

SAMPLE CHAPTER*

IT'S A BREEZE

42 Lively English Lessons on American Idioms

Written by
Toni Aberson

*reproducible for classroom use

COUCH POTATO

USAGE

If you don't get moving, you'll become a **couch potato**.

MEANING

A **couch potato** is a person who watches television for hours and seems to stay in one place. If someone is a **couch potato**, he is glued to a spot and just sits. A couch potato is not being active. The expression **couch potato** suggests that the person is out of shape and sluggish. He is only interested in watching television.

STORY

Since Steve lost his job, he has become a **couch potato**. He just stays at home and watches television. His mother doesn't know what to do. She told him, "Turn off the TV and start looking for a job. Go out with your friends. Do something." He does not seem to hear what she is saying. He just sits there and watches TV. "It's like you're in a trance," his mother said. "You have become a **couch potato**."

VOCABULARY

couch - a piece of furniture that seats more than one person; a sofa.

- ◆ *Three people can sit comfortably on the new couch in our living room.*

glued - stuck in one spot; pasted.

- ◆ *The child glued sparkles on paper in art class.*

sluggish - without energy; moving slowly if at all.

◆ *Until she had her coffee, Jane felt sluggish in the mornings.*

active - moving; interested; involved.

◆ *Mila is a very active mother.*

trance - a state of not being aware; a state of not knowing what is happening in one's surroundings.

◆ *The magician put Alex in a trance.*

PRACTICE

1. Choose the most appropriate, or apt, vocabulary words to fill in the blanks in the following sentences. Hint: the past tense of many verbs includes the letters "ed."

Jack _____ the newspaper article into his scrapbook.

The horse was _____ at the start, but he won the race.

Most Americans have a _____ in their living room.

2. Which of the following words fits you? Circle the words that you think accurately name or describe you.

cautious	modern	talkative	married
athletic	traditional	liberal	ambitious
healthy	playful	friendly	silly
smart	rich	kind	strong
short	calm	conservative	balanced
curious	happy	driven	busy
handsome	spiritual	retired	hardworking
serious	generous	polite	nice
lazy	comfortable	energetic	sad
tall	nervous	tired	confident
enthusiastic	shy	single	optimistic

How else can you describe yourself? What groups do you belong to? Sometimes we also describe ourselves as a member of a group.

I am a salesman. (driver/engineer/nanny/nurse)

I am a parent. (a sister, an uncle, an only child)

I am a _____.

I am also a _____.

CONVERSATION

1. If your son or daughter was acting like a **couch potato**, what would you do to change the situation?
2. How much television do you usually watch in a day? Do you watch more on Saturday? Is there a day you don't watch any television?
3. Have you ever felt it would be nice to just watch television all the time? Have you ever wished there were no television?
4. Which television shows are your favorites? Why?
5. If you had children, would you let them watch as much television as they wanted? Would you decide which programs they could watch? Why?

Other choices: Some other expressions that are similar to **couch potato** are **bump on a log**, which means not moving, and **stick in the mud**, which means not wanting to be active.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

TONI ABERSON has written educational books since retiring from teaching English to high school and college students and supervising high school English teachers for 35 years. Aberson (M.A. English; M.A. Psychology and Religion) believes that a lively classroom is the optimal learning environment.

“If people are thinking, sharing, and laughing, then they’re learning,” notes Aberson, the co-author of *Compelling American Conversations: Questions and Quotations for Intermediate English Language Learners*. “The mere fact that students are in an English classroom attests to their courage and their determination to learn.”

“Both high school and adult English students bring a wealth of interesting experiences with them,” continues Aberson. “They bring the world into the classroom. The challenge for English teachers is to put students at ease and encourage them to practice English. What better way than to ask students about their lives? I love teaching English.”

Aberson has co-authored two additional Chimayo Press books for adult English language learners. Her first book, *Compelling Conversations: Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics*, a fluency-focused advanced English as Second Language (ESL) textbook, has been used by English learners, teachers, and tutors in over 50 countries. *It’s A Breeze: 42 Lively English Lessons on American Idioms* reflects her focus on real-life expressions and situations—and the importance of authentic communication for teenagers, college students, and working adults.

“The key in a classroom is engagement,” notes Aberson, a member of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). “People become interested and excited when they’re learning about the daily stuff of life. When students are thinking and writing and talking about their real lives—food, jobs, family, homes, sports, movies—that’s when students learn the language.”

“Learning English is not easy,” continues Aberson. “It can be a real challenge, but it can also be fun and stimulating. That’s what I’m aiming for—the real life and the fun that stimulates ESL students so they want to learn more and share their experiences. Everybody wants to jump in, and learning English becomes a breeze.”

