Introduction: A Recipe for Disaster

Detective’s Log

I've been called to a new case at Mountain Berry High. The fire alarm at the high school has been going off all week! The students have to evacuate every time the alarm goes off in case it's not a false alarm. To make matters worse, it's exam time. Mountain Berry High's students need to write their tests before the end of the year.

I tapped the phone in the principal's office just in case the prankster calls in. I'm going to check the sound quality now. One of the parents called the school to discuss the matter with the principal.

Did you know...

A false alarm often refers to a fire alarm that goes off when there is not really a fire. It may also describe any situation that seems to be an emergency, but turns out not to be one. The word "alarm" can be used as a noun or a verb (to cause worry or panic).
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Vocabulary Preview

A. Matching

Match these words to the correct definitions.

_____ 1. go off  a) a person who plays tricks on others
_____ 2. on one’s hands  b) to assume that someone is innocent or doing the right thing
_____ 3. prankster  c) to make a sound
_____ 4. Your guess is as good as mine.  d) if nothing else works (try this instead)
_____ 5. get to the bottom of  e) someone’s responsibility to deal with (a problem)
_____ 6. recipe for disaster  f) to figure out the cause or problem
_____ 7. give one the benefit of the doubt  g) to not result in a certain outcome
_____ 8. not rocket science  h) simple, not difficult
_____ 9. around the clock  i) I don’t know either.
_____ 10. if all else fails  j) something that is sure to create a big problem in the future
_____ 11. not come down to  k) all day and all night

B. Detective’s Dictionary

Your Detective’s Dictionary is full of idioms, phrasal verbs, and expressions that are used in everyday English. When you learn a new word or expression, it is important to get to know it well! You can be a language sleuth by exploring many aspects of a word or expression, such as the spelling, the pronunciation, and even the formality.

While you work on this lesson, take some time to add some notes and examples of your own to your Detective’s Dictionary. Here are some ways to practice vocabulary items with a partner. You’ll learn other ways throughout this series.

1. Challenge each other to a spelling bee.
2. Explore the proper pronunciation of each word or phrase.
3. Think of a word or expression that means the opposite.

Tip:

As you work through this series, it may be helpful to write a character’s name beside a word or phrase in your Detective’s Dictionary. If you remember who said it, you may remember its use in context. This will help you remember what it means.
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Dialogue
Read the dialogue in pairs. Take turns being each character.

Mountain Berry High. Principal Davidson speaking.

Hello, this is Mia Walker's mother. What's this I hear about a fire alarm? Mia says she had to leave class every day this week because the fire alarm kept going off.

Hello, Mrs. Walker. Yes, I'm afraid we have a prankster on our hands.

A prankster? Who would want to pull the fire alarm during school hours?

Your guess is as good as mine.

Well, what are you going to do about it? It's exam time, the most important time of the year.

Well, I've just hired a private detective. I'm hoping Detective Bossley will get to the bottom of this soon.

Detective Bossley, huh? And what if he doesn't? A fire alarm going off during an exam is a recipe for disaster.

We're doing everything we can, Mrs. Walker.

You know the other kids will cheat if the alarm goes off during an exam.

I'd like to give our kids the benefit of the doubt, Mrs. Walker.

(sneers) It's not rocket science! Why don't you put up some surveillance cameras?

We have cameras up, and we're monitoring the alarms around the clock.

Mia's teacher said exams might be canceled if the alarm keeps going off. Then what?

If all else fails, the kids will have to do their exams on the weekends or over the summer holidays.

Well, let's just hope it doesn't come down to that! I hope this Detective Bossley is as good as everyone says he is.
Vocabulary Review

A. Complete the Expressions

Complete the expressions by matching the numbers to the letters. Try not to look at pages 2 or 3.

1. your guess is a) come down to that
2. a recipe b) bottom of
3. around c) else fails
4. if all d) the clock
5. we have a thief e) for disaster
6. the benefit f) science
7. let's hope it doesn't g) the prankster yet?
8. get to the h) of the doubt
9. have you caught i) on our hands
10. not rocket j) as good as mine

B. Match the Examples

Match each word or phrase on the right to the example sentence on the left that has the same meaning.

