

## Proverbs

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All the idioms in these exercises are examples of **proverbs**. A proverb is a statement that gives advice or says something that is generally true about life.

**1** Match the proverbs (1–6) with their meanings (a–f).

- 1 Actions speak louder than words. ....*c*.....
  - 2 All that glitters is not gold. ....
  - 3 No news is good news. ....
  - 4 It's no use crying over spilt milk. ....
  - 5 A leopard does not change its spots. ....
  - 6 The early bird catches the worm. ....
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- a Something or someone may not be as good or as valuable as they first appear.
  - b You should not worry or be upset about things that have happened and cannot be changed.
  - c People show what they really think and feel by what they do, and not by what they say.
  - d If you do not hear new information about a situation, it is probably because nothing bad has happened.
  - e It is not possible for someone bad or unpleasant to change and become good and pleasant.
  - f People who get up early achieve more in their lives.

**2** Now do the same with this set of proverbs.

- 1 Blood is thicker than water. ....*e*.....
  - 2 Don't count your chickens before they're hatched. ....
  - 3 You can't judge a book by its cover. ....
  - 4 Out of sight, out of mind. ....
  - 5 Rome wasn't built in a day. ....
  - 6 Variety is the spice of life. ....
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- a Doing and seeing a lot of different things makes life more enjoyable and interesting.
  - b You should not judge someone or something by what they look like or what they seem like at first.
  - c It is easy to forget about someone or something when you have not seen them for a long time.
  - d Do not make plans for the future yet because you do not know for certain how a particular situation will develop.
  - e Someone's loyalty to their family is greater than their loyalty to anyone else.
  - f It takes a long time to do a task properly, and you should not rush it or expect to do it quickly.

- 3** There is a group of proverbs that are usually said in a short form. Speakers often know the full form, but they choose to say only the first half.

In exercise 3, the first half (1–7) of each proverb is the part that people usually say. The second half (a–g) is the part that people often leave out.

Match the first half of each proverb with the second half.

- |                             |                                  |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 The road to hell          | a where angels fear to tread.    |
| 2 A bird in the hand        | b spoil the broth.               |
| 3 A stitch in time          | c than the devil you don't.      |
| 4 Better the devil you know | d flock together.                |
| 5 Birds of a feather        | e is worth two in the bush.      |
| 6 Fools rush in             | f saves nine.                    |
| 7 Too many cooks            | g is paved with good intentions. |
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4 Write the correct proverb from exercise 3 under the definitions.

- 1 Stupid people often do or say things without thinking enough about them first.

.....  
*Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.*  
.....

- 2 People often intend to do good things, but in fact they do not achieve them, perhaps because they are lazy or weak.

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- 3 A plan or project can fail because there are too many people working on it at the same time.

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- 4 It is safer to keep what you already have. If you try to get something better, you risk having nothing at all.

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- 5 It is better to deal with a problem in its early stages, in order to prevent it from getting worse.

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- 6 It is better to deal with someone you already know even if you do not like them. Someone that you do not know may be even worse.

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- 7 Similar people like to be with each other.

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## Proverbs – Answer key

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### Exercise 1

- 1 c
- 2 a
- 3 d
- 4 b
- 5 e
- 6 f

### Exercise 2

- 1 e
- 2 d
- 3 b
- 4 c
- 5 f
- 6 a

### Exercise 3

- 1 g
- 2 e
- 3 f
- 4 c
- 5 d
- 6 a
- 7 b

### Exercise 4

- 1 Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.
- 2 The road to hell is paved with good intentions.
- 3 Too many cooks spoil the broth.
- 4 A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
- 5 A stitch in time saves nine.
- 6 Better the devil you know than the devil you don't.
- 7 Birds of a feather flock together.