

Lesson Plan:

Advanced use of articles in idioms

LEVEL Advanced (C1+)	TIME 60–75 minutes
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Objectives

- Understand how definite and indefinite articles function in idiomatic expressions.
- Identify idiomatic phrases where article usage is fixed or non-standard.
- Practice using idioms with correct article use in speaking and writing.

Materials

- Handout with idioms and example sentences.
- Exercise worksheet.
- A short article or dialogue using idiomatic language.
- Whiteboard or digital board.

Part 1: Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Activity: *Quick Brainstorm*

- Ask: "What is an idiom?"
- Write 5 idioms on the board (e.g., **in a pickle**, **hit the nail on the head**, **under the weather**, **a dime a dozen**, **out of the blue**).
- Ask students: Do these idioms use articles? Why/why not?

Part 2: Focus on Articles in Idioms (20 minutes)

Mini-Lecture & Examples

Explain that idioms often *lock in* certain articles, and using the wrong article sounds unnatural or changes the meaning.

Examples:

a dime a dozen on the fence hit the nail on the head under the weather have an ax to grind

Rule of thumb: In idioms, article use often follows no "logical" grammar — students must **memorize the phrase as a whole**.

Worksheet practice (15 minutes)

Worksheet: Provide sentences with idioms missing the article.

Example:

1. That excuse is just ___ dime ___ dozen.
2. You really hit ___ nail on ___ head.
3. He's always sitting on ___ fence.

Students work in pairs to fill in blanks, then check with class.

Part 4: Idiom Match + Use (15 minutes)

Match Game: Provide idioms and definitions.

Example: Match "kick the bucket" → "to die."

Then have students:

- Pick 2 idioms.
- Create short dialogues using each with **correct article use**.

Part 5: Speaking or Writing Task (15 minutes)

Option A - Speaking:

Role play a conversation between two coworkers using 3 idioms from today.

Option B - Writing:

Write a short paragraph about a bad day using at least 3 idioms.

Homework

Find 5 idioms in English media (news, TV, songs) and write:

- The full idiom
- The sentence it appeared in
- What article was used and why you think it was used

Optional Extension

Use a short article full of idiomatic language (e.g., a humorous advice column) and have students underline idioms and analyze the article use.