5. Restrictions on the use of Prepositions
5.0. Introduction

It is evident from what has been discussed in the previous chapters that the use of prepositions is governed by all those factors that are structurally—semantically and syntactically—and contextually dominant. This eventually attests the semantically-syntactic nature of prepositions.

The verb is the pivot around which the whole sentence is structured and so it plays a vital role in selecting almost all arguments therein, viz. Subject, Direct Object, Indirect Object, Complement, and so on. Thus it seems plausible that all restrictions ought to be based on:

(a) the verb — type, aspect, tense, mood, voice, etc.

(b) the nominal — type, grammatical role, case-function, thematic role, etc.

(c) the preposition — type.

In brief, restrictions are mainly of two types: semantic and syntactic.
5.1. **Semantic Restrictions**

According to Firth (1951), semantic restrictions are 'collocational'. Harris (1965) calls them 'co-occurrence restrictions' while Chomsky (1965) has preferred the term 'Selectional'.

The selectional or collocational restrictions are semantic/pragmatic in nature (Radford, 1997: 370). "With regard to pragmatics, we are particularly interested in those inferences that are made in linguistic contexts from one clause or constituent to another, or even from one utterance to another. These are in principle implicational features (in the linguistic jargon called "implicatures") of the type characterised by Grice (1975) as "conversational". Such inferences are computable on the basis not of lexical meanings alone, but of lexical meanings together with implicatures arising from speech act maxims", (Hopper and Trangott, 1997: 72). The maxims shown by Grice (1975: 45-47) are as under:

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required; i.e., don't make your contribution more informative
than is required (the first and second maxims of quantity).

(ii) Try to make your contribution one that is true (the maxim of quality);

(iii) Be relevant (the maxim of relation);

(iv) Be perspicuous (the maxim of manner).

Out of these four/five maxims, the maxim of relevance alone suffices to account for pragmatic meaning (Sperber and Wilson : 1986).

5.2. Syntactic Restrictions

Syntactic restrictions are actually those features which are basically categorial (Radford, 1997 : 370), e.g. Verb, Noun, Preposition, etc., i.e. each category displays a distinctive distribution attributable to its notional character (Anderson, 1997 : 21). The assignment of a category feature is straight-forward; each lexical item is assigned to one of the set of lexical categories in a given language according to its general distributional and morphological properties. (Horrocks, 1987 34).
Since not all members of the same category have the same specific meaning or function, we have to subcategorise them each as follows (cf. Horrocks, 1987: 34-5).

Examples:

(i) hop; V (intr.) + [ ]

(ii) like; V (tran.) + [NP]

(iii) put; V (tran.) + [NP + P]

(iv) say; V + [S]

The relevant sentences might be:

(i) Steve hops.

(ii) Steve likes girls.

(iii) Steve puts his money in the bank.

(iv) Steve says he has never been happier.

The tree-diagrams clearly show the subcategorisation features as under:

(i) VP |
       \ V

(ii) VP \ V NP
In each case the categories specified in the subcategorisation feature are those which must co-occur with the verb in question in the VP.

5.3. **Thematic Role**

Apart from these, there is one more restriction known as "thematic" (cf. Radford, 1997 : 372 ff.). The incorporation of thematic information into syntax is although aimed at capturing the similarity between different (but related) uses of the same lexical item (Radford, ibid.), yet it is the bridge between syntax and semantics (more precisely, pragmatics). The thematic role or function (also known as 'theta-role') is that one which each and every argument bears to its predicate.

Theta-roles are Agent, Patient, Experiencer, Benefactive, Instrument, Locative, Goal, Source, etc. (cf. Radford, 1997 : 373).
5.4. Grammatical Role

In addition to the three restrictions, there is one more factor — grammatical role or function — which constrains the use of prepositions. These grammatical functions are, no doubt, superficial in nature, but are of prime importance. In English for example, the following are the grammatical situations when a particular preposition is used:

(i) The subject never takes any preposition, i.e. it is always with the Zero one;

(ii) The direct object also never takes any preposition;

(iii) The indirect object takes 'to' or 'for' only when it is in the usual order: S - V - DO - IO - SO
    (otherwise it is with 'Zero' the order being: S - V - IO - DO - SO);

(iv) The secondary object is usually with a particular preposition, but especially with 'no' preposition, eg.:

    I go φ home.

    He will go to New York φ next year.

