Animals and colours

The idioms in these exercises all contain words related to animals or colours.

1 Circle the correct animal to complete each idiom. Then match the idioms (1–6) with their meanings (a–f).

1 I don't like to leave my team for too long. *When the cat's away, the (mice / rabbits / worms) will play!* 

2 The children *fight like (bird / cat / wolf) and dog.*

3 I intend to get there before seven o'clock. *The early (bird / mouse / cat) catches the worm.*

4 He seemed nice enough but he was *a (lion / wolf / horse) in sheep's clothing.*

5 I usually *kill two (birds / dogs / sheep) with one stone* and do some shopping on the way to pick up the children.

6 There's no point *running around like a headless (chicken / horse / dog).*

a to manage to achieve two things at the same time

b someone who appears harmless but is in fact dangerous

c to fight a lot

d moving in a disorganized way, and not thinking calmly or achieving anything

e People who get up early achieve more.

f People behave badly when their boss is not there.
Circle the correct colour to complete each idiom. Then match the idioms (1–6) with their meanings (a–f).

1. My mother grows all her own vegetables. She has **green** / brown / red fingers.  
   ...................... d

2. Are you sure you’re okay? You’re as **grey** / white / pink as a sheet. .........................

3. She gave me a **black** / blue / purple look as she left the room, clearly furious.  
   .........................

4. You can tell her until you are **red** / blue / pink in the face but she won’t believe you.  
   .........................

5. Carlos is going to see my favourite band and I’m **black** / green / yellow with envy.  
   .........................

6. They rolled out the **red** / purple / blue carpet for the actor’s visit. .........................

a. again and again, but with no effect  

b. wanting very much to do or have the same  

c. gave a very special welcome  

d. is very good at gardening  

e. very pale  

f. a look showing anger
3 Complete the conversation with idioms from exercises 1 and 2.

Maria: Are you okay, Anna? You’re as white as a ___________.

Anna: I haven’t had a very good day, actually. I’ve had a headache all afternoon and the kids have been fighting ________________. On top of that I’ve been running around ________________, trying to get things prepared for the party on Sunday.

Maria: Oh poor you. You need a holiday!

Anna: I know. A colleague of mine is off to Portugal for two weeks and I’m green with ___________. I really need a break.

Maria: Do you have a holiday planned for this summer?

Anna: No. Peter says he can’t take the time off work.

Maria: But everyone needs a holiday!

Anna: I know. I tell him that till I’m blue ________________, but he doesn’t listen. He’s in charge of a big team, and he doesn’t like to leave them for any length of time. You know what they say: while ________________, the mice will play.
4 For each sentence, complete the response with an idiom from exercise 1 or 2.

1 A: Get to the market as early in the morning as you can.
B: Good idea! The early bird catches the worm.

2 A: Your garden looks fantastic, Martine.
B: Thank you! People say

3 A: You should have seen how angry she was when he asked her to leave.
B: I know. She gave

4 A: They treated him so well during his last visit to the country.
B: Yes, they did. They

5 A: He wasn't the nice man he seemed to be.
B: That's true. He

6 A: You could drop these books off at the library while you're shopping in the town centre.
B: Good idea! Then I can
Animals and colours – Answer key

Exercise 1
1 mice f
2 cat c
3 bird e
4 wolf b
5 birds a
6 chicken d

Exercise 2
1 green d
2 white e
3 black f
4 blue a
5 green b
6 red c

Exercise 3
1 sheet
2 like cat and dog
3 like a headless chicken
4 envy
5 in the face
6 the cat’s away

Exercise 4
1 Good idea! The early bird catches the worm.
2 Thank you! People say I have green fingers.
3 I know. She gave him a black look.
4 Yes, they did. They rolled out the red carpet.
5 That’s true. He was a wolf in sheep’s clothing.
6 Good idea! Then I can kill two birds with one stone.