1. It's simple. Just turn the key to the left. a) give them the benefit of the doubt
2. It wasn't necessarily the kids' fault. b) around the clock
3. He's working all day and night. c) a recipe for disaster
4. Don't give a cell phone to a two-year-old. d) if all else fails
5. We'll eat at home if no restaurants are open. e) not rocket science

C. Complete the Dialogues

Complete the dialogues using expressions from the list on page 2.

1. A: How do I change the channel?
   B: __________________________________________

2. A: I bet Brian broke the window.
   B: __________________________________________

3. A: __________________________________________!
   B: At least you don't have to work this weekend.

4. A: __________________________________________?
   B: We don't know who pulled the alarm.

5. A: Are we going to have to pack up because of this weather?
   B: __________________________________________
Writing

IT’S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE – A NEW DIALOGUE

Work with a partner. One of you will pretend to be Mrs. Walker. The other will pretend to be Mr. Walker. Mrs. Walker will tell her husband about her conversation with the detective. Try to use vocabulary from this episode. Use this line as your first line:

Mrs. Walker: So, I called the school today.

Comprehension

Discuss these questions with a partner, and write your responses in your notebook.

1. Why did Mia Walker’s mom call Mountain Berry High?

2. Which of the following does not describe Mrs. Walker?
   a) upset
   b) sarcastic
   c) worried
   d) optimistic

3. What does Principal Davidson say about the prankster?
   a) She has no idea who it is.
   b) She thinks the prankster goes to the school.
   c) She doesn’t suspect Mia Walker.
   d) She thinks the prankster is male.

4. True or False? Detective Bossley is well known in the community.

Spotting a Common Error

PRINCIPAL VS. PRINCIPLE

Notice the spelling differences between these two common words. Many people mix these up. “Principal” is a person and “principle” is a thing (a rule or concept). Think of a “principal” as being a “pal” to the students. Also, note that the word “principal” is only capitalized when it comes before a last name or at the beginning of a sentence.

Examples:

• The principal is retiring.
• Did you know that Principal Watt is retiring?
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Picture This

A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

Write three more examples of situations where someone might say, “That's a recipe for disaster!”

1. A fire alarm goes off during an exam.
2. Two boys are holding a hose near an open window.
3. ________________
4. ________________
5. ________________

Share your ideas with your classmates. Who came up with the best example for this idiom?

Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions with the class or a partner. Add important details to your Clue File.

1. Do you think Mrs. Walker is right about high school kids cheating if they have the opportunity?
2. Do you think Ms. Davidson is a good principal? Why or why not?
3. Would your parent(s) call the school about a problem like this? Why or why not?

4. Do you think the prankster is someone the principal knows? Why or why not?
5. What questions do you think the detective will ask?

Making Predictions

EPISODE #2: LEAVE IT TO ME

The next dialogue is between Principal Davidson and Detective Bossley. What do you think these characters will talk about? Will Mrs. Walker appear in the series again? Make some notes about her in your Clue File.
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Answer Key

Detective’s Log

Read the detective’s notes together and discuss the term “false alarm.” Ask your students for real-life examples of “false alarms.” You may also want to talk about what you do in your school when the fire alarm goes off. Explain that “phone tapping” is a way for investigators to monitor telephone conversations.

Ask your students if they know the idiom “recipe for disaster.” What do they think it means?

Vocabulary Review

A. COMPLETE THE EXPRESSIONS

1.  j  3.  d  5.  i  7.  a  9.  g
2.  e  4.  c  6.  h  8.  b  10.  f

B. MATCH THE EXAMPLES

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

C. COMPLETE THE DIALOGUES

Answers will vary.
1.  It’s not rocket science.
2.  Give him the benefit of the doubt.
3.  I worked around the clock today!
4.  Who is the prankster?
5.  Let’s hope it doesn’t come down to that.

Writing

Give students time to create their own dialogues. Feel free to change the gender of the characters to suit the student pairings.

Comprehension

1.  Mia Walker’s mom called Mountain Berry High because she heard that a fire alarm was disrupting exams. She’s worried students will cheat.
2.  d  3.  a  4.  True.

Picture This

Have your students share their examples. You could also ask them to bring in some photographs that illustrate this expression.

Discussion Questions & Making Predictions

Discuss in pairs, groups, or as a class. Print out a copy of the Clue Files sheet for each student. Give them time to take notes in their Clue Files and Detective’s Dictionaries.