Spoken idioms

Idioms are generally used as a more interesting or emphatic way of conveying meaning. For example, if you say that you are 'getting to grips with' a situation, you mean that you are starting to understand it or deal with it.

However, the idioms in these exercises are used a little differently. They are used as a response to a particular situation. They are all types of **exclamation**.

1 Match the exclamations (1–4) with their meanings (a–d).

1 Break a leg! ..........

2 You took the words right out of my mouth! ..........

3 Easier said than done! ..........

4 Just what the doctor ordered! ..........

a That's exactly what I needed! I feel much better now.

b You said exactly what I was just going to say!

c That is not easy to do, although it may sound like a good idea.

d Good luck! (said to a performer just before they go on stage)
Now match these exclamations (1–5) with their meanings (a–e).

1. Look what the cat’s dragged in! ..........  
2. Famous last words! ..........  
3. Don’t give up the day job! ..........  
4. Eat your heart out, Frank Sinatra / Beckham, etc! ..........  
5. In for a penny, in for a pound! ..........  

a. You are not good at something so don’t try to do it as a job.  
b. What has just been said may be proved wrong.  
c. Look who has just arrived! (used disapprovingly or humorously)  
d. I am definitely going to continue with something, even if it means more effort or money.  
e. That was a brilliant performance!
Write a response for each statement using these idioms.

Just what the doctor ordered!  Break a leg!  Famous last words!
Don’t give up the day job!  Easier said than done!

1  A: I need to lose six kilos by January.
   B: .................................................................
      Easier said than done!

2  A: I’m on stage in half an hour.
   B: ........................................................................

3  A: Ah, a nice ice-cool glass of lemonade.
   B: ........................................................................

4  A: Everything is under control and I’m confident the event will be a success.
   B: ........................................................................

5  A: So what did you think of my singing?
   B: ........................................................................
4 Choose the correct idiom for the situation.

You took the words right out of my mouth!  Look what the cat’s dragged in!

Eat your heart out, Ronaldo!  In for a penny, in for a pound!

Bang goes any chance of promotion!

1 Susannah makes a serious mistake at work. What does she say?

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Bang goes any chance of promotion!

2 Daniel sees his old friend, Paul, walking into the café. He hasn’t seen him for a while and likes to joke with him. What does Daniel say?

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3 Luke goes to a shop to buy a tent for his holiday. He ends up buying the tent, a camping cooker, a sleeping bag and other items of equipment. What does he say?

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4 Luisa’s friend expresses an opinion that is exactly what Luisa is thinking. What does Luisa say?

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5 John is playing football for his school team and scores a brilliant goal. What does he say?

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Spoken idioms – Answer key

Exercise 1
1  d
2  b
3  c
4  a

Exercise 2
1  c
2  b
3  a
4  e
5  d

Exercise 3
1  Easier said than done!
2  Break a leg!
3  Just what the doctor ordered!
4  Famous last words!
5  Don’t give up the day job!

Exercise 4
1  Bang goes any chance of promotion!
2  Look what the cat’s dragged in!
3  In for a penny, in for a pound!
4  You took the words right out of my mouth!
5  Eat your heart out, Ronaldo!