

IDIOMS

What is an idiom?

An idiom is a sequence of words which has a different meaning as a group from the meaning it would have if you understood each word separately. Idioms add colour to the language, help us to emphasise meaning and make the language lively and interesting.

IDIOMS WITH COLOURS

A. Each example below has an idiom with a color word. Can you guess the meaning of each idiom from the context? Try to match each idiom (1-6) with its definition (a-f).

1. I spent too much money this month and I don't have enough money in the bank to pay my bills. I am *in the red*.
2. He is very careful with his money. He never overspends and so he is always *in the black*.
3. I didn't feel like going to the party with John, but I didn't want to hurt his feeling, so I told *a white lie* and said I was busy.
4. Last month I lost my job and my boyfriend broke up with me, so I was really *feeling blue*.
5. I was *green with envy* when I learned Jim won first prize in the lucky draw - he got a free trip to Hawaii!
6. The news of her death came *out of the blue*. No one was expecting it because she was still so young.

Idioms

1. *in the red*
2. *a white lie*
3. *to feel blue*
4. *green with envy*
5. *out of the blue*
6. *in the black*

Definitions

- a) to feel sad
- b) having money
- c) jealous of someone else's good fortune
- d) unexpectedly
- e) a lie that doesn't cause any harm
- f) in debt

B. Each sentence below has an idiom, but there is something wrong with it. Can you find and correct each one?

1. I got the news out from the blue that she was getting married!
2. She was green from envy when her sister won the beauty contest.
3. Ian doesn't have to worry about money. He's always in black.
4. Hana was feeling the blue because no one paid any attention.
5. My sister enjoys shopping very much. She is always in red by the end of each month.
6. I told a black lie. I didn't want to attend the party so I said I was busy.

C. Answer each question with *yes* or *no*.

1. I just got a promotion and I have met a great guy. Should I feel blue?
2. Jane's baby is not pretty, but I told her that her baby was sweet and cute. Did I tell a white lie?
3. We knew John was getting married the next month, so when we received an invitation to his wedding last week, did the news come out of the blue?
4. I don't have enough money to pay for my credit card expenses, am I in the black?
5. I truly felt happy for my sister when she won the singing contest. Was I green with envy?

D. Complete each gap with the correct colour idioms:

1. Our company has lost a lot of money recently and now we're in the
2. My mother just loves gardening: she has fingers.
3. When we heard the news, it came completely out of the
4. Peter is so honest: he would never tell even a lie.
5. When Jane saw Mary's car, she was with envy.
6. Congratulations! You've passed all your exams with flying
7. The opposition brought up another herring during the debate yesterday.
8. The teacher gave the boy a look but went on.
9. When my son came after that fight with the other boys, he was and all over.
10. This party is so boring. Let's leave and paint the town instead.
11. You know, Fred has always been the sheep in the family.
12. We just can't get ahead because of all this tape!

E. Choose the right answer.

1. She is feeling because her boyfriend didn't call her yesterday.
A blue B green C red D white
2. How many little lies do we tell every day?
A blue B green C red D white
3. Her father and mother saw when they found out that their daughter was dating that guy.
A blue B green C red D white
4. Lena and Nick will be with envy when they see my new car!
A blue B green C red D white
5. That expensive gift turned out to be a elephant. We didn't have any use for it, and we couldn't sell it either.
A blue B green C red D white
6. I tried to talk him out of it. Actually, I talked to him till I was in the face, but he didn't change his mind.
A blue B green C red D white
7. They have to sell their property because their business has been in the for six years.
A blue B green C red D white

8. Her flower garden is fantastic. She loves gardening and has a thumb.
A blue B green C red D white
9. The idea came to him right out of the when he was making coffee in the kitchen.
A blue B green C red D white
10. There was so much bureaucratic tape that we did not get the required papers in time.
A blue B green C red D white
11. When you give something the 'green light' you are giving:
A money B time C permission D refusal
12. When someone is 'yellow' they are:
A young B rich C cowardly D happy
13. A large sum of money paid to a retiring worker is called a 'golden'
A hug B handshake C high-five D kiss

