

Idioms with “for”:

Students-Take turns reading the conversations below. Answer the questions after the conversation. Discuss any vocabulary you don't understand with the group.

Jenny: I'm going to my last exam. Bill is supposed to pick me up at 9. I hope he is on time for once. This is my last class as a university student. I'm finished with school once and for all.

Jane: Did you study the poems the professor assigned?

Jenny: Yes, I can recite them word for word. But let's be honest, some of those poems were for the birds. For heaven's sake, couldn't he find poems that more people would understand.

1-Do you think Bill is a person that is perpetually late? What makes you think that?

2-Will Jenny continue her education next semester? How do you know?

3-Did Jenny memorize the poems? How do you know?

4-Did Jenny like the poems she studied? What expression does she use?

5-Did Jenny think the poems were easy to understand?

6-How do you feel about people that are always late?

7-Do people in your country have patience with people, buses and trains that always run late?

Jane: I agree. For crying out loud, how about some poems that rhyme! What will you do after you graduate?

Jenny: I'm looking for a teaching job, but for the time being I'll keep my job at the restaurant. I would like to spend more time job searching, but I don't dare quit my restaurant job for fear of having no income.

Jane: At least you will have more time now that you are finished with school. I know you studied for hours on end.

1-What is Jane's complaint about the poems?

2-What prevents Jenny from looking for a job?

3-Does Jane think Jenny studied a lot? What idiom does Jane use?

Jenny: Yes, having no homework will be nice for a change. I'm excited about finishing school. But, if I am unable to find a teaching job, all my schooling will be for naught.

Jane: I'm sure you'll find a teaching job. For that matter, I think you'll probably get lots of offers.

Jenny: I hope you're right. But I don't intend to work for peanuts. For the most part, teachers are underpaid. My uncle is a principal. He has a job for me for the asking. But his school is in a tiny town hours away from a city. For all practical purposes, I would be in isolation. I wouldn't know anyone or have access to any cultural events. For all I know, I would be the only single woman in town.

1-What does Jenny mean when she says all her schooling will be for naught?

2-What does “work for peanuts” mean?

3-What does Jenny mean when she says her uncle has a job “for the asking”?

4-Why does Jenny not want the job her uncle offers?

5-Do you think Jenny wants to work somewhere where she can meet other singles?

Building Vocabulary:

These paragraphs have words that you may not encounter in normal conversation, but which will appear on TOEFL exams. Read the paragraph and tell in your own words what the paragraph means.

A business owner faces a dilemma when people bring unruly children into their store. Should he allow the children to run wild and risk damage to the merchandise, or admonish the children and risk alienating the parents.

1-What does this paragraph mean?

2-Admonish means to warn or find fault with. Synonyms include caution, reprimand or reproach. These three words could be substituted for "admonish" in this sentence. Has anyone ever reprimanded your children in public? If someone reproached your children, would you be alienated?

3-Do Americans have more or less tolerance for unruly children than people in your country? Would you ever correct children that were not yours?

4-If you alienate someone, you cause them to feel negatively about you. Ex: The president alienated the conservative voters. Have you ever alienated someone unintentionally?

5-A dilemma is a situation that requires a choice between two difficult alternatives. Give an example of a dilemma you have faced in your life.

I think there is value in attending a school with a diverse student body. Diversity encourages understanding and sensitivity. I entreat you to send your children to a school that includes a mix of cultures.

1-What does this paragraph mean?

2-Do you agree with the sentiment?

3-Was your educational experience diverse?

4-Would you prefer your children go to a school with diverse cultures?

5-What does "I entreat you" mean?

Group Conversation

Did you have a happy childhood?

Are you raising your children the same way you were raised?

Describe yourself as a child (personality and habits).

What were some of your happiest childhood memories?

Did you play outside often when you were a child? Do your children play outside? Were your first memories of school pleasant ones? Do your children like school?