    Hema is coming here φ this evening.
5.5. Semantico-Syntactics

Now let us return to the problem of where to use what preposition when and how. This is a problem which calls for syntactic as well as semantic/pragmatic approach, i.e. a semantics-syntactic one. "We may assume that each predicate is strictly subcategorised according to the number of arguments it has and that each one contains selectional features to indicate what features are imposed on these arguments. Certain of these features are manifested not only by the head noun of these arguments, but also by prepositions that may occur with them."

(Langendoen, 1969: 102)

"If one includes in the notion 'case', as recommended by e.g. Hjemslev (1935/37), expression by adposition or position, i.e. if one equates 'case' and functor, then the noun-'case' association is arguably universal (with substantives) .... Morphological Case and, more generally, functors are associated with nouns — or, again more generally, nominal or 'name' phrases — because as names the latter provide stable labels for arguments whose functions are specified by functors: having preponderant N, they constitute primary arguments."

(Anderson, 1997: 106). In other words, "the preposition associated with each argument contributes certain feature
specifications to that argument and that these specifications are also imposed by the verbs which select that argument." (Langendoen, 1969: 104)

The semantico-syntactic features are manifested not only by the head noun of the arguments of each predicate, but also by prepositions that may occur with them. "In an interesting series of papers, Fillmore (1966, 1968) has argued that such prepositions are best considered to be constituents of the noun phrases with which they occur, in fact, that prepositions are constituents of every deep-structure argument, and that whenever a preposition fails to turn up in a surface-structure argument, it has been transformationally deleted. In English, the preposition of a subjectivised argument is obligatorily deleted, while the preposition of the argument which immediately follows a verb may or may not be deleted, depending upon the verb (the preposition of an argument which follows a noun or an adjective is never deleted). The preposition is moreover always deleted when the argument is simply a sentence. Fillmore also noted a connection between certain of the prepositions and features of the nouns which occur with them; for example
the preposition that expresses agency, *by*, occurs only with animate nouns." (Langendoen, 1969: 103)

5.6. **A Synthetic Approach**

Apparently the use of prepositions is governed by all that has been discussed above. For an objective result, semantic, pragmatic, syntactic, thematic, and/or grammatical conditions must be taken together into consideration. Here are some examples:

5.6.1. **Verbal Restrictions**

In English, certain verbs allow certain prepositions after them (cf. Tickoo et al, 1986), e.g.:

- accuse (someone) of (a crime, etc.)
- appeal to (someone for mercy, etc.)
- bestow (something) on (someone)
- care for (someone or something)
- compete with (someone)
- comply with (a request, order, etc.)
- consent to (a proposal)
- depend on (someone or something)
exchange (something) for (something)
guard against (a danger)
inquire into (something)
invite (someone) to (lunch, dinner, etc.)
laugh at (somebody or something)
long for (something)
look at (somebody or something)
object to (something)
prefer (something or someone) to (something or someone)
recover from (illness, etc.)
refer to (a person or a book)
rely on (someone or something)
remind (someone) of (something)
search for (something)
talk to (someone)

5.6.2. **Verbal + Nominal Restrictions**

As the examples show, there are certain nominals which restrict the use of prepositions after the verb (cf. Swan, 1988), eg.

(1) Agree  : with a person,
           : about a subject of discussion,
on a matter for decision.
to a suggestion or proposal.
I entirely agree with you.
We agree about most things.
Let's try to agree on a date.
I will agree to your proposal if you
lower the price.

(ii) Believe : in God,

: ø* a person or a statement.
I always believe in God.
Don't you believe ø me ?

(iii) Get : in(to) and out of a car, taxi,
or small boat ;
on(to) and off a bus, train-plane,
or ship.
I got into my car.
we'll be getting off the train
in ten minutes.

* 'ø' indicates the 'Zero' preposition
or 'no preposition'.
(iv) **Search**: for (= look for)
    : Ø (= look through, look everywhere in/on)

The customs were searching for drugs when I came through the airport.
They searched Ø everybody's luggage, and they searched Ø the man in front of me from head to foot.

(v) **Shout**: at (aggressive)
    : to (to communicate = call to)

If you don't stop shouting at me I'll come and hit you. Mamy shouted to us to come in and swim.

(vi) **Throw**: at (aggressive)
    : to (in a game, etc.)
    : in/into

Stop throwing stones at the cars.
If you get the ball throw it to the wicket-keeper.
Throw it in/into the waste paper basket.
(vii) **Write** : to : You must write to me
what happens there.

:  : He writes  letters.

