

Idioms: Career & Life Goals

Intermediate (B1–B2)



WARM UP

Part 1. Discuss the following questions.

1. What's one skill you had to **learn the ropes** for?
2. Have you ever needed to **take the bull by the horns** at work or in life?
3. Do you prefer someone else to **call the shots** or to make decisions yourself?
4. When did you last **go the extra mile** for a friend, project, or client?

READING ACTIVITY

Part 1. Read the following dialogue carefully.

Aria: Congrats on your promotion, Leo! How are you settling in?

Leo: Thanks! I'm still **learning the ropes**, but my mentor's been great.

Aria: I'm sure you'll pick it up fast. You always **go the extra mile**.

Leo: I try—but now I need to **step up my game** even more.

Aria: You've got this. It's nice to see you **calling the shots** for once.

Leo: Yeah—and I've learnt that if someone's not **pulling their weight**, you've got to **take the bull by the horns**.

Part 2. Answer the comprehension questions.

1. What is Leo still in the process of doing?
2. Which idiom tells us Aria admires Leo's extra effort?
3. Why does Leo feel he must step up his game?
4. What change has Leo experienced in how decisions are made?

DEFINITION MATCHING

Part 1. Match each idiom to its correct definition. Can you guess any before looking at the options?

Learn the ropes

Step up your game

Call the shots

Pull your weight

Go the extra mile

Take the bull by the horns

1. _____ to your fair share of work
2. _____ put in more effort than required
3. _____ take control and deal with a tough situation directly
4. _____ master the basics of a new job or task
5. _____ improve your performance
6. _____ be the one making decisions



TYPICAL USAGE MATCHING

Part 1. Match the idioms with what they are typically used with.

Learn the ropes

Step up your game

Call the shots

Pull your weight

Go the extra mile

Take the bull by the horns

1. _____ when trying to impress your boss
2. _____ in a group task or team setting
3. _____ when you're in charge of a project or team
4. _____ when facing a difficult challenge or decision
5. _____ in a new job
6. _____ when you want to stand out or deliver exceptional results

SENTENCE TRANSFORMATION

Part 1. Rewrite the following sentences using the target idioms so that the meaning stays the same.

1. I still need to get the basic skills for this role.
2. You must work harder if you want to compete.
3. She's the one in charge of all the final decisions.
4. Everyone must contribute equally on this project.
5. He always does more than what's expected of him.
6. It was time to confront the problem head-on.

SENTENCE GAP-FILL

Part 1. Use the correct form of the idiom in brackets to complete each sentence.

1. By month three, I _____ (learn the ropes) well enough to train new employees.
2. Since the new competitor arrived, we _____ (step up your game) across the board.
3. When the director went on leave, I _____ (call the shots) for two weeks.
4. Last quarter, the whole team finally _____ (pull your weight) and met every target.
5. I _____ (go the extra mile) on every campaign since I started.
6. After our client threatened to leave, we _____ (take the bull by the horns) and renegotiated terms.

SPEAKING

Part 1. Use the idioms from today's lesson to talk about:

Learn the ropes

Step up your game

Call the shots

Pull your weight

Go the extra mile

Take the bull by the horns

- A time you had to learn the ropes in a new role
- A moment you needed to take the bull by the horns
- When you or someone else had to step up your game
- An example of going the extra mile to achieve a goal
- How you feel when you finally call the shots

