

Colour and decor

Upper-intermediate

1 Synonyms and colour

The words in the lists below are all synonyms of, or closely related to, which colours?

- | | | | | | |
|----|---------|------------|----------|---------|--------|
| a. | scarlet | ruddy | ruby | crimson | ginger |
| b. | emerald | olive | lime | | |
| c. | marble | chalk | pale | pearl | ivory |
| d. | coal | ebony | jet | ink | |
| e. | coffee | sun-tanned | brunette | khaki | |
| f. | straw | butter | sandy | canary | lemon |

Now answer the following questions:

- Which words describe precious stones?
- Which describe things you eat and drink?
- Which of the colours above would you collocate with the words below?

cheeks hair lips skin a uniform

2 Read and match

Match the colour to the emotion or state below:

green blue white yellow pink red

- I'm feeling a bit depressed at the moment.
- I was so angry!
- I'm so jealous of you!
- He's a complete coward – scared of everything.
- The children looked very healthy.
- He was so shocked

Can you rewrite the phrases above, using an idiomatic phrase, which includes one of the colours?

Example: *Green* *I'm green with envy!*

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3 Black or white?

Complete the phrases with the words **black** or **white**:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| a _____ look | a _____ lie |
| _____ hot | a _____ eye |
| the _____ market | the _____ sheep of the family |
| a _____ wedding | _____ wine |

Now complete the sentences with the phrases above:

- In this country, you can't buy such things legally. You'll have to get them on the _____.
- I must have said something stupid. My girlfriend gave me a _____.
- Don't touch it. You'll burn your hand badly. It's _____.
- 'What would you like to drink?' 'A _____, please.'
- He punched me in the face and gave me a _____.
- I couldn't tell her the truth. She would have been very upset. So I told her a _____.
- His brothers and sisters are doctors, teachers and lawyers, but he's been in and out of prison all his life, and has never had a job. He's the _____.
- I'd like the dress, bridesmaids, everything traditional when I get married. I'd like a _____.

4 Fill the gaps

Complete the gaps with the words below:

moon *pitch* *sheet* *beetroot*

- He went as white as a _____. He was so scared.
- It was as black as _____. It was so dark.
- He went as red as a _____. He was so embarrassed.
- It only happens once in a blue _____. In other words, almost never.

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5 Reading comprehension

Read the passage. Choose the best word in each case:

Decorating a new flat

I've decided to redecorate my flat. I love wonderful *vibrant/lurid* colours so I'm going to *paint/dye* the living room a *brilliant/subtle* red colour. I've bought a new hall carpet, which is green *with a hint of blue/with a bluish tint*, and I'm going to give the hallway a new *coat/level* of paint to match. I've decided to paint the bedrooms white with a *splash/riot* of colour provided by red and blue cushions and throws – nothing too dramatic, though. I think colours in bedrooms should be *restful/vivid*.

6 Decorate your room

Imagine that you are going to redecorate your bedroom. Think about the following:

- What colours are you going to paint it?
- Which of the following will you change, and what colours will they be?
carpets, furniture, rugs, curtains, throws, cushions, bedspreads
- Which of the following will you add to improve the style and décor of your room?
vases, ornaments, potted plants, framed photos, lamps and lampshades
- Interview your partner.

7 Describe your room

Write a description of your favourite room.

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8 Colour dictionary quiz

Try the quiz. If you have the Macmillan English Advanced Learner's Dictionary and CD- ROM you can find all the answers by finding the key word *colour*, and following the various links.

- 1 What are you if you are *off-colour*?
- 2 What's the difference between a *deep* colour and a *sombre* colour?
- 3 What sort of things do children *colour in*?
- 4 What does it mean if you want to see the *colour of someone's money*?
- 5 What are the *primary colours*?
- 6 If you like *local colour* on holiday, what are you looking for?
- 7 What is *colourful language*?
- 8 What is a *colourless person* like?
- 9 What's the difference between *shade* and *tone*?
- 10 What is a *colour supplement*?
- 11 Which of the following is positive: gaudy, vibrant, garish?

