



COLOUR IDIOMS - A2

I. About this Lesson

Activity title: Colour idioms

Level: A2

Subject: English as a foreign language

Timing: 50 minutes

Resources: Digital resources

Learning objectives:

By the end of the lesson, the students will:

- a. Learn about the most common colour idioms and assimilate their meaning;
- b. Use the idiomatic expressions about colours in their own productions.

Materials needed: If you ask students to create a comic strip as an extra activity, either drawing supplies or a computer with access to a comic creation tool.



II. Lesson scenario

1. Instructions for the teacher

Introduction (5 min)

Start the lesson with a short “Check IN” by telling students:

- a. Today, we will study the topic of colour idioms.
- b. We will spend some time discovering what an idiom is and I will present the different colours idioms that exist.
- c. Then we will do the exercises from the worksheet.
- d. Once the exercises are done, we will recap and call it a day!

What are colours idioms ?

- a. Print exercise 1 of the worksheet and distribute it among students.
- b. Start by explaining what an idiom is.
- c. For this first example, we will focus on the expression “colour blind”.
- d. Have students read the strip and guess what “colour blind” means. They can discuss in groups after reading. Explanations are already included in the worksheet.

The most common colour idioms, sorted by colour

- a. Print the worksheet with exercise 2 and distribute it among students.
- b. In the worksheet, you will find a list of expressions that can be used in the context of this lesson. Write or project them on the board and ask your students the ones they know and their definitions. If there are any expressions that students do not know, give their definition.



- c. Ask your students to complete task 2 individually.

Ask them to read their answers out loud.

Answers to task 2:

Frame 1: to be born with a silver spoon

Frame 2: to see red

Frame 3: to feel blue

Frame 4: to be green with envy

Frame 5: to feel off colour

Frame 6: to be the black sheep

Make sure you take time to check that the examples your students wrote are correct by checking the work of each group.

- d. Ask your students to complete task 3 individually.

Ask some students to read their answers out loud.

Finish the lesson with a short “Check out” (5 min)

- During the lesson we learnt about colour idioms.
- The most important things were the different expressions and their uses.
- We were able to identify what is a colour idiom and to use some of them in context.



2. Worksheet for student

EXERCISE 1 : WHAT ARE COLOUR IDIOMS?

Introduction: As you might already know, an idiom is “a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own” (Cambridge Dictionary).

There are idioms about almost anything in English, and idioms about or using colours are frequently used. It is interesting to learn colour idioms, because they will make your English sound more natural.

Let us start by taking a look at the idiom “colour blind”.

TASK 1: Read the comic strip below. Then, talk with a partner to see whether you can guess what the idiom “colour blind” means.



Now, you may know that the word “blind” means “unable to see”. Therefore, when combined with the word “colour”, the idiom “colour blind” means “unable to see some colours”.



The scientific name is “colour vision deficiency”, and the complete definition is: “People with colour vision deficiency find it difficult to identify and distinguish between certain colours.” The most common form of colour vision deficiency makes it difficult to tell the difference between reds, oranges, yellows, browns and greens, for instance (NHS, 2019).

Now that you know what we mean when we talk about colour idioms, let’s discover and learn the most common ones!

EXERCISE 2: THE MOST COMMON COLOUR IDIOMS

This is a list of the most common colour idioms, sorted by colour. Keep this list for future reference when you review your lessons.

TASK 1: Read carefully the colour idioms with black and blue in the tables below.



Idiom	Meaning	Example
BLACK		
Black and blue	Bruised and beaten	We found this dog wandering in the streets black and blue . Now he's been living with us and he is a happy and healthy puppy.
Black and white	Something that is very clear and explicit	In the real world, knowing who is wrong and who is right is not as black and white as it is in fairy tales.
To black out	To faint	I was so tired from running that I blacked out at the end of the marathon.
Black sheep	A member of a group who is seen negatively	My cousin was always seen as the black sheep of the family because he chose to become a florist and not a doctor like the rest of us. I think it was actually brave of him to choose his own path.



