

BBC Learning English – Q & A of the Week

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Q & A of the Week: A Hundred and One 许多

Tracy: Welcome to this week's Question and Answer of the Week. I'm Tracy and today I'll be joined by Yang Li.

Li: 大家好我是杨莉。

Tracy: In this programme we do our best to answer any questions you might have about the English language. Who is this week's question from Li?

Li: Well this week's question is from Du Min who is in Qingdao. She wanted to know what 'a hundred and one things' means.

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I have a question I want you to answer for me. When I read 'the hundred and one things people do in everyday life', I'm a little puzzled by 'the hundred and one things'. I am not very clear about it; I hope you can answer me for that. Thank you.

Tracy: An idiom question.

Li: 真的吗? 'a hundred and one' 这个短语原来还是个成语呢? So what does it mean? And how would you use it?

Tracy: Well, before I tell you, let's see if you can figure it out. Let's listen to another BBC China Team member, Will, as he repeats Du Min's example:

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The hundred and one things people do in everyday life.

Li: 让我想想看...'a hundred and one' 究竟是什么意思呢...?

Tracy: No ideas Li?

Li: It could mean lots.

Tracy: That is exactly what the idiom 'a hundred and one' means. It can be used as a synonym for the words lots or many.

Li: 这么说, 我觉得 there are a hundred and one idioms in the English language, 你说对不对?

Tracy: Yes, there are but some of them are...well they can sound a bit strange in conversation...they are not very popular...a bit old fashioned. People wouldn't really use them.

Li: Is the idiom 'a hundred and one' used often? 这不是一个热门的成语?

- Tracy: Very much so. People use the phrase 'a hundred and one things' all the time.
- Li: Ok, 那你能不能举一个不常用的成语例句呢?
- Tracy: You're unlikely to hear people say something like 'it's raining cats and dogs'.
- Li: 不过这可是个非常有名的成语啊, isn't it?
- Tracy: Yes, it is a famous idiom. It means it's raining heavily outside. But hardly anyone would say it. These days, you'd be much more likely to hear someone say "It's pouring down".
- Li: I see... 这点很重要, 学英语的同学们要特别注意一个成语词组是不是仍然入时上口, 还是已经过时, 否则就会听上去傻傻的, 对吗?
- Tracy: You could really end up sounding a bit silly.
- Li: Ok, 今天我们的话题是英语的成语 idioms, 其中最重要的就是不仅要知道一个成语的意思, 而且一定要搞清一个成语是不是仍然入时上口。
- Tracy: Yes, and we've also been talking about idioms that contain numbers. Now, we're going to look at a few other idioms that contain the number one.
- Li: 这些包含数字一的成语可是大家在日常口语中经常用到的。
- Tracy: Yes they are all quite common phrases in everyday conversation. Let's listen to the idioms.
- Li: Ok, 看看你们能不能抢在 Tracy 之前把下面几个成语的意思猜出来:

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There's about a hundred to one chance of it being sunny tomorrow.

- Tracy: Any ideas what the idiom 'a hundred to one' means Li?
- Li: 嗯... 'a hundred to one' 这个成语是什么意思呢?
- Tracy: Any idea?
- Li: No...
- Tracy: Ok, it means that something is quite unlikely. If we said that there was a hundred to one chance of rain today that would mean that...
- Li: It is quite unlikely that it will rain. Unlikely 就是不大可能的。
- Tracy: Yes, the idiom 'a hundred to one' is used to talk about how unlikely something is to happen.
- Li: I think this idiom is used a lot in sport, isn't it?

Tracy: Yes, this idiom is often used when people place bets on sport. They might say the odds of a team winning are a hundred to one.

Li: 啊，我明白了 'a hundred to one' 一百比一的意思，经常用在体育赌博方面，指获胜的几率是一百比一，很小。

Tracy: It sure is. Are you ready for the next idiom containing the number one?

Li: Sure am; let's hear the next idiom.

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My friend is helping me move house tomorrow. She really is one in a million.

Tracy: Any ideas what the idiom 'one in a million' means Li?

Li: 嗯... 'one in a million' 这是什么意思呢?

Tracy: I think you know this one Li.

Li: Yes, 是的，我知道这个成语。 If you describe a person as one in a million it is a compliment 是一种赞扬，类似中文里的百里挑一， right?

Tracy: Right, it is a compliment.

Li: So, if you say someone is one in a million, it means they are very special.

Tracy: Yes, it means they are very special. Just like you Li. You are one in a million.

Li: Thank you, but why are you saying that?

Tracy: Well, you're always helping me with my Chinese.

Li: 那算不了什么，别客气。

Tracy: Ok, so are you ready for one more idiom using the number one?

Li: Ready.

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Learning idioms is not easy. You simply have to learn them one by one.

Li: 没错，我完全同意。

Tracy: Oh so you understood that idiom Li. Well what does 'one by one' mean?

Li: The idiom 'one by one' means to do something a little bit at a time. 一步一步来。

Tracy: Exactly. So in the example, they said that learning idioms can be quite a difficult process and that the best way to learn them is one by one.

Li: Well, we have learned four new idioms today: a hundred and one;

- Tracy: A hundred to one;
- Li: One in a million;
- Tracy: And one by one. And we've also discussed the importance of learning idioms that are still commonly used in everyday conversation.
- Li: Yes, it is very important. I hope we have answered your question Du Min.
- Tracy: If you have any other questions about idioms or the English language in general, email us at questions.chinaelt@bbc.co.uk.
- Li: 大家可以登陆我们的双语教学网页 www.bbcchina.com.cn 阅读或下载更多的你问我答节目以及其它教学材料。
- Tracy: Until next time, bye!
- Li: 谢谢收听，我们下次节目再会!