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Episode #079

Color Idioms (white)

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Hello, everybody! I am Georgiana, your English teacher and founder of speakenglishpodcast.com. My mission is to help you speak English fluently. Speaking English is easier than it seems! You just have to use the right material and techniques.

In today's episode, you will learn new **expressions in English** with the help of the **color white**. In fact, with the help of **colors**, you can say many different things. You'll see.

And with an exclusive mini-story, you will be able to practice your fluency in English along with today's expressions.

I'm going to start talking about the **English idiomatic expressions with the color white**. In the following episodes, I will use more **expressions** with different **colors**.

As I was preparing this episode, I realized that these expressions are used a lot in everyday life. It would be great if you could at least understand their meaning. And don't worry if you don't remember all of them.

1. As white as a sheet

We use this expression to say that someone is in a state of great fear or anxiety.

Let me tell you a story about a friend who had a long-distance relationship before the internet era. During the first month, he spoke on the phone for about 12 hours every day. However, things changed after he saw the phone bill! I'm sure that he became **as white as a sheet**. :)

Another example:

"Bill, you're **as white as a sheet!** Are you alright?"

2. Raise a white flag

The white flag is a widely known symbol used to symbolize surrender. People carrying or waving a white flag should not be attacked or allowed to open fire.

And as you have already guessed by now, this expression indicates that someone admitted defeat.

Examples:

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"After studying English for 28 years and eight months, Marta was about to **raise a white flag**. Luckily before throwing in the towel, she found out about the Speak English Now podcast!!"

Here I used the expression "to throw in the towel," which has the same meaning as "**raise a white flag**."

"That's it! You win. I raised a white flag. You can eat all the chocolate you want." My friend told his 5-year-old son.

"Carol was convinced that she was right. So I just **raised my white flag** in the end."

3. Whitewash something

In American English, a **whitewash** is something that hides a wrong or illegal action.

Example:

"The company was trying to **whitewash** the scandal."

4. White elephant

What's the meaning of this expression? I'll give you a few seconds to think about it.

And no. I'm not referring myself to a real white elephant. Those aren't really white. The color of their skin is a soft reddish-brown.

Anyway, "**white elephant**" is an expression used to say that an investment or a purchase is considered expensive but without use or value.

Do you remember the expression "The elephant in the room"? We use it when there's a **complicated subject that people don't want to talk about**. Everyone is aware of the issue, but they prefer to ignore it because it makes them feel uncomfortable.

And what if we merged these two expressions? What would be the meaning of "a white elephant in the room"? That you bought something costly that you can't use, and you really don't want to talk about it with your wife?

What a mess! :) It's obviously just a joke. Make sure you use these two expressions separately. :)

Now let's listen to an example with the idiom "**white elephant**":

Examples:

"A friend gave me a cat as a present. I really wish he didn't. Since for me, it's a **white elephant**. I'm allergic to cats!

5. White as a ghost

This expression is used to describe someone who is very pale because of pain, fear, shock, or illness.

Are you afraid of ghosts? Well, I am! I'm very apprehensive sometimes. I can't watch any horror movies, or I become **white as a ghost**."

Example:

"You know, the movie wasn't that scary, though after watching it, my sister was **white as a ghost!**"

6. A white lie

Did you ever tell a lie thinking that it wouldn't have any real repercussions? Did you ever say to a friend she didn't look fat or lied about your age? Well, that's what we call a **white lie**.

And before you go ahead and listen to the example, I want to recommend a TV show on HBO called "[Big Little Lies](#)." It's quite interesting.

Example:

"Yesterday I didn't feel like going to work, so I told my boss a **white lie**. I told him I was under the weather."

7. White collar

Refers to **employees who work in an office or other professional environments**.

There is a similar term called **blue-collar** that refers to **manual work or workers, particularly in industry**.

Example:

"There are more vacancies for **white-collar** workers than for the blue-collar."

