

Read Words in Context

READ!



Serena: I've been to the school office three times today to find out if I passed the audition for the talent show. I kept asking if there was something I could do just so I could stay around. Mrs. Long said, "Go **badger someone** else. I'm busy." Sometimes I can **be an eager beaver** and show too much enthusiasm. —Charlene

Charlene: What's going on? Are you preparing an animal act? Have you trained a badger and a beaver to jump through hoops or something? —Serena

Serena: **Not by a long shot!** I'm using idioms! I thought what I was doing would be **as plain as the nose on your face**. After all, you know how much I love baton twirling. —Charlene

Charlene: Now I think that you are not being polite. I have a fine nose. And why are you speaking about my nose if you mean baton twirling? —Serena

Serena: You are **barking up the wrong tree** so let's start all over again. I performed a baton-twirling routine for the talent-show try-outs. It's a difficult routine, since I tap dance as I twirl. At one point, I was so tired I had to stop to **get a second wind**. I hope my stopping doesn't count against me and become **a fly in the ointment**. —Charlene

Charlene: I understand that the routine made you tired. Is that why you had to use an ointment—to soothe your aching muscles? I have heard of putting fruit or herbs in ointment but never flies! As your friend, I tell you that you need to calm down. You should not run around barking at trees like a dog. —Serena

Serena: I just got the results. Mr. Bryce thought I should be in the show, but Ms. Aaron thought I shouldn't. Finally, Mr. Bryce **got the upper hand** and I'm in. He said that Ms. Aaron didn't **have a leg to stand on**. There is no rule against pausing. I'm going to stop twirling so that I can go to sleep and **catch forty winks** before the first rehearsal. —Charlene

Vocabulary Words

a fly in the ointment
 a leg to stand on
 as plain as the nose on your face
 badger someone
 bark up the wrong tree
 be an eager beaver
 catch forty winks
 get a second wind
 get the upper hand
 not by a long shot

Word Learning Tip!

An idiom is a common expression that means something different from what the individual words normally mean. When these words are put together, they are an imaginative way of expressing a single idea. For example, the idiom "to catch someone's eye" doesn't mean that you go out and grab a person's eye! Instead, this idiom means that you got someone's attention.

Vocabulary Building Strategy

When several words in a row don't make sense, you could be reading an idiom. To determine the meaning of an idiom, think about the overall picture that the words could communicate.