



# Straightforward

## Second edition

### Idiom stories

by Jim Scrivener

This is an alternative way of presenting new idioms (or vocabulary) to students. Before class, you need to prepare a single story that includes all the idioms you wish to work on. Don't worry too much about making a great story - just start trying to make use of the idioms and you'll probably find that a usable tale suggests itself. Here is an example:

*When I was a student myself I was never very good at exams. I remember there was one exam - history - I was terrified of. I planned to start preparing for it three weeks before, but I kept dragging my feet. I just didn't start. I couldn't get cracking. Well, the days passed. Suddenly it was one day before the exam. I planned to get up bright and early at 5.30 and spend the whole day revising. My best friend phoned at 9.00 and we chatted for half an hour, but then I said 'Sorry but I must get cracking again' and I went back to my work. Then at midday, someone else in my class phoned me. He said he had seen the question paper and would tell me the questions if I paid him £10. I'll tell you the truth! I did think about it. It would have made the exam much easier! But I decided to play it safe and be honest. I'm glad I did! In the exam, I could answer most of the questions. In one essay, it took me a long time to get to the point - but generally my answers were OK. Well, I passed and I got a good mark. That was the high point of the term! Oh - and the boy who offered to sell me the questions - he failed. I guess his information wasn't perfect!*

1. In class, read the story through once as written above. You could set a listening exercise to help focus students (e.g. What was I worried about?; What happened in the end?) When you have finished the story (and chatted about it if students are interested) say that you will tell it again - but, with some different language. Ask students to try and notice any items that are different between the two versions. Tell the story - but when you come to the underlined idioms say the definition instead of the idiom, e.g. . three weeks before but I kept delaying and avoiding starting
2. At the end, students may want to hear both versions again to help check. Alternatively, you could get feedback on changes.

#### Rationale

This is a good, simple and motivating way to work on vocabulary. It shows the students a lively example of the idioms used in context and it challenges them to remember items.

#### Applying the idea

Use this idea with other sets of idioms.