

# Colours and their associations in English speaking

## English – Speaking Countries





Blue is considered the safest color choice around the world, since it has many positive associations. In North America and Europe blue represents trust, security, and authority, and is considered to be soothing and peaceful. But it can also represent depression, loneliness, and sadness (hence having “the blues”).





- Green represents luck, nature, freshness, spring, environmental awareness, wealth, inexperience, and jealousy (the “green-eyed monster”). Of course, green is an emblematic color for Ireland, which earned its nickname “The Emerald Isle” from its lush green landscapes.



- Red symbolizes excitement, energy, passion, action, love, and danger in Western cultures also it symbolizes good luck, joy, prosperity, celebration, happiness, and a long life. Because it's such an auspicious color, brides often wear red on their wedding day and red envelopes containing money are given out during holidays and special occasions.





- In Western cultures, yellow is associated with happiness, cheeriness, optimism, warmth (as the color of sunlight), joy, and hope, as well as caution and cowardice



- Orange represents autumn, harvest, warmth, and visibility in Western cultures



- Purple is often associated with royalty, wealth, spirituality, and nobility, purple is also associated with piety and faith. It's also a color of honor — the Purple Heart is the oldest military award still given to US military members.



- In Western cultures, white symbolizes purity, elegance, peace, and cleanliness; brides traditionally wear white dresses at their weddings





- black symbolizes sophistication and formality, but it also represents death, evil, mourning, magic, fierceness, illness, bad luck, and mystery

# Colours and their Associations

In all cultures, different colours have different associations. Here are the associations that different colours have for British and American people.

## RED



Red warns of danger. The expression **red alert** is used to warn of a sudden and very dangerous situation. People imagine that the **DEVIL** is red. Red heart shapes and red roses are used to represent romantic love. Red clothes, and lips and fingernails that are painted red are often associated with sexual desire. Red is thought to be an exciting colour; the expression **paint the town red** means to go out at night to bars, clubs etc and have a very good time.

In politics, red is used to represent **COMMUNISM** and **SOCIALISM**. In the UK the **LABOUR PARTY** is represented by a red rose.

If someone is **red in the face**, they are very embarrassed.

It is traditional to welcome a king, queen, or president to a place by having a **red carpet** for them to walk on.

## GREEN

British and American people think of green as the colour that represents nature. If you describe a place as green, you mean that it is covered with grass or trees: *green fields*. The **green belt** is an area of land around a city where building is not allowed, in order to protect fields and woods. Green is the national colour of Ireland, also known as the **EMERALD ISLE** because of its many green fields.

Green also means 'connected with the environment'. **Green issues** are ideas about the environment that are discussed in parliament, newspapers etc. Products that are described as green are



thought to cause less harm to the environment than other products.

Green is used to describe someone who is young and lacks experience in a job.

Green represents jealousy. If you are **green with envy**, you are very jealous of someone who has something that you want. The expression **green-eyed monster** is used to mean sexual jealousy. If someone's face is green, they look pale and unhealthy, especially because they are about to **VOMIT**.

## PURPLE

Purple is associated with kings and queens and Roman **EMPERORS**, and in the past, these were the only people who were allowed to wear purple clothes. It is also connected with the **POPE**.

**Purple prose** is a piece of writing that has a grand style.

If someone is **purple with rage** or **purple in the face**, they are extremely angry.

## BLUE

In the US and UK it is very common for clothes to be blue. **NAVY BLUE** (=very dark blue) is a common colour for **UNIFORMS** such as those worn by sailors and the police, and formal clothes worn for work: a *navy blue suit*.

In the UK, blue is the colour of the **CONSERVATIVE PARTY**. There is a joke that old ladies who support this party have a **blue rinse**, which means that they have their white or grey hair dyed a pale blue colour.

In the US, the expression **blue-collar** is used to talk about social class. A blue-collar worker works



in a factory, repairs machines etc —compare

#### WHITE-COLLAR

Blue is connected with coldness. If you say that someone is **blue with cold**, you mean that they are very cold.

Pale blue is associated with baby boys, who are traditionally dressed in this colour. Today many parents avoid dressing their boys in blue because they think that it strengthens sexual **STEREOTYPES**. People who belong to royal families are said to be **blue-blooded** (=to have blue blood).

#### PINK

In the UK and US, pink is thought of as a pretty colour that is worn by women and girls. Pale pink is associated with baby girls, who are traditionally dressed in this colour. Today many parents avoid dressing their girls in pink because they think that it strengthens sexual



**STEREOTYPES**. Pink is also connected with **HOMOSEXUAL** men, and is used in expressions such as the **pink pound** (=the money that homosexual men have available to spend).

#### GREY BrE, GRAY AmE



In the US and UK, grey is connected with being dull and boring. It is, however, also a common colour for both men and women's clothes.

A **grey day** is an unpleasant one because the sky is full of grey clouds.

Grey is connected with old people, and is used in expressions such as the **grey vote** (=the

support of old people in an election).

#### BLACK

In the US and UK, black is a very popular colour for clothes of all types, and especially formal clothes. It is typically worn at funerals to show



respect and sadness. Black clothes are often worn to social occasions in the evening, when women sometimes wear a **little black dress** (=a simple, short, black dress with no **SLEEVES**, that is acceptable at most social occasions that happen in the evening or at night) and men sometimes wear a **black DINNER JACKET**.

Black is associated with death and evil. **WITCHES** (=women thought to have magic powers that they use to do bad things) are thought to wear black and to have black cats. **Black magic** is believed to be magic that uses the power of the **DEVIL** for evil purposes.

The **black sheep** of a family is a member of a family who chooses to live their life in a way that is different from the other members, and that they disapprove of.

#### WHITE

In the UK and US, white is associated with purity and **VIRGINITY** (=the condition of never having had sex). Traditionally women wear long white dresses when they get married.

White is also associated with moral goodness.

People imagine that the Christian god and his **ANGELS** (=spirits that live with god and have white wings) wear white, and that **HEAVEN** (=believed by Christians to be the home of god, where good Christians go when they die) is a place where there are many white clouds.



If someone's face looks as **white as a sheet**, they are pale because they are ill or very frightened. A **white flag** is traditionally used by people fighting in a battle, to show they **SURRENDER** (=accept that they have been defeated).

In the US, the expression **white-collar** is used to talk about social class. A white-collar worker works in an office, bank etc. —compare **BLUE-COLLAR**