

ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS IN USE

How words work
together for fluent
and natural English

Self-study and
classroom use

Second Edition

Intermediate



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do research, attend a lecture, first draft
target audience, prepare handouts, public speaking
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set up a business, launch a product, rival company
key factor, challenge a theory, carry out research
make reference to, argue convincingly, research suggests*

*break the law, bend the rules, fair trial
hardened criminal, juvenile crime, tackle crime
hit the headlines, hold talks, take hostage
squander money, price soars, go cheap
war breaks out, restore order, call a truce
eradicate poverty, forced and voluntary migration*

*save time, a good day, hours, from dawn till dusk
break the silence, excessive noise, almighty bang
within commuting distance, painfully thin
bright colour, beam of light, shed some light on
choppy sea, soft pillow, ice melts
fragrant perfume, have a taste, smell danger
significant number, come to a total of, rare species
prompt payment, painfully slow, lose your balance
make an adjustment, break a habit, change the subject
brief chat, raise a subject, drop a hint
pace up and down, wander aimlessly, faltering steps*

*promising start, bring something to an end
make a breakthrough, fail miserably
cause alarm, adverse effects, have a major impact
vaguely remember, blot out a memory, have a feeling
settle a dispute, agree to differ, heated argument
firmly believe, colour someone's judgement
arrive at a decision, have second thoughts, tough choice
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Using this book

What is a collocation?

Collocation means a natural combination of words; it refers to the way English words are closely associated with each other. For example, *do* and *homework* go together, as *do* *make* and *mistakes*; *tall* goes with *man/woman* and *high* with *mountain*.

Why learn collocations?

You need to learn collocations because they will help you to speak and write English in a more natural and accurate way. People will probably understand what you mean if you talk about 'making your homework' or say 'My uncle is a very high man' but your language will sound unnatural and might perhaps confuse. Did you mean that your uncle is two metres tall or did you mean that he has a high position in government or business?

Learning collocations will also help you to increase your range of English vocabulary. For example, you'll find it easier to avoid words like *very* or *nice* or *beautiful* or *get* by choosing a word that fits the context better and has a more precise meaning. This is particularly useful if you are taking a written exam in English and want to make a good impression on the examiners.

How were the collocations in the book selected?

The collocations presented in this book were mainly selected from those identified as significant by the Cambridge International Corpus of written and spoken English (now known as the Cambridge English Corpus) and also the CANCODE corpus of spoken English, developed at the University of Nottingham in association with Cambridge University Press. The Cambridge English Corpus is a vast database of real English taken from a range of sources, such as books, newspapers, advertising, letters and emails, websites, conversations and speeches, radio and television. By studying this corpus we obtained a representative picture of how English is really used and which words naturally and frequently go together. We also made much use of the Cambridge Learner Corpus, a corpus of learner English made up of exam scripts from students taking Cambridge English examinations all over the world. This particular corpus showed us what kind of collocation errors learners tend to make.

These corpora show that there are many thousands of collocations in English. So how could we select which ones would be most useful for you to work on in this book?

Firstly, of course, we wanted to choose ones that you might want to use in your own written and spoken English. So, in the unit on Eating and drinking we include, for example, *have a quick snack* and *processed food* but not *cocoa butter*, which is a very strong collocation, but one which has very limited use for most people.

Secondly, we decided it would be most useful for you if we focused on those collocations which are not immediately obvious and which the Cambridge Learner Corpus shows can cause problems for students. *A friendly girl*, *cold water* or *to eat an apple* are all collocations, but they are combinations which you can easily understand and produce yourself without any problems. So we deal here with less obvious – though equally useful – word combinations, with, for instance, *make friends* (not *get friends*) and *heavy rain* (not *strong rain*).

Idioms are a special type of collocation where a fixed group of words has a meaning that cannot be guessed by knowing the meaning of the individual words. We deal with them separately in *English Idioms in Use* and so do not focus on them here.

How is the book organised?

The book has 60 two-page units. The left-hand page presents the collocations that are focused on in the unit. You will usually find examples of collocations in typical contexts with, where appropriate, any special notes about their meaning and their usage. The right-hand page checks that you have understood the information on the left-hand page by giving you a series of exercises that practise the material just presented.

The units are organised into different sections. First we start with important information about collocations in general. Then there are sections looking at grammatical and other special aspects of collocations. The rest of the book deals with collocations that relate to particular topics such as *Weather* or *Business*, concepts such as *Time* or *Change* and functions such as *Agreeing and disagreeing* or *Liking and disliking*.

The book has a key to all the exercises and an index which lists all the collocations we deal with and indicates the units where they can be found.

How should I use this book?

We recommend that you work through the five introductory units first so that you become familiar with the nature of collocations and with how best to study them. After that, you may work on the units in any order that suits you.

What else do I need in order to work with this book?

You need a notebook or file in which you can write down the collocations that you study in this book as well as any others that you come across elsewhere.

You also need to have access to a good dictionary. We strongly recommend the *Cambridge Learner's Dictionary* or the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, as both of these give exactly the kind of information that you need to have about collocations. They do this both through the examples provided for each word entry and through their special collocations boxes or mini-panels. For more information about Cambridge dictionaries, or to do online searches you could go to <http://dictionary.cambridge.org>. Your teacher, however, may also be able to recommend other dictionaries that you will find useful.

So, a study of collocation is **highly recommended** (Unit 6) if you want to **make a good impression** (Unit 2) with your natural and accurate use of English. Above all, we hope that you will not only learn a lot but will also **have fun** (Unit 9) as you **do the exercises** (Unit 7) in this book.