Here's a game to whet your appetite, or (great expectorations!) wet your appetite for spelling challenges.

The phrases below may be as familiar to you as your old stamping (or is it stomping?) grounds, but when it comes to spelling them, you may be in dire straights (or is it dire straits?). Like the cat that ate cheese and then breathed into the mousehole, I'm sure you're waiting with baited breath (or should that be bated breath?) and chomping (or perhaps champing?) at the bit. May your answers and mine jibe (or maybe jive?) completely so that you don't miss by a hare's breath (hare's breadth? hair's breath? hair's breadth?).

For each phrase that follows choose the preferred spelling. Answers are in Answers and Solutions at the end of the issue.

1. all in vain/vane/vein
2. anchors away/aweigh
3. beyond the pale/pail
4. bloc/block voting
5. champing/chomping at the bit
6. a ceded/seeded player
7. declare marshal/martial law
8. dire straights/straits
9. doesn't faze/phase me
10. foul/foul weather
11. a friend in deed/indeed
12. a full complement/compliment of
13. give free rein/reign
14. grin and bear/bare it
15. a hair's/hare's breath/breadth
16. hail/hale and hearty/hardy
17. to have a flair/flare for
18. it doesn't jibe/jive
19. just deserts/desserts
20. a matter of principal/principle
21. might/mite and mane/main
22. the old stamping/stomping grounds
23. on the lam/lamb
24. peak/pique/peek one's interest
25. pi/pie in the sky

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26. pidgin/pigeon English
27. plain/plane geometry
28. pore/pour over an article
29. praying/preying mantis
30. rack/wrack one's brain
31. raise/raze Cain/cane
32. reckless/wreckless abandon
33. rapped/raped/wrapped attention
34. reek/wreak/wreck havoc
35. right/rite of passage
36. a seamless whole/hole
37. a shoe/shoe -in
38. sic/sick the dog on someone
39. sleight/slight of hand
40. sound bite/byte
41. spit and/spitting image
42. stanch/stauch the flow
43. strike a responsive cord/chord
44. swear like a trooper/trouper
45. toe/tow -headed youth
46. toe/tow the line
47. test one's metal/meddle/mettle
48. to the manor/manner born/borne
49. wait with bated/baited breath
50. whet/wet your appetite