

# English Collocations **in** Advanced **Use**

How words  
work together  
for fluent and  
natural English

Self-study and  
classroom use

**Felicity O'Dell**  
**Michael McCarthy**



Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-70780-0 - English Collocations in Use: Advanced  
Felicity O'Dell and Michael McCarthy  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521707800](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521707800)

© Cambridge University Press 2008

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2008

Printed in Italy by Legoprint S.p.A

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-0-521-70780-0 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

# Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Using this book	4

## Learning about collocations

- 1 Introducing collocations
- 2 Strong, fixed and weak collocations
- 3 Grammatical categories of collocation
- 4 Using your dictionary and other resources
- 5 Finding and working on collocations in texts
- 6 Register

## Varieties of collocations

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 7 Metaphor                                    | <i>foot the bill, heavy burden, run into trouble</i>            |
| 8 Intensifying and softening adverbs          | <i>deeply offensive, spotlessly clean, wildly inaccurate</i>    |
| 9 <i>Make</i> and verbs that mean <i>make</i> | <i>make a contribution, make a habit of, turn in a profit</i>   |
| 10 Communicating                              | <i>generally speaking, talk business, get a message across</i>  |
| 11 Collocations with phrasal verbs            | <i>take up office, work up an appetite, see off an intruder</i> |

## Topics: work and study

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 12 Working life                            | <i>make a living, take up a post, move up the ladder</i>      |
| 13 New employment                          | <i>fit the job description, land a new job, menial tasks</i>  |
| 14 Thoughts and ideas                      | <i>bear in mind, widespread belief, jump to conclusions</i>   |
| 15 Business reports                        | <i>fierce competition, stimulate growth, hike in prices</i>   |
| 16 Customer services                       | <i>fit for purpose, kick up a fuss, grounds for complaint</i> |
| 17 Student life                            | <i>gifted child, mature student, thirst for knowledge</i>     |
| 18 Writing essays, assignments and reports | <i>working hypothesis, confront issues, critical analysis</i> |

## Topics: leisure and lifestyle

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 19 Social life                | <i>call for a celebration, social whirl, play host to</i>       |
| 20 Talking                    | <i>juicy gossip, broach the subject, opening gambit</i>         |
| 21 News                       | <i>declare independence, reach agreement, bow to pressure</i>   |
| 22 Current affairs            | <i>refuse point-blank, decline to comment, gauge reaction</i>   |
| 23 Festivals and celebrations | <i>date back to, movable feast, propose a toast</i>             |
| 24 Advertisements and fashion | <i>set the trend, fashion victim, flawless complexion</i>       |
| 25 Traffic and driving        | <i>lengthy delays, grind the gears, bear left</i>               |
| 26 Travel and adventure       | <i>get itchy feet, off the beaten track, leg of the journey</i> |
| 27 Sport                      | <i>keep in shape, reach fever pitch, score an own goal</i>      |
| 28 Plans and decisions        | <i>toy with an idea, tentative suggestion, deciding factor</i>  |
| 29 Film and book reviews      | <i>star-studded cast, glowing reviews, hold one's attention</i> |

## Topics: the modern world

30 Regulations and authority	<i>minimise danger, grant permission, faceless bureaucrats</i>
31 The environment	<i>dump waste, searing heat, offset carbon emissions</i>
32 Town and country life	<i>back of beyond, rural idyll, urban regeneration</i>
33 Personal finance	<i>clear one's debts, agreed credit limit, identity theft</i>
34 The economy	<i>curb inflation, safeguard one's interests, plummeting profits</i>
35 Social issues	<i>antisocial behaviour, dysfunctional family, unfit for human habitation</i>
36 Science and technology	<i>harness technology, cutting edge design, wireless hotspots</i>
37 Health and medicine	<i>build up resistance, adverse reaction, shake off a cold</i>
38 Criminal justice	<i>custodial sentences, beyond reasonable doubt, trumped-up charges</i>
39 War and peace	<i>deploy troops, pre-emptive strike, collateral damage</i>

## Topics: people

40 Friendship	<i>lifelong friends, platonic relationship, heal the rift</i>
41 Youth and age	<i>child prodigy, go through a midlife crisis, senior moment</i>
42 Celebrities and heroes	<i>go into rehab, kiss and tell, heap praise on</i>
43 Criticising people	<i>bone idle, poison the atmosphere, nasty piece of work</i>
44 References	<i>act as a referee, accumulate experience, financial acumen</i>
45 Appearance and personality	<i>boundless energy, stubborn streak, act one's age</i>

## Basic concepts

46 Time and space	<i>cramped conditions, waste of space, go down in history</i>
47 Sound	<i>husky voice, incessant noise, let out a cry</i>
48 Making things easier	<i>viable options, simplicity itself, take the easy way out</i>
49 Difficulty	<i>severe blow, hinder progress, encounter difficulties</i>
50 Quantity and size	<i>finite number, endless supply, unknown quantity</i>
51 Change	<i>sweeping changes, would make a change, sudden shift</i>

## Functions

52 Stopping and starting	<i>bring a halt to, close off a street, dispel rumours</i>
53 Cause and effect	<i>root cause, provoke an outcry, dire consequences</i>
54 Describing groups and amounts	<i>swarm of bees, flurry of activity, stroke of genius</i>
55 Comparing and contrasting	<i>bear little resemblance to, polar opposites, draw a comparison between</i>
56 Making an effort	<i>give it one's best shot, abortive attempt, worth a try</i>
57 Social English	<i>not lose any sleep, to be brutally honest, be on the go</i>
58 Discussing issues	<i>make a commitment, give a straight answer, miss the point</i>
59 Negative situations and feelings	<i>nasty shock, take exception to, suffer at the hands of</i>
60 Positive situations and feelings	<i>sense of achievement, state of euphoria, derive pleasure from</i>

Key	126
Index	162

## Acknowledgements

The authors wish above all to thank their editors at Cambridge University Press, especially Caroline Thiriau and Frances Disken whose expertise and unfailing guidance and encouragement have supported the project from beginning to end. We also thank Alyson Maskell for all her professional skills in steering the book through its final stages. Linda Matthews, too, deserves our thanks for organising the production schedules for the book.

We must also thank the Corpus team at Cambridge University Press for their help in providing lists of frequent collocation errors made by learners taking advanced exams. Special thanks also must go to Liz Walter for her invaluable feedback and suggestions while we were compiling the lists of collocations.

Also, as always, we thank our domestic partners for their patience and support during the writing of this book.

We have also received invaluable feedback from both students and