

When Pigs Fly: A Lesson Plan on Idioms

by [Sarah Sahr](#)

I'll be honest: I love idioms. I love how they play with the English language. I love how they confuse people. I love the complexities found in them. However, most people studying English find idioms to be quite the challenge. The lesson below is a quick introductory lesson for students just beginning to play with idioms. It's best used as an idiom needs assessment. What might you have to teach after this class?

Time: 60 minutes
Materials: Premade number cards, hat, blank copy paper, dictionaries, colored pencils, premade letter cards, & 8 sheets of notebook paper
Audience: Secondary school students or adult English language learners; intermediate learners.
Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of eight idioms by sharing drawings and sentences, and having small group discussions

Lesson Prep:

Write the following idioms on the board:

1. Barking up the wrong tree
2. Cat got your tongue
3. Cry over spilt milk
4. Drive me up the wall
5. Have an axe to grind
6. Jump the gun
7. On pins and needles
8. X marks the spot

If you don't like these, find a great list at [Idiom Site](#).

Number Cards: Create four sets of eight cards, number the cards in each set 1–8, and put them in your hat.

Letter Cards: Create eight sets of four cards and letter the cards in each set A–D.

Please note: This lesson is arranged with 32 students. You'll have to take into consideration your own class population when creating the number and letter cards.

As students enter the room, give them each a piece of blank copy paper.

Introduction: (10 minutes)

Once class is settled and attendance is taken, have students read the statements on the board. Allow students to look up new vocabulary in a regular student dictionary. Have students talk with their neighbors about what they have learned. Do any of these make sense? Can students envision these statements as pictures in their head?

Have each student pick a number card from your hat.

Independent work: (~10 minutes)

First, students study the statement that coincides with the number they picked from the hat. Second, students will draw an exact representation of the statement on the blank paper they received at the start of class. They can use colored pencils if available but pencil and paper will suffice. To clarify, students who picked #6 would have to draw a person jumping over a gun, or something similar.

Find your group: (~15 minutes)

Once all pictures are complete, have students form groups based on the number they picked from the hat. (There should be eight groups of four students, one group for each statement on the board.) In these groups, students must perform four tasks:

1. Share their art with each other
2. From consensus, form a definition that goes with their idiom
3. Create at least four sentences using their assigned idiom
4. Write these sentences on the back of their art

While groups are working, make sure to visit each group to check their understanding of the idiom they are working on.

While visiting each group, the teacher should quietly hand a letter card to each member of the group. Each member in each group should have a different letter: A, B, C, or D.

Find your next group: (~20 minutes)

Once groups have finished their first tasks, students should look at the letter card you gave them and find their new group! (There should now be four groups of eight people.) Give each group a clean sheet of notebook paper. In this group, several things need to take place:

1. Each student should share their idiom's photo, definition, and sentences
2. After each student shares their information, the group must vote which sentence represents the idiom best.
3. Each winning sentence should be written on the notebook paper.

Closure: (~5 minutes)

Once groups are finished with writing the eight winning statements, have groups exchange papers and read the winning statements. At the end of class, ask each group to share their favorite. Collect the notebook paper as students leave class. This notebook paper acts as your needs assessment. Plan future lessons accordingly.

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