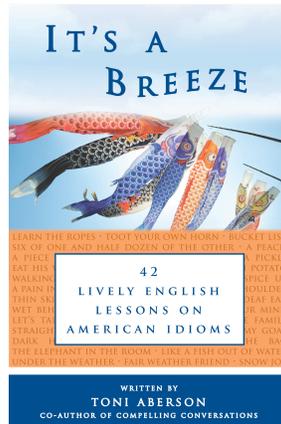
Aberson lives in Southern California, where she loves to garden and spend as much time as possible on the beach.

ERIC H. ROTH (editor) teaches international students the pleasures of writing and speaking English at the University of Southern California. For the last twenty years, he has taught

English to high school, community college, and university students. Roth co-authored the *Compelling Conversations* series of fluency-focused ESL textbooks with Abersson, and has taught in France, Spain, and Vietnam. He has also given CATESOL and TESOL presentations on effective communicative teaching methods. *It's A Breeze* is his fourth Chimayo Press publication.

ABOUT THIS BOOK AND CHIMAYO PRESS

It's A Breeze: 42 Lively English Lessons on American Idioms explicitly emphasizes American phrases in short, self-contained lessons.



The primary audience is newcomers to the United States as well as recent and not-so-recent immigrants, who may be studying at an American high school, adult school, community college, or university. Speaking English remains the passport to a better life, and understanding and using American idioms remains essential to clearly communicate with native speakers. Unfortunately, idioms are often confusing and usually only taught at the most advanced levels. Many lower level English language learners often find idioms particularly difficult. This thin volume clearly introduces common American idioms in a comfortable manner with short reading, writing, and speaking exercises.

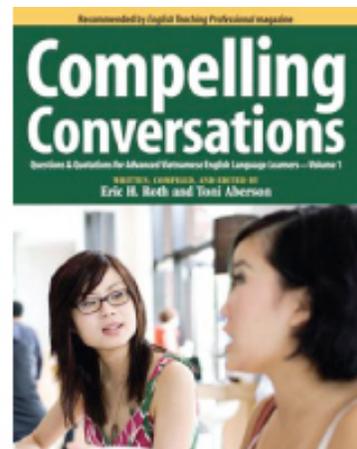
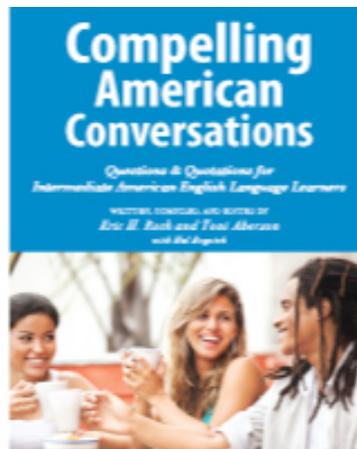
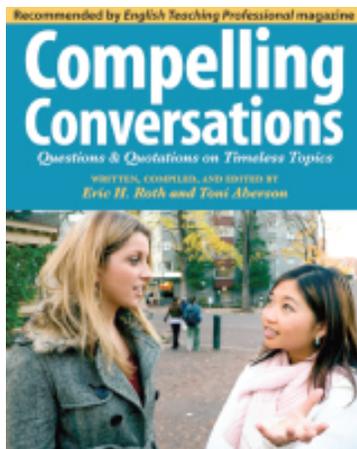
Intended as a supplemental textbook for beginning high or intermediate low English language learners, *It's A Breeze* can add a vital linguistic element to traditional life skills curriculum for high school, adult, and community college classes. English teachers and private tutors can also use the book as a textbook for the rare idioms class. Literacy programs and Intensive English programs can use it as a high-low text for their students.

All immigrants deserve a quality education that allows them to express themselves, develop their English language skills, and deepen their critical thinking skills. Classrooms can also provide sanctuary for sometimes isolated, often stressed students. This book provides students the words and phrases to share their experiences in vivid English. It also attempts to fill in common gaps between student interests and the sometimes narrow focus of standardized tests.

Chimayo Press, an independent publishing company, believes that many language programs too often teach students to mostly listen and seldom speak—and often underestimate the academic, social, and professional abilities of many American immigrants.

Therefore, we deliberately chose to emphasize speaking skills and fluency in all of our books for English language learners. Our first book, *Compelling Conversations: Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics* has been used in English classrooms in over 50 countries. Since 2007, Chimayo Press has created quality niche books. The series continued with *Compelling American Conversations: Questions and Quotations for Intermediate American English Language Learners* in 2012. *It's A Breeze* is our fourth title.

All Chimayo Press titles include both practical topics and philosophical questions because American immigrants deserve the same level of sophisticated materials that international English as Foreign Language (EFL) students enjoy in the stronger international schools. We hope American English language learners begin asking more questions, speak more in their workplaces, and create their own compelling conversations – across the globe.



Visit us at www.ChimayoPress.com to find more tips on fluently speaking English, to suggest conversation topics, or to contribute your favorite proverbs, idioms, and/or quotations.

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