

What is a collocation?

A collocation



is two or more words that often go together.

It can be “Strong” or “Weak”.

*If we look deeper, 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.

*If I give you one word, you can predict the other word, with varying degrees of success.

The predictability may be **strong**:


Example "auspicious" collocates with very few words:

- ▶ **auspicious** occasion
- ▶ **auspicious** moment
- ▶ **auspicious** event


Or the predictability may be **weak**:

Example "circuit" collocates with more than 20 words:

▶ circuit collocates **left** and **right**...



Racing **Circuit**
Lecture **Circuit**
Talk-show **Circuit**
Short **Circuit**
Closed **Circuit**
Integrated **Circuit**
Printed **Circuit**



Circuit board
Circuit breaker
Circuit training
Circuit judge

Also, we can make a distinction
between...

**Lexical
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.

Example:

Adverb + Adjective:

- ▶ completely satisfied (NOT downright satisfied)
- ▶ 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?

Adjective + Noun:

- ▶ excruciating pain (NOT excruciating joy)
- ▶ The doctor ordered him to take **regular exercise**.
- ▶ The Titanic sank on its **maiden voyage**.
- ▶ He was writhing on the ground in **excruciating pain**.

Noun + Verb:

- ▶ lions roar (NOT lions ~~shout~~)
- ▶ 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.

Verb + Noun:

- ▶ commit suicide (NOT ~~undertake~~ suicide)
- ▶ 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.

Noun + Noun:

- ▶ a surge of anger (NOT a ~~rush~~ of anger)
- ▶ Let's give Mr Jones a round of applause.
- ▶ The ceasefire agreement came into effect at 11 am.
- ▶ I'd like to buy two bars of soap please.

Verb + Expression With Preposition:

- ▶ burst into tears (NOT ~~blow up in~~ tears)
- ▶ 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.**

Verb + Adverb:

- ▶ wave frantically (NOT wave ~~feverishly~~)
- ▶ 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.

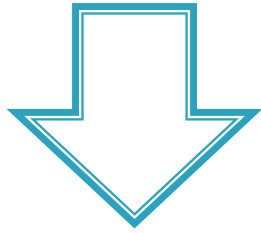
A grammatical collocation...

is a type of construction where a verb or adjective must be followed by a particular preposition, or a noun must be followed by a particular form of the verb.

Example:

- ▶ **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~~)

Why learn collocations?



- ▶ Your language will be more natural and more easily understood.
- ▶ You will have alternative and richer ways of expressing yourself.
- ▶ It is easier for our brains to remember and use language in chunks or blocks rather than as single words.

Examples:

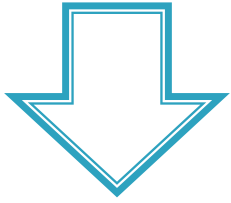
Natural English

- ▶ the fast train
- ▶ fast food
- ▶ a quick shower
- ▶ a quick meal

Unnatural English

- the ~~quick~~ train
- ~~quick~~ food
- a ~~fast~~ shower
- a ~~fast~~ meal

How to learn collocations?



- ▶ Be **aware** of collocations, and try to **recognize** them when you see or hear them.
- ▶ Treat collocations as **single blocks** of language. Think of them as individual blocks or chunks, and learn *strongly support*, not strongly + support.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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*).

▶ **Questions?**

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