

COLOR IDIOMS

1. When a person is angry or embarrassed they might “turn red” or “blush”. Red is associated with good times as in “paint the town red”. It also refers to recognizing important people as when we “roll out the red carpet”.

2. Red can also mean anger when you “see red”. “Red tape” is excessive bureaucratic rules and regulations that cause long delays. If you are “in the red”, you are in debt. If you catch someone “red-handed”, you witness them being sneaky or deceptive.

3. What would you do if you caught someone red-handed as they were stealing a friend’s purse? In your country is there a lot of red tape before you can get permits?

4. Blue can mean sad or depressed. EX: I feel a little blue today. Or you might say, “I have the blues”. If you “sing the blues” you feel sad about a lost love or other situation you regret. EX: Since his girlfriend left he’s been singing the blues. If you “turn blue” you are very cold, or you are out of oxygen. If you “talk until you are blue in the face”, you talk without ceasing, usually trying to convince someone of something. EX: I talked until I was blue in the face, but she still refuses to listen to my advice. If you talk a blue streak, you talk a lot, and usually fast. EX: That woman can talk a blue streak. Once she starts, you can’t get her to stop.

5. Are you often blue or depressed? What makes you feel better when you are feeling blue? Do people who talk a blue streak annoy you? Who do you think talks more, men or women?

6. “Blue-collar” describes a person who does factory work or manual labor. A “true blue friend” is one who is loyal and trustworthy. If you see someone only “once in a blue moon” it means rarely. A blue moon is the rare second full moon in a month. If something comes completely unexpectedly it is “out of the blue”. EX: We got a call out of the blue from one of my oldest friends.

7. Talk about something you only do once in a blue moon.

8. Yellow isn’t often used in idioms. Someone who is “yellow” is cowardly.

9. Green is associated with nature. If you have “a green thumb” you have talent for growing things. A person who is “green” is inexperienced and naive. EX: The freshmen are so green that they are often tricked by the upperclassmen. If you get “the green light” you get approval for a plan or project. EX: We finally got the green light on our home loan, so we made an offer on a house. If you are “green around the gills”, you are nauseated or sick. If you are “green with envy”, you are jealous or envious. EX: I’m green with envy about your trip to Europe.

10. Do you have a green thumb? Do you get green around the gills when you are on a boat or when you ride in a car?

11. If you are “in the pink” you are healthy. EX: he was sick for a long time, but he’s in the pink now. If you are “tickled pink” you are pleased or delighted. If you get a “pink slip”, you are fired.

12. If you “brown bag” it, you bring your lunch to work from home. EX: No expensive lunches for me. I’m brown bagging it this month. If you “brown-nose” you seek approval by showing too great a willingness to obey or serve someone. Note: This is a crude expression. If you get credit for doing good deeds, you get “brownie points”.

13. Do you like brown bagging it or do you prefer to eat out?

14. If you are “in the black”, you are financially sound. It is the opposite of being “in the red”. “Black gold” refers to oil. A “black mark” is an unfavorable comment or item on your record. The “black sheep” is the least respected member of the family.

Who is the black sheep in your family? What did they do to be the black sheep?

15. A “gray area” is something that is not clearly defined. “Gray matter” refers to your brain.

16. If you “whitewash” something you cover it up to hide your faults. EX: The government whitewashed their involvement in the arms scandal. A “white-collar” job is one held by professionals. “White-collar crime” is non-violent crime committed by professionals. Insider trading and embezzlement are examples of white-collar crime. If someone gets scared, they might be “as white as a ghost”. A “little white lie” is a small harmless lie that is told to avoid hurting or offending someone. If your wife asks you if she looks fat, most men will tell a little white lie and say “NO”.

17. A “golden anniversary” is the 50th anniversary. A “golden parachute” is a generous retirement package that is given to a valuable employee that loses his job as a result of a merger or other situation. A “golden opportunity” is a valuable opportunity. The “golden rule” is treat others as you would have them treat you. This is in the Bible, Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31. The idea of a golden rule is one rule which should guide your whole life.

Do you think you will ever celebrate your golden anniversary? How long have you been married?

18. If you are “born with a silver spoon in your mouth”, you are born into a wealthy family. A “silver lining” is a positive or hopeful side to an otherwise bad situation. EX: I got laid off from my job, but the silver lining is that I got a better one.

19. If something is “black and white” it is clearly defined, not vague. EX: He’s very opinionated and sees everything in black and white. This can also mean getting it down on paper. EX: Get it all down in black and white. If you are “black and blue” you are badly bruised. This refers to the dark blue and purple color of bruises. The “red, white and blue” refers to the American flag.

20. My Uncle Harry is the most **colorful** character. He has been married seven times and has worked as everything from a pilot to a bar tender. He tells great stories. What does “colorful” mean here? If someone has had a colorful past, what kind of life have they had?

21. Bob always acts like he's a strong, brave guy, but when the hurricane hit he **showed his true colors**. He was too scared to go check on old Mrs Flowers, our next-door neighbor. What does “show your true colors” mean?

22. John passed his licensing exam with flying colors. He’s so excited. Now he can go out and get a job. Explain this situation.