Let's listen to the expressions one more time:

1. As white as a sheet

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2. Raise a white flag
3. Whitewash something
4. White elephant
5. White as a ghost
6. A white lie
7. White collar

Mini-Story

(Practice your speaking)

Great! Now, you can practice with a mini-story. You will be able to go over this vocabulary we saw in the first section.

A mini-story is very simple. I give you information using phrases, and then I ask you questions.

I recommend that you listen several times until it's easy to answer.

Michael, a **white-collar**-worker, suddenly looked as **white as a sheet**.

Was Michael a blue-collar worker?

No. No. Not a blue-collar worker. Michael was a **white-collar** worker.

When did he look as white as a sheet?

Suddenly. He suddenly looked **as white as a sheet**.

He looked as **white as a sheet** because his boss was demanding an explanation.

Who was as white as a sheet? His boss?

No. No. His boss wasn't as white as a sheet. Michael was **as white as a sheet**.

Why was Michael as white as a sheet?

Because his boss was demanding an explanation.

It turned out that Michael had bought a drinking fountain for the company. It was a mistake!

Did Michael buy a drinking fountain?

No. No. Michael didn't buy a drinking fountain. He purchased a chocolate fountain.

Was the chocolate fountain a white elephant?

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Yes. The chocolate fountain was a **white elephant** because it wasn't useful in an office.
Michael bought a chocolate fountain on purpose. Right?

No. He didn't buy a chocolate fountain on purpose. He bought it by mistake.

Michael thought of trying to **whitewash** his mistake, but it was too obvious.

Did anyone make a mistake?

Yes. Michael made a mistake.

What did Michael think of?

He thought of trying to **whitewash** his mistake.

Did he try to whitewash his mistake or to tell a white lie?

No. He didn't tell a **white lie**, but he thought he'd try to **whitewash** his mistake.

Michael finally decided to **raise a white flag** and hope for the worst.

What did Michael raise? A balloon?

No. No. Michael didn't raise a balloon. He gave up, so he decided to **raise a white flag**.

Was Michael optimistic about the situation?

No. No. Michael wasn't optimistic. He raised a white flag because he was pessimistic about the situation.

Did Michael give up?

Yes. He gave up. He decided to **raise a white flag**.

Michael woke up suddenly. It was just a nightmare, so he was relieved.

Was Michael dreaming?

Yes. He was dreaming.

Did he have a pleasant dream?

No. No. He didn't have a pleasant dream. Michael had a nightmare.

Who woke up? Michael's boss?

No. Michael woke up suddenly and realized that he just had a bad dream.

When he got to the office, he saw a chocolate fountain. And just like in the dream, his boss demanding an explanation.

Who got at the office?

Michael. He got to the office. He arrived at the office.

Did he see a chocolate fountain?

Yes. He saw a chocolate fountain.

Was Michael dreaming again?

No. No. He wasn't dreaming anymore. This time it was real.

Michael started to look **as white as a sheet**, just like in his dream.

How did Michael start to look?

As white as a sheet. He looked **white as a ghost**.

How did he look in his dream?

As white as a sheet. Michael looked as white as a sheet, just like in his dream.

Who started to look as white as a sheet?

Michael. He started to look **as white as a sheet**.

Although the chocolate fountain idea seemed at first a **white elephant**, surprisingly, Michael was promoted for his initiative. It turned out that everyone became incredibly motivated at work. All the employees loved drinking from the chocolate fountain, and therefore they became incredibly motivated. And who wouldn't like to have a fountain-like that at work? I definitely would! :)

Perfect! It's the end of this mini-story. As you can see, through questions and answers, you can practice and improve your speech.

If you want to get hours of audio with mini-stories and points of view stories, I'd like to recommend to you my [Fluency Course](#).

You can get it at SpeakEnglishPodcast.com/fluency

Well, I think that's enough for today. Try to listen to this content several times.

See you soon!
Bye! Bye!



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