5.6.3. **Noun + Preposition Collocation**

A number of nouns in English take certain specific prepositions after them. The following is a brief list of this type for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun + Preposition</th>
<th>Noun + Preposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to</td>
<td>Acquaintance with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adept in</td>
<td>Advice on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance with</td>
<td>Appetite for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to</td>
<td>Attention to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards(s)</td>
<td>Basis for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bearing upon</td>
<td>Capacity for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collision with</td>
<td>Command of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidence in</td>
<td>Consequence of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contempt for</td>
<td>Contrast between</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cure for</td>
<td>Danger of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demand for</td>
<td>Desire for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difference between</td>
<td>Difficulty in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disgust at</td>
<td>Distrust of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubt about</td>
<td>Duty to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Esteem for</td>
<td>Exception to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excuse for</td>
<td>Experience in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expert in</td>
<td>Exposure to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extent of</td>
<td>Facility for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faith in</td>
<td>Fear of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fondness for</td>
<td>Grasp of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hope of</td>
<td>Hunger for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impression on</td>
<td>Interest in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interference with</td>
<td>Invitation to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judge of</td>
<td>Knowledge of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of</td>
<td>Likeness to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liking for</td>
<td>Limit to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love for</td>
<td>Match for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method of</td>
<td>Motive for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Necessity for</td>
<td>Objection to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Payment for</td>
<td>Penalty for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for</td>
<td>Predudice against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for</td>
<td>Prevention against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency in</td>
<td>Progress in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proof of</td>
<td>Provision for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punishment for</td>
<td>Pursuit of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction to</td>
<td>Recovery from</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regard for</td>
<td>Relief from</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relish for</td>
<td>Remedy for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reply to</td>
<td>Request for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response to Result of
Reward for Sequel to
Skill in Stranger to
Substitute for Suggestion for
Superiority over Surprise at
Sympathy for Talent for
Thirst for Tolerance for
Triumph over Victim of
Witness to Zeal for
Zest for

5.6.4. Noun + Preposition + Noun (Object of Preposition)

There are certain nouns which when used as the object of a preposition impose some constraints on the use of prepositions, eg.:

(i) Advantage : over someone
: of something

(ii) Agreement : with someone
: on something

(iii) Anxiety : for something
: about somebody or something

(iv) Control : of something
: over someone or a situation
(v) Disagreement : with someone
: on/over something

(vi) Feeling : toward(s) someone
: about some matter

(vii) Gratitude : for something
: to someone

(viii) Revenge : on/upon someone
: for something

5.6.5. Adjective + Preposition Collocation

Here are some examples of commonly used
Adjective-Preposition Collocations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverbial Phrase</th>
<th>Prepositional Phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abounding in</td>
<td>Absorbed in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable to</td>
<td>Accused of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accustomed to</td>
<td>Acquainted with</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addicted to</td>
<td>Affectionate to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afraid of</td>
<td>Alarmed at</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alien to</td>
<td>Amazed at</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicable to</td>
<td>Appropriate to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashamed of</td>
<td>Associated with</td>
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<tr>
<td>Based on</td>
<td>Bent on</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Blessed with
Born of
Busy with
Charged with
Comparable to
Contrary to
Convinced of
Deficient in
Devoid of
Disqualified for
Entitled to
Exhausted with
Fascinated by
Fond of
Gifted with
Good at
Guilty of
Honoured with
Identical with
Ill with
Independent of
Innocent of
Irrelevant to
Loyal to
Notorious for
Boastful of
Bound for
Capable of
Common to
Confident of
Convicted of
Defective in
Deprived of
Disgusted with
Endowed with
Envious of
Famous for
Favourable to
Full of
Given to
Greedy for
Harmful to
Hopeful of
Ignorant of
Inclined to
Indifferent to
Intimate with
Jealous of
Mistaken for
Occupied with
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offended</td>
<td>with</td>
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<td>Overwhelmed</td>
<td>with</td>
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<td>Parallel to</td>
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<td>Peculiar to</td>
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<td>Preferable to</td>
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<td>Profitable to</td>
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<td>Proud of</td>
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<td>Ready for</td>
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<td>Reduced to</td>
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<td>Regardless of</td>
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<td>Relevant to</td>
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<td>Repugnant to</td>
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<td>Respectful to</td>
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<td>Restricted to</td>
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<td>Rich in</td>
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<td>Sacred to</td>
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<td>Satisfied with</td>
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<td>Sensitive to</td>
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<td>Short of</td>
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<td>Silent about</td>
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<td>Similar to</td>
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<td>Subject to</td>
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<td>Suitable for</td>
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<td>Sure of</td>
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<td>Suspicious of</td>
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<td>Wanting in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worthy of</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5.6.6. **Adjective + Preposition + Noun**

