

UNIT 1

Outside my comfort zone

Many modern workplaces, including offices and museums, have water coolers in strategic areas, so that staff and visitors can have cool, filtered water to drink while having a break. 'Water cooler' chat is informal conversation taking place around a water cooler.

A Read the 'water cooler' conversation between two colleagues.

- | | |
|---|--|
| CARRIE: I'm wondering whether to put in for Greg's job. They're advertising it already. | RANJIT: No way! You need to have more confidence in yourself. And blow your own trumpet more. You'll be great in that role. And anyway, look who you're up against for the post. |
| RANJIT: You should. It's got your name on it! | CARRIE: Greg's sidekick, you mean? |
| CARRIE: You think so? | RANJIT: Yeah, Max. He hasn't a chance. He's not exactly the brightest button in the box. |
| RANJIT: Sure. If they have any sense, they'll be crawling over broken glass to promote you. | CARRIE: Well, no. Maybe I will apply. And tell you what, I'll buy myself a new suit for the interview. |
| CARRIE: It'll stretch me – I'll be outside my comfort zone. That's what worries me. | RANJIT: That's it, push the boat out. I would. |
| RANJIT: Come on, Carrie, think big! You can do it! | |
| CARRIE: Sometimes I wonder if I've reached my sell-by date. | |

B Four of the idioms or expressions in the conversation take their origins from the following topics. Match the expressions to the topics. There is one extra topic.

sailing music art shopping sewing

C Match the phrases in italics from 1–10 with their meanings (a–j).

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 She'll <i>have kittens</i> . | a chose the best people for |
| 2 He's got <i>the green light</i> . | b get to the point |
| 3 She's feeling <i>off colour</i> . | c be just what is needed |
| 4 He does things <i>by the book</i> . | d make an additional effort |
| 5 Let's <i>cut to the chase</i> . | e permission to proceed |
| 6 I'm ready to <i>go the extra mile</i> . | f understand what I mean |
| 7 He <i>cherry-picked</i> his team. | g decreased drastically |
| 8 That'll <i>fit the bill</i> . | h according to the rules |
| 9 Do you <i>get my drift</i> ? | i rather unwell |
| 10 The profits <i>went south</i> . | j be very anxious |

D Read the sentences and choose the correct meaning from the brackets to replace the words in italics.

- 1 *She's on good form*. (she's cheerful and active / she has a healthy bank balance)
- 2 It's a *quantum leap* for me. (considerable problem / huge step up)
- 3 We can't make *ends meet*. (friends stop quarrelling / our money last)
- 4 *It beggars belief*. (it's really hard to believe / it's important to help poor people)

- 5 *You know what makes people tick.* (have insight into people's characters / can make people do what you want)
- 6 *It's a steep learning curve.* (learning gets easier later on / there's a lot to learn)
- 7 *It's a 24/7 job.* (it needs total commitment / you have to be in the workplace every minute of the day)
- 8 *He's off the leash.* (feeling depressed / free from family responsibilities)
- 9 *It's gone into a black hole.* (completely disappeared / been protected for future generations)
- 10 *He's bulked up a lot lately.* (put on weight or muscle / been aggressive)



He's off the leash

E Complete the conversation with the most appropriate expressions from the box. There is one extra.

fit the bill	sidekick	blow my own trumpet	push the boat
ends meet	the extra mile	brightest button	by the book
beggars belief	went south	cut to the chase	

- JAKE: How's things, Trish?
- TRISH: Not good, I have to say. Trying to make 1) _____ takes up most of my time these days.
- JAKE: Yes, I know. How do they think we can manage on frozen pay? It just 2) _____.
- TRISH: I thought Nick and I might be able to 3) _____ out and have a decent holiday this year, but – fat chance!
- JAKE: And I think profits 4) _____ this quarter, so it looks like our end-of-year bonus is no longer on the cards.
- TRISH: Oh no! And we're all going 5) _____ to help out. What more can we do?
- JAKE: For starters, we could do with someone to replace Stella. I don't want to 6) _____ but I had to show her what was wrong with the figures this morning. And she's supposed to be in charge!
- TRISH: Not the 7) _____ in the box, sad to say.
- JAKE: Mike's OK, though – you know, her 8) _____ – at least he does things 9) _____ so you know where you are with him.
- TRISH: Well, I'm just hoping for a pay rise this time next year. That'll 10) _____ nicely!

F What would you say in these situations? Choose from the options a) or b). All the expressions come from this unit.

- 1 You think a post you have seen advertised would be perfect for you.
 - a) It's got my name on it.
 - b) I'm having kittens about it.
- 2 You want your friend to stop waffling and get to the point.
 - a) Come on, cut to the chase.
 - b) You should blow your own trumpet more.
- 3 You are explaining that your project has been given the go-ahead.
 - a) I've got the green light.
 - b) It's gone into a black hole.
- 4 You are impressed by your colleague's understanding of human nature.
 - a) You know what makes people tick.
 - b) You like being outside your comfort zone.

- 5 You want to check that the person listening is following what you are saying.
 - a) Why not go the extra mile?
 - b) Do you get my drift?
- 6 In answer to a friend's enquiry, you say that your sister is not feeling well.
 - a) She's not the brightest button in the box.
 - b) She's a bit off colour.
- 7 You are describing how the head of a department has selected only the very best people for his team.
 - a) He's cherrypicked them.
 - b) He's reached his sell-by date.
- 8 You think something is almost unbelievable.
 - a) It's hard to make ends meet.
 - b) It beggars belief.
- 9 You agree that someone's suggestion will solve the problem perfectly.
 - a) He'll be crawling over broken glass.
 - b) It'll fit the bill.
- 10 You encourage someone to spend more than usual on a particular item.
 - a) Why don't you push the boat out?
 - b) Go on, do things by the book.