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# Collocations

## An abridged guide

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## What is a collocation?

A collocation is two or more words that often go together. These combinations just sound "right" to native English speakers, who use them all the time. On the other hand, other combinations may be unnatural and just sound "wrong". Look at these examples:

natural English...	unnatural English...
the fast train	the quick train
fast food	quick food
a quick shower	a fast shower
a quick meal	a fast meal

## Why learn collocations?

Your language will be more natural and more easily understood. More importantly, collocations will help you solve the fill in the blank questions more intuitively. Have you ever felt that one combination of words sounded better than the other in the exam? That's exactly what I am talk about. You felt like that because knowingly or unknowingly you had picked up that collocation, and therefore, when you saw it you felt more at home.

## How to learn collocations

At this stage of learning, you should not be learning the meaning of words individually but rather should be picking them as one meaningful block. For example, when you see "strongly support", keep in mind that these words sound more natural when used together and you should try to learn their meaning as one word.

### General Suggestions

- When you learn a new word, write down other words that collocate with it (remember rightly, remember distinctly, remember vaguely, remember vividly).
- Read as much as possible. Reading is an excellent way to learn vocabulary and collocations in context and naturally.
- Revise what you learn regularly. Practise using new collocations in context as soon as possible after learning them.

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- Learn collocations in groups that work for you. You could learn them by topic (time, number, weather, money, family) or by a particular word (take action, take a chance, take an exam).

### Suggestions for the exam

- Whenever I mention collocation in our class discussion, note them down.
- If you come across the same word combinations frequently during your practice, take a mental note of them.
- While solving the questions, if nothing seems to be helping, try putting all the remaining options in the gap and choose the one that sounds more natural to you.

## Types of collocation

There are several different types of collocation made from combinations of verb, noun, adjective etc. Some of the most common types are:

- adverb + adjective: completely satisfied (NOT downright satisfied)
- adjective + noun: excruciating pain (NOT excruciating joy)
- noun + noun: a surge of anger (NOT a rush of anger)
- noun + verb: lions roar (NOT lions shout)
- verb + noun: commit suicide (NOT undertake suicide)
- verb + expression with preposition: burst into tears (NOT blow up in tears)
- verb + adverb: wave frantically (NOT wave feverishly)

## common collocations

### 1. adverb + adjective

- Invading that country was an **utterly stupid** thing to do.
- We entered a **richly decorated** room.
- Are you **fully aware of** the implications of your action?

### 2. adjective + noun

- The doctor ordered him to take **regular exercise**.
- The Titanic sank on its **maiden voyage**.
- He was writhing on the ground in **excruciating pain**.

### 3. noun + noun

- Let's give Mr Jones a **round of applause**.
- The **ceasefire agreement** came into effect at 11am.
- I'd like to buy **two bars of soap** please.

#### 4. noun + verb

- The **lion** started to **roar** when it heard the dog barking.
- **Snow** was **falling** as our plane took off.
- The **bomb went off** when he started the car engine.

#### 5. verb + noun

- The prisoner was hanged for **committing murder**.
- I always try to **do my homework** in the morning, after **making my bed**.
- He has been asked to **give a presentation** about his work.

#### 6. verb + expression with preposition

- We had to return home because we had **run out of money**.
- At first her eyes filled with horror, and then she **burst into tears**.
- Their behaviour was enough to **drive anybody to crime**.

#### 7. verb + adverb

- She **placed** her keys **gently** on the table and sat down.
- Mary **whispered softly** in John's ear.
- I **vaguely remember** that it was growing dark when we left.

#### Verb collocations

	<b>do business</b>	do your	make room
<b>have a bath</b>	do nothing	homework	make trouble
have a drink	do someone a	make a	take
have a good time	favour	difference	break
have a haircut	do the cooking	make a mess	catch
have a holiday	do the housework	make a mistake	take a break
have a problem	do the shopping	make a noise	take a chance
have a relationship	do the washing up	make an effort	take a look
have a rest	do your best	make furniture	take a rest
have lunch	do your hair	make money	take a seat
have sympathy		make progress	take a taxi

take an exam	pay someone a	come direct	go out of business
take notes	compliment	come early	go overseas
take someone's	pay someone a	come first	go quiet
place	visit	come into view	go sailing
take someone's	pay the bill	come last	go to war
temperature	pay the price	come late	go yellow
<b>break a</b>	pay your respects	come on time	<b>get a job</b>
<b>habit</b>	<b>save</b>	come prepared	get a shock
break a leg	electricity	come right back	get angry
break a promise	save energy	come second	get divorced
break a record	save money	come to a	get drunk
break a window	save one's strength	compromise	get frightened
break someone's	save someone a	come to a decision	get home
heart	seat	come to an	get lost
break the ice	save someone's life	agreement	get married
break the law	save something to	come to an end	get nowhere
break the news to	a disk	come to a	get permission
someone	save space	standstill	get pregnant
break the rules	save time	come to terms	get ready
<b>catch a ball</b>	save yourself the	with	get started
catch a bus	trouble	come to a total of	get the impression
catch a chill	<b>keep a diary</b>	come under attack	get the message
catch a cold	keep a promise	<b>go abroad</b>	get the sack
catch a thief	keep a secret	go astray	get upset
catch fire	keep an	go bad	get wet
catch sight of	appointment	go bald	get worried
catch someone's	keep calm	go bankrupt	
attention	keep control	go blind	
catch someone's	keep in touch	go crazy	
eye	keep quiet	go dark	
catch the flu	keep someone's	go deaf	
<b>pay a fine</b>	place	go fishing	
pay attention	keep the change	go mad	
pay by credit card	<b>come close</b>	go missing	
pay cash	come complete	go on foot	
pay interest	with	go online	

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## Advanced Collocations

If we look deeper into collocations, we find that not only do the words "go together" but there is a degree of predictability in their association. Generally, in any collocation, one word will "call up" another word in the mind of a native speaker. In other words, if I give you one word, you can predict the other word, with varying degrees of success. This predictability is not 100%, but it is always much higher than with non-collocates.

The predictability may be strong: for example "auspicious" collocates with very few words, as in:

- auspicious occasion
- auspicious moment
- auspicious event

### Lexical and grammatical collocations

A distinction may, if wished, be made between lexical collocations and grammatical collocations.

A lexical collocation is a type of construction where a verb, noun, adjective or adverb forms a predictable connection with another word, as in:

- adverb + adjective: completely satisfied (NOT downright satisfied)
- adjective + noun: excruciating pain (NOT excruciating joy)
- noun + verb: lions roar (NOT lions shout)
- verb + noun: commit suicide (NOT undertake suicide)

A grammatical collocation is a type of construction where for example a verb or adjective must be followed by a particular preposition, or a noun must be followed by a particular form of the verb, as in:

- verb + preposition: depend on (NOT depend of)
- adjective + preposition: afraid of (NOT afraid at)
- noun + particular form of verb: strength to lift it (not strength lifting it)

### Further Study

If you are after 65 or 79 or want to make your language more natural, the following link will take you to the Quizlet, from where you can practise all the collocations Pearson has used in their exams so far.

[Click me to go to Quizlet](#)