

## Timely Idioms

*An activity of "13-year-old boy swims for hours to save his family..."*

Read "13-year-old boy swims for hours to save his family stuck out at sea" (page 6, *What's Up* March 2026). The writer uses the idiom "lost track of time" to describe the mother, Joanne Appelbee, not knowing how much time had passed. An idiom is a common phrase that has a different meaning from what the words literally mean.

**TASK 1.** Here are some other idioms that use words related to time. Guess their meaning and write them in the spaces below.

Idiom	Meaning
the eleventh hour	
in the nick of time	
(to do something) against the clock	
to kill time	
to have a whale of a time	
donkey's years	
a mile a minute	
once in a blue moon	

**TASK 2.** Next, check your answers using an online dictionary such as the Cambridge Dictionary at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>. How many did you get correct? Write down the correct meanings below your answers with a red pen.

**TASK 3.** Test your understanding! Write down the most suitable idiom for each blank below.

- a. The team worked \_\_\_\_\_ to finish the project on time.
- b. The firefighters arrived \_\_\_\_\_ to save the girl from the burning house.
- c. She's my childhood friend whom I've known for \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. Ali loves to go to his grandparents' house. He always has \_\_\_\_\_ playing with their dog and eating all the delicious food.
- e. Jane was talking \_\_\_\_\_ and I couldn't make out what she said!

**TASK 4.** Create your own sentences using any four of the idioms in Task 1.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**WRITING TIP:** *Keep an eye out for idioms when you read books or articles! Write them down in a notebook so that you can remember them and use them in your compositions.*