days a week: all the time:

- We're open for business 24/7.
- We offer 24/7 internet access.

## 50 Fifty-fifty: (into) equal halves:

- They divided the prize fifty-fifty.