There are certain nouns which when used as
the object of a preposition affect the choice of a parti-
cular preposition, eg. :

(i) **Allied** : *with* a country, a party, etc.
    : *to* something
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Num</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Preposition(s)</th>
<th>Complement(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ii)</td>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>with a person</td>
<td>at something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii)</td>
<td>Annoyed</td>
<td>with a person</td>
<td>at something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv)</td>
<td>Answerable</td>
<td>to someone</td>
<td>for something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v)</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>in something</td>
<td>to someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vi)</td>
<td>Familiar</td>
<td>to a person</td>
<td>with facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vii)</td>
<td>Grateful</td>
<td>to somebody</td>
<td>for something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(viii)</td>
<td>Impatient</td>
<td>with someone</td>
<td>at something happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ix)</td>
<td>Indebted</td>
<td>to somebody</td>
<td>for something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(x)</td>
<td>Obliged</td>
<td>to someone</td>
<td>for something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responsible : to someone
: for something

Sorry : for someone
: about something

5.7. Prepositions in Idioms

Undoubtedly, the different sets of collocations shown above can be extended with the help of the lexicon, but in vain. What is of use here is that every verb/noun/adjective takes a preposition according as the context permits. And very often, we have been doing what all speakers do in the process of learning. This, in other words, is the convention which is the outcome/essence of conversation, although it is also true that ...

"Conversational implicatures are typically contrasted with 'conventional' ones. Conventional implicatures are unpredictable and arbitrary, and are not cancellable." (Hopper and Traugott, 1997 : 73). For example:

"John managed to solve the problem."

(conversational)

implicates:

"John solved the problem."

(conventional)
Likewise, the idiomatic use of prepositional verb phrases has nothing to do with the individual meaning of the verb and the preposition, as in: He decided to pack his job in (which means 'to abandon').

Thus, it is evident that the meaning and use of prepositions in idioms would be best examples of conventional implicatures and they need be learnt and included among the semantic inferences of a form. This is why we come across a single verb with different prepositions has different inferences, for example, only one verb 'take' may be sufficient for ready reference (cf. Seidl and McMordie, 1982):

(i) **Take after someone** = resemble.
Margaret takes after her father in being strong-willed.

(ii) **Take someone down** = humiliate.
Margaret has a much too high opinion of herself. Someone must take her down a bit.

(iii) **Take something down** = record
The policeman took down all particulars of the accident.
(iv) Take someone in = trick; fool.
He's a clever talker — and good at taking people.

(v) Take something in = understand.
I can't take in what the author means.

(vi) Take in someone = give accommodation to
Mrs. Robinson is considering taking in students next year.

(vii) Take in something = include; cover.
The study of physics takes in many different subjects.

(viii) Take off = (of aircraft) leave the ground.
The plane took off on time.

(ix) Take someone of = imitate (for amusement).
Bob's party-piece is taking politicians off.

(x) Take something off = remove.
Take your coat off and sit down.

(xi) Take on = become popular.
I don't expect pointed shoes to take on.

(xii) Take someone on = employ.
No more workers are being taken on at present.
(xiii) Take something on = accept.
Is he willing to take on the responsibility?

(xiv) Take on something = acquire
His writing has taken on a very peculiar style.

(xv) Take someone out = invite for entertainment.
Bob takes his wife out to the theatre every weekend.

(xvi) Take something out = remove.
I need something that will take the grease stains out.

(xvii) Take something over = come into control or possession of.
Henry has taken over the running of family firm from his old father.

(xviii) Take to someone = Form a liking for.
I didn't take to our new neighbours at first, but now we are good friends.

(xix) Take to something = Embark on; start with; form the habit of.
If a man once takes to gambling, it's difficult for him to break the habit.
Take up = improve.
I think the weather is going to take up at last.

Take something up = discuss, examine.
That is an issue we ought to take up at the next meeting.

Take up something = begin.
When does the new man take up his post?

Take someone up on something = question about.
Do you mind if I take you up on this matter of participation?

Take up with someone = become friends with.
When Philip went to London, he took up with some very strange people from Soho.

Now, hell with the idioms!