**IELTS Idioms in Use**

**Instructions**: Here are 5 common idioms that might be used on the IELTS exam. Look at the idioms below, read the excerpts from an articles ( ) and then try to guess the answers to the multiple-choice questions. After you finish, check the definitions and answer key to see if you answered correctly.

1. **to get the ball rolling**

While Pritchard and Selmak were responsible for getting the ball rolling, a whole team of scientists have scoured the planet looking for examples that could be included in the Gardening Tools Archive. This team then carefully catalogues the approved samples so that they can be used in displays.



What was the main responsibility of Pritchard and Selmak at the Gardening Tools Archive?

1. to accept and authorize samples
2. to set up displays of the samples
3. to begin the institution
4. to look for samples around the world
5. **once in a blue moon**

There are individuals who skip breakfast as a rule and then dine out for the meal once in a blue moon. These types of diners are classified as ‘mimosa breakfasters’ for their tendency to overindulge and include alcohol in their early morning feasting. After such events, these culinary mavericks will typically eat less and exercise more the following day.



What does the article say about a ‘mimosa breakfaster’s’ attitude towards breakfast?

1. they typically eat too much for breakfast
2. they very rarely eat breakfast
3. they eat a lighter breakfast the day after eating too much
4. they drink alcohol every morning
5. **burn the midnight oil**

Students are finding new ways to cram for exams. Many now eschew the isolated method of burning the midnight oil in a dorm room and instead favor long study sessions in the early afternoon. Groups of pupils gather in a university common area with strict rules about what can be said and done, and no person is permitted to leave (except to use the lavatory).



What does the article say about how students traditionally studied?

1. they did not have study very hard
2. they did not use a study space provided by the university
3. they studied until the early morning
4. they studied alone or in groups
5. **throw in the towel**

The initiative started as the brainchild of one man, Pete Heatherington. His dream was to one day see that clean water was provided to every individual in his rural community of Rockers Beach. Despite many setbacks, including a cease-and-desist letter from the state authorities that almost caused him to throw in the towel, Pete’s efforts came to fruition in early 2010.



What was the result of the cease-and-desist letter sent to Pete Heatherington?

1. the initiative was a success
2. the initiative was a failure
3. Pete Heatherington gave up on his dream
4. the letter ultimately had no effect on the outcome
5. **go the extra mile**

There exist many explanations as to why some employees are promoted while others are not. The prevailing advice to workers who seek to get ahead is go the extra mile. Many employers pay little heed to consistent punctuality. However, staying late to meet a deadline has an outsized effect on how you are viewed by those in the position to hand out advancements.



According to the article, how should an employee go about getting a promotion?

1. show that you are willing to work more than strictly required
2. arrive early or on time for work every day
3. make sure deadlines are met within working hours
4. have a substantial impact on the revenue of the company

**Idiom Definitions**

**to get the ball rolling**
*to start something, especially a project or activity.*

**once in a blue moon**
*very rarely; something that doesn't happen often.*

**burn the midnight oil**
*to stay up late working or studying.*

**throw in the towel**
*to quit or give up, especially when something is too difficult.*

**go the extra mile**
*to do more than what is expected or required.*

**Answer Key**

1. **c**
2. **b**
3. **c**
4. **d**
5. **a**