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Basics. Articles in Fixed Expressions

Hard | B2 | Upper Intermediate | Article | Determiner | Phrase | Preposition | Verb | Collocations | Idiom

1. Help the detective finish her incident report by selecting the correct article for each fixed expression.

I am currently at _____ loss to explain how the suspect managed to delete the classified files. He claimed he did it by _____ mistake, but I was under _____ impression that the system required a complex password and two-factor authentication.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** a
- **B)** the
- **C)** (no article)

Blank 2

- **A)** a
- **B)** the
- **C)** (no article)

Blank 3

- **A)** a
- **B)** the
- **C)** (no article)

2. Help the head chef review the restaurant's chaotic night by selecting ALL the grammatically correct sentences.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** The new waiter was in a hurry and dropped the soup.
- **B)** I am at a loss to explain why the oven exploded.
- **C)** Please don't make fuss about the burnt toast!
- **D)** The manager left in hurry after the incident.

3. Help the HR manager complete her incident report.

During the meeting, Marcus ___ to the director's suggestion that the team should work on Saturdays.

Select one.

- **A)** took an exception
- **B)** took the exception
- **C)** took exception
- **D)** took some exception

4. Select ALL the sentences from the traveler's complaint letter that correctly use (or omit!) articles in fixed expressions.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** I boarded the wrong flight to Antarctica by mistake.
- **B)** To make matters worse, I had packed only beach clothes.
- **C)** I boarded the wrong flight to Antarctica by a mistake.
- **D)** To make the matters worse, I had packed only beach clothes.

5. Read the struggling artist's text message to her friend and choose the correct article for each gap.

It's incredibly hard to make _____ living as a sculptor these days. Getting a solo gallery exhibition is completely out of _____ question without the right connections. I hope you don't take _____ offense, but I might need to borrow some money to buy my next block of marble!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

A) a
B) the
C) (no article)

Blank 2

A) a
B) the
C) (no article)

Blank 3

A) a
B) the
C) (no article)

6. Choose the correct phrase to complete the assistant's slightly presumptuous email.

Since you were unreachable during your silent yoga retreat, I ___ of upgrading your flight to first class using your miles.

Select one.

A) took a liberty
B) took the liberty
C) took liberty
D) took my liberty

7. Choose the correct phrase for each gap to help Sarah finish her dramatic text message to her best friend about a terrible first date.

He made such _____ about the restaurant's lighting, and then he spilled red wine on my favorite dress completely _____; honestly, I don't think we are going to be compatible _____.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

A) a fuss
B) the fuss
C) fuss

Blank 2

A) by mistake
B) by a mistake
C) by the mistake

Blank 3

A) in the long run
B) in a long run
C) in long run

8. Complete the spy's encrypted message to headquarters by selecting the correct article for each idiom.

Please keep _____ eye on the target's apartment from the van. If you catch _____ sight of anyone leaving through the back door, notify me immediately. We cannot afford to be left in _____ dark about his movements tonight.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

A) an
B) the
C) (no article)

Blank 2

A) a
B) the
C) (no article)

Blank 3

A) a
B) the
C) (no article)

9. Complete the head chef's performance review of his well-meaning but chaotic new assistant by choosing the correct expression for each gap.

I explained the complicated recipe to him _____, specifically asking him to keep _____ on the simmering sauce, and although he is a decent cook _____, he still managed to burn the garlic!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

A) in detail
B) in a detail
C) in the detail

Blank 2

A) an eye
B) the eye
C) eye

Blank 3

A) on the whole
B) on a whole
C) on whole

10. Read the employee's gossipy email and select ALL the sentences that use fixed expressions correctly.

Select all that apply.

A) The promotion came completely out of the blue.
B) I was under the impression that he was quitting!
C) On a whole, it was a very strange day at the office.
D) He got the job out of blue without even interviewing.

11. Help Detective Miller complete her case notes about a very clumsy suspect by choosing the correct phrase for each blank.

The suspect left the crime scene _____, claiming that the heavy chandelier had fallen completely _____. However, the evidence strongly suggests he broke it _____ to create a distraction.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

A) in a hurry
B) in the hurry
C) in hurry

Blank 2

A) out of the blue
B) out of a blue
C) out of blue

Blank 3

A) on purpose
B) on a purpose
C) on the purpose

12. Complete the veteran spy's advice to his new partner.

Remember, rookie: we always sweep the hotel room for hidden microphones as ___.

Select one.

A) a matter of course
B) the matter of course
C) matter of course
D) one matter of course