

More Words About Numbers: Two Heads Are Better Than One

Read these paragraphs that contain many number idioms. Discuss the meaning of the underlined idioms and use them in a sentence.

Some problems are difficult to solve. But there are a lot of number expressions that can help. For example, if we put two and two together, we might come up with the right answer. We know that two heads are better than one. It is always better to work with another person to solve a problem.

Sometimes there are no two ways about it. Some problems have only one solution. You cannot be of two minds over this.

But with any luck, we could solve the problem in two shakes of a lamb's tail. We could have our answers quickly and easily.

Sometimes we can kill two birds with one stone. That is, we can complete two goals with only one effort or action. But we must remember that two wrongs don't make a right. If someone does something bad to you, you should not do the same to him.

If you are going out with your girlfriend, or boyfriend, you do not want another friend to go along on your date. You can just say to your friend: two's company, three's a crowd.

When I was a young child in school, I had to learn the three R's. These important skills are reading, writing and arithmetic. These three words do not all start with the letter "R." But they have the sound of "R." My teachers used to give three cheers when I did well in math. They gave praise and approval for a job well done.

Some of my friends were confused and did not understand their schoolwork. They were at sixes and sevens. In fact, they did not care if they finished high school. They saw little difference between the two choices. Six of one, half a dozen the other – that was their position. But they were really happy when they completed their studies and graduated from high school. They were in seventh heaven. They were on cloud nine.

Nine times out of ten, students who do well in school find good jobs. Some work in an office doing the same things every day at nine-to-five jobs. You do not have to dress to the nines, or wear your best clothes, for this kind of work.

Last year, one of my friends applied for a better job at her office. I did not think she would get it. I thought she had a hundred to one shot at the job. Other people at her office thought her chances were a million to one. One reason was that she had been caught catching forty winks at the office. She slept at her desk for short periods during the day. But her supervisor appointed her to the new job at the eleventh hour -- at the very last minute. I guess her lucky number came up.

OTHER NUMBER IDIOMS–Read the sentence and guess at a definition of the underlined idiom.

1. I can't believe you bought that Rolex watch from that man on the street. That thing is as phony as a three dollar bill.

2. The members of the board are at one with me over my decision to pull out of the project.
3. I sold another huge order today. Lately I've been batting a thousand when dealing with new clients.
4. It's a catch-22 situation. If I go to work they'll think I was lying about being sick, but if I stay home, they'll think I'm lazy.
5. I would try to sell these old textbooks, but used paperbacks are a dime a dozen.
6. When the teenager returned home late he got the third degree from his mom about where he had been.
7. I think Ed has had one too many. We'd better drive him home. I don't trust him behind the wheel.
8. I'd love to ask Jane to dance, but I have two left feet. I'm sure it would be a disaster.
9. Jeff claims he wouldn't have divorced his wife if she hadn't been so cruel to him, but it takes two to tango. He can't blame all his problems on her.
10. I can't depend on my neighbor to help me out. He only looks out for number one. If there isn't something in the situation which benefits him, he is not interested in helping.

Discuss:

1. Have you ever bought something that turned out to be a phony?
2. Have you ever been in a catch-22 situation? Describe what happened.
3. Did your parents ever give you the third degree?
4. Do you have two left feet, or are you light on your feet?
5. Do you know anyone who only looks out for number one?