

Idioms by the Number



1 Warm Up Work with a partner.

- Do you know any idioms containing a number?

2 Matching Work with a partner.

Match the word to the idiom. What do you think the idiom means?

two dozen one second once

- Julie is having thoughts about quitting her job.
- We had almost finished the project, but now we are back to square
- I thought this teapot was a rare antique, but they're actually a dime a
- Tom only exercises in a blue moon.
- I'm of minds about whether to go abroad this Christmas or not.

3 Check Match the meaning to the idiom. Write the number from exercise two.

- very common and therefore not valuable
- return to the beginning
- be unable to decide about something
- be worried after deciding to do something
- very occasionally

4 Check Fill in the spaces using an idiom from the list above.

- Lucy is after she accidentally deleted the file.
- I'm about whether to move house or not.
- Peter is about getting married next month.
- Jim can only afford to drink champagne
- People with my skills are I think I should learn another foreign language.

5 Discussion

- Tell your partner about some things you only do once in a blue moon.
- Are you a decisive person, or do you ever have second thoughts?
- Are your skills a dime a dozen?
- Can you think of a project which went wrong? Did you have to go back to square one?
- Your ideas!

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Target Structure:	Idiom Building
Vocabulary:	Idioms themed around numbers
Level:	Intermediate +
Time:	45 minutes, depending on discussion
Preparation:	None

Suggested Teaching Method

This worksheet looks at some common idioms which contain a reference to a number. Students can infer the meanings from context, and have the opportunity to consolidate the expressions through exercises to recycle the language.

The worksheet rounds off with discussion questions.

- 1 The opening question introduces the topic. Students can work in pairs for this.

Elicit a few examples from the group. Don't spend too long here. There is extended discussion at the end of the lesson.
- 2 Follow the instructions. Before beginning, pre-teach vocabulary, as needed. Don't teach the meaning of the idioms. You may need to teach the word *wink* and *jetlagged*. Students can work alone, and then check in pairs.
- 3 Again, students can work alone and check in pairs. Elicit the answers from the group, and give further explanations or examples where necessary.

After going through the answers, give the students one minute to read the idioms again, and memorize them.
- 4 This exercise checks your students' ability to use the idioms in sentences. Students can work in pairs, and then check with a student from a different pair. For this exercise, have students cover the previous exercises.

Go through the answers with the group. Accept any answers that make grammatical (and logical) sense.
- 5 Assign new pairs or groups of three. The pairs/groups should begin by reading through the questions.

When students are talking, monitor, but try not to interrupt. Make a note of errors which you think need correcting: especially ones which cover these idioms.

When the discussion comes to a close, write some of the errors you heard on the board, and elicit corrections.

The answer key can be found on the next page.

Answer Key (Other answers may be possible)

- 2
- Julie is having second thoughts about quitting her job.
 - We had almost finished the project, but now we are back to square one.
 - I thought this teapot was a rare antique, but they're actually a dime a dozen.
 - Tom only exercises once in a blue moon.
 - I'm of two minds about whether to go abroad this Christmas or not.
- 3
- very common and therefore not valuable c
 - return to the beginning b
 - be unable to decide about something e
 - be worried after deciding to do something a
 - very occasionally d
- 4
- Lucy is back to square one after she accidentally deleted the file.
 - I'm of two minds about whether to move house or not.
 - Peter is having second thoughts about getting married next month.
 - Jim can only afford to drink champagne once in a blue moon.
 - People with my skills are a dime a dozen. I think I should learn another foreign language.

How are we doing?

We'd be pleased to hear some feedback on our worksheets. Tell us how it went in your class. You can send us feedback from www.handoutsonline.com.

Alternatively, you can email the editor at editor@handoutsonline.com.

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