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Teacher's notes – Colour and décor (Upper-intermediate)

1 Put the students in pairs to decide which colours the words in the lists are similar in meaning to.

Answers:

a. red b. green c. white d. black e. brown f. yellow

Answers:

Which words describe precious stones? ruby, emerald, pearl, jet

Which describe things you eat and drink? ginger, olive, lime, coffee, butter, lemon

Which of the colours above would you collocate with the words below?

Cheeks: ruddy, crimson, pale

Hair: ginger, brunette, sandy

Lips: scarlet, ruddy, ruby, crimson, pale

Skin: marble, pale, sun-tanned

Uniform: scarlet, khaki

2 Ask the students to match the colour to the emotion or state. Then ask them to rewrite the phrases using an idiomatic phrase.

Answers:

a. Blue - I'm feeling a bit blue at the moment. b. Red - I saw red!
c. Green - I'm green with envy! d. Yellow - He's yellow – scared of everything.
e. Pink - The children looked in the pink. f. White - He went/turned white.

3 Ask the students to complete the phrases with the words black or white.

Answers:

a black look a white lie white hot
a black eye the black market the black sheep of the family
a white wedding white wine

Then ask the students to complete the sentences with the phrases.

Answers:

a. In this country, you can't buy such things legally. You'll have to get them on the black market.
b. I must have said something stupid. My girlfriend gave me a black look.
c. Don't touch it. You'll burn your hand badly. It's white hot.
d. 'What would you like to drink?' 'White wine, please.'
e. He punched me in the face and gave me a black eye.
f. I couldn't tell her the truth. She would have been very upset. So I told her a white lie.
g. His brothers and sisters are doctors, teachers and lawyers, but he's been in and out of prison all his life, and has never had a job. He's the black sheep of the family.
h. I'd like the dress, bridesmaids, everything traditional when I get married. I'd like a white wedding.

4 Ask the students to complete the gaps.

Answers:

a. He went as white as a sheet. He was so scared.
b. It was as black as pitch. It was so dark.
c. He went as red as a beetroot. He was so embarrassed.
d. It only happens once in a blue moon. In other words, almost never.

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5 Ask the students to read the passage, and choose the best word in each case.

Answers:

Decorating a new flat

I've decided to redecorate my flat. I love wonderful *vibrant/lurid* colours so I'm going to *paint/dye* the living room a *brilliant/subtle* red colour. I've bought a new hall carpet, which is green *with a hint of blue/with a bluish tint*, and I'm going to give the hallway a new *coat/level* of paint to match. I've decided to paint the bedrooms white with a *splash/riot* of colour provided by red and blue cushions and throws – nothing too dramatic, though. I think colours in bedrooms should be *restful/vivid*.

6 Ask the students to imagine that they are going to redecorate their bedroom. Give them a few minutes to think about the questions, then get them to interview their partner.

7 Ask the students to write a description of their favourite room. You could set this for homework.

8 Using the Macmillan English Advanced Learner's Dictionary and CD ROM set your students the following quiz. They can find all the answers by finding the key word *colour*, and following the various links. If they don't have the dictionary let them try with the Internet or any other reference materials you can use.

Answers:

1. What are you if you are *off-colour*?
Feeling slightly ill
2. What's the difference between a *deep* colour and a *sombre* colour?
Deep: dark and strong colour. Sombre: dark, e.g. grey or black
3. What sort of things do children *colour in*?
Pictures
4. What does it mean if you want to see the *colour of someone's money*?
To have proof that someone is going to pay you.
5. What are the *primary colours*?
One of the colours red, blue, or yellow, that are combined to make other colours such as orange and green.
6. If you like *local colour* on holiday, what are you looking for?
Interesting details about the typical features, customs etc about a place.
7. What is *colourful language*?
Colourful language is rude or uses offensive words.
8. What is a *colourless person* like?
Not interesting, exciting, or original.
9. What's the difference between *shade* and *tone*?
Shade and tone = one of the different types of a particular colour. Shade also describes how dark or light a colour is.
10. What is a *colour supplement*?
A magazine printed in colour that is given away with a newspaper.
11. Which of the following is positive: gaudy, vibrant, garish?
Vibrant