F. See if you can match the meanings with the correct idioms.

Idioms:

Meanings:

- a) a red herring
- b) a red letter day
- c) a white elephant
- d) once in a blue moon
- e) out of the blue
- f) red tape
- g) to be green with envy
- h) to be the black sheep
- i) to have green fingers
- j) to tell a white lie

- 1. A number of official rules and regulations which seem unnecessary
- 2. A very special and happy occasion
- 3. To be very good at gardening
- 4. Suddenly; without warning
- 5. To be very jealous of somebody
- 6. Something that takes the attention away from the subject being discussed
- 7. The person in the family who is thought of as being very bad/naughty
- 8. To say something which is not true because you do not want to make the person unhappy
- 9. Something which cost a lot of money but isn't really very useful
- 10. Seldom

G. Each sentence below has an idiom which needs to be completed with a colour. Choose the right one.

1. When I told him I had crashed his car he really saw He went crazy.
A red B blue C black D green
2. He punched me in the face and gave me a eye.
A green B white C grey D black
3. My birthday party was a complete surprise. It came completely out of the
A blue B black C white D pink
4. How can you argue your salary now? It's there on your contract in
A blue and white B black and white C red and white D white and black
5. The police caught him -handed as he steal some jeans from the shop.
A green B grey C brown D red
6. When someone is very envious, they are " with envy".
A Green B blue C pink D white
7. My brother only rings home once in a moon. I wish he would ring our parents more often.
A green B black C red D blue
8. With all these car repairs, we're to be in the This month.
A red B grey C black D purple
9. When you give someone the "green light" you are giving:
A time B money C permission D refusal
10. When someone is good at gardening, they have " fingers".
A green B yellow C orange D purple
11. They treat you so well at that hotel. They really give you the carpet treatment.
A purple B violet C green D red
12. Then he started talking about the cost of a new computer, which was a herring, because we've got plenty of computers.
A red C black C green D white

H. Rewrite the underlined part of each sentence with an idiom.

1. I want to see the contract in written form, not just an informal agreement.
2. She wanted to apply for a visa, but I told her there are so many forms to fill in and complicated rules, so she's decided to forget it.
3. My new house has a big garden, but I'm not good with plants, so I'll probably never do any gardening.
4. She was caught just as she was stealing food from the market.
5. He's always introducing unimportant points into the discussion which distract everybody from the main argument.

KEYS

A.

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. f | 4. c |
| 2. e | 5. d |
| 3. a | 6. b |

B.

1. out ~~from~~ the blue → out of the blue
2. green ~~from~~ envy → green with envy
3. in black → in the black
4. was feeling ~~the~~ blue → was feeling blue
5. in red → in the red
6. a ~~black~~ lie → a white lie

C.

- | | |
|--------|-------|
| 1. no | 4. no |
| 2. yes | 5. no |
| 3. no | |

D.

- | | |
|------------|-------------------|
| 1. red | 7. red |
| 2. green | 8. black |
| 3. blue | 9. black and blue |
| 4. white | 10. red |
| 5. green | 11. black |
| 6. colours | 12. red |

E.

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. A | 8. B |
| 2. D | 9. A |
| 3. C | 10. C |
| 4. B | 11. C |
| 5. D | 12. C |
| 6. A | 13. B |
| 7. C | |

F.

- | | |
|-------|------|
| a) 6 | f) 1 |
| b) 2 | g) 5 |
| c) 9 | h) 7 |
| d) 10 | i) 3 |
| e) 4 | j) 8 |

G.

1. A
2. D
3. A
4. B
5. D
6. A

7. D
8. A
9. C
10. A
11. D
12. A

H.

1. in black and white
2. a lot of/ too much red tape
3. I don't have/ haven't got green fingers
4. caught red-handed
5. red herrings