BLUE		
To have the blues	To be sad or depressed	I always have the blues when I watch Titanic.
Once in a blue moon	Very rarely	I only listen to classical music once in a blue moon.
Out of the blue	Unexpectedly	Our flatmate told us she was moving out of the blue.
To feel blue	To feel sad	Learning about pollution makes me feel blue.

DARK		
To be in the dark	To not know about something	My mother left us in the dark about our holiday destination until the last minute.

GOLD		
A golden opportunity	The perfect chance	This winter's plane discounts were a golden opportunity for me to finally travel to Japan.

GREY		
Gray area (or less commonly 'grey area')	Something that is not clear, or something that needs to be made more explicit	The organisation of this year's exams have a lot of grey areas.



GREEN		
To get the green light	To get permission	My dog was waiting for the green light to eat his food.
To be green with envy	To be very jealous	I am green with envy because the woman before me got to buy the last piece of my favourite cake at the bakery.
To have a green thumb	To be good at growing plants or gardening	Don't give me plants because I really don't have a green thumb : I never manage to keep my plants alive.

PINK		
To be tickled pink	To be very pleased and appreciative	I was tickled pink when my friends organised a surprise birthday party for me!
To see something with rose coloured glasses	To have an unrealistic or dreamy perception of something	A lot of foreign tourists see Paris with rose coloured glasses .



RED		
To turn beet red	To be very pleased and appreciative	I was tickled pink when my friends organised a surprise birthday party for me!
To be in the red	To be in debt	When I started working, I finished each month in the red .
To roll out the red carpet	To treat someone very importantly	When my girlfriend first came to meet my parents, my father rolled out the red carpet .
To see red	To be very angry	He saw red when he learnt that someone had yelled at his daughter at school.

SILVER		
To be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth	To be born into a rich family	You can see by the clothes he wears that he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth.



WHITE		
To tell a white lie	To tell a small lie to protect another person's feelings	I told my little brother that the pasta he had made was delicious. It was actually a white lie , but I didn't want to discourage him!

IDIOMS WITH THE WORD "COLOUR"		
Colour blind	To be unable to see some colours	Some people believe that Van Gogh was very innovative in his use of colours because he might have been colour blind .
To show one's true colours	To show one's real self	I only show my true colours when I play soccer.
To pass a test or exam with flying colours	To pass a test or exam with distinction	I passed my English exam with flying colours .
To feel off colour	To feel slightly ill	I need to say home today because I feel off colour .

Task 2: In the comic strip below, in each frame, there is an illustration. Each illustration correspond to a colour idiom. Write in the box at the top of each frame which colour idiom you think they represent.



Task 3: Write your own example sentences and compare with your classmates. Pick 5/10 idioms from the idiom tables listed above, and write an example sentence for each. Then, in pairs or in small groups, read together the examples that were written. For each sentence, discuss with others whether they seem correct or not. If there are some examples that do not feel correct, ask your teacher for advice.



III. Modification and Differentiation ideas

Additional exercise: Create a comic strip to illustrate a colour idiom

In exercise 2, you wrote example sentences for colour idioms. Pick one example and create a short comic strip to illustrate it.

If the idiom you picked is related to a specific colour, make sure to use this colour in your strip! You can colour just one element or the whole frame. The purpose is to help you remember the appropriate colour in the colour idiom.

For the teacher:

- You can propose this activity in class or as homework.
- If you offer students to do this activity in class, you can also offer them to do the exercise in pair.
- When all students have completed the task, you can offer them to present their work to the classroom if they wish to.
- In case students are reluctant to create a comic, you can offer them to write a short story instead.



IV. References

Cambridge Dictionary, "Idiom". Retrieved from

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/idiom>

NHS (2019, April 1st). "Colour vision deficiency (colour blindness)". Retrieved from

[https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/colour-vision-](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/colour-vision-deficiency/#:~:text=People%20with%20colour%20vision%20deficiency,any%20colour%20is%20very%20rare.)

[deficiency/#:~:text=People%20with%20colour%20vision%20deficiency,any%20colour%20is%20very%20rare.](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/colour-vision-deficiency/#:~:text=People%20with%20colour%20vision%20deficiency,any%20colour%20is%20very%20rare.)

Comics created using Procreate (<https://procreate.art/>).