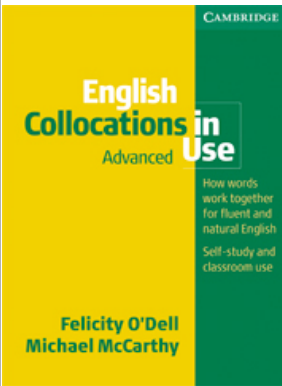


English Collocations in Use: Advanced

Author:	Felicity O'Dell & Michael McCarthy (2008)	
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Within the area of corpus linguistics, *collocation* is defined as a sequence of words or terms that co-occur more often than would be expected by chance. Collocation comprises the restrictions on how words can be used together, for example which prepositions are used with particular verbs or which verbs and nouns are used together. Collocations are examples of lexical units and should not be confused with idioms. Unlike the majority of idioms, collocations are subject to syntactic modification. For example, we can say *effective writing* and *write effectively*. Learning collocations will help a learner speak and write English in a more natural and formal way. A native speaker listener will know what *make a crime* means but *commit a crime* is standard usage. Learning collocations increases the range of one's English vocabulary, so as to avoid or go beyond words like *very* or *nice* by choosing a word that fits the context better and has a more precise meaning.

A list of reasons for learning collocations we might present to learners could include (1) your language will be more natural and more easily understood; (2) you will have alternative and richer ways of expressing yourself; and (3) your brain will probably have an easier time processing language in chunks or blocks rather than as single words. Skilled users of English may choose to create stylistic effects by varying the normal patterns of collocation with the aim of, for example, startling or amusing their audience. However, to do this effectively, it's best to have first assimilated the standard language patterns presented in this book, all of which were selected from those identified as significant by the CANCODE corpus of spoken English. CANCODE was developed at the University of Nottingham in association with Cambridge University Press and the Cambridge International Corpus of written and spoken English.

This book has sixty two-page units. The left-hand page presents the collocations focused on in the unit. The reader will usually find examples of collocations in typical contexts with, where appropriate, any special notes about their meaning and their usage. Practice exercises on the right-hand page check whether learners have understood the information on the left-hand page. Among thousands of collocations in English the authors selected those which they think would be most useful for improving fluency and accuracy. At first the authors decided to choose collocations from everyday written and spoken English; for example in the unit "Health and Medicine" we find *Shake off a cold* and *respond well to treatment* but not *grumbling appendix*, which is a strong collocation, that is, one in which the words are very closely associated with each other. Then, setting the bar

higher, the authors focused on those collocations not so readily produced by even advanced learners. Instead of very common groupings like *a pretty girl, a modern car, or to buy a ticket* they chose less obvious word combinations, for instance, *flatly contradict* (instead of *strongly contradict*) and *bitter enemies* (instead of *serious enemies*).

The textbook's first section "Learning about Collocations" includes six units delineating collocations' hierarchy, for example, strong, fixed and weak; grammatical categories, for example, verb+noun, noun+verb, noun+noun; and information on how to combine these parts to complete sentences, and the resultant meaning of such combinations. Then there is a section focusing on different kinds of collocations, for instance metaphor, where the words have a non-literal sense: When we say *a writer casts light on a situation*, we mean that the writer helps us understand it more clearly, in the same way that turning a light on in a dark room helps us see more clearly. Or when we say *Mary decided to shoulder the blame for the problem*, we mean that she took responsibility for what happened. As another example, when saying *unemployment goes hand in hand with social unrest*, we use these words in a non-literal sense to suggest that unemployment and social unrest happen at the same time.

The rest of the book sorts collocations by topics, concepts and functions into corresponding sections:

Topics: *Work and study, Leisure and lifestyle, The modern world, and People*

Basic concepts: *Time and space, Sound, Difficulty, Making things easier, Quantity and size, and Change*

Functions: *Stopping and starting, Cause and effect, Describing groups and amounts, Comparison and contrast, Making an effort, Social English, Discussing issues, Negative situations and feelings, Positive situations and feelings*

O'Dell and McCarthy make further distinctions among collocations and patterns. For example, in Unit 17 "Student Life" a student would learn that *to secure a place* is a formal collocation and *to get a place* an informal one or discover that *a seat of learning* is a very formal collocation for an educational institution with a very good reputation. In Unit 46 "Time and Space" students learn to say *ample space/room, leave space/room, short of space/room, and take up a lot of space/room*. Lest students think there are no exceptions to the pattern about the concept space, they are alerted that it's okay to say *waste of space*, but not *waste of room*. We are told that *bygone era* is a literary collocation that means a time in the distant past. And in the 54th unit "Describing groups and amounts" we learn that when you want to describe a group of animals, the word you use depends on the animals you are talking about: *a pack of dogs, hounds or wolves* but *a herd of cattle or elephants* (and other large herbivorous mammals); *a swarm of bees/locusts* (and other flying insects) but *a flock of birds* and also *a flock of sheep*.

At the end of the book, there's an exercise key and an index listing all the collocations presented and where each can be found.

English Collocations in Use Advanced should help advanced learners acquire the knowledge they need about English collocations and enjoy themselves along the way. Besides its more obvious use as a classroom text, the book could also be used as reference when students are writing their university essays and research reports and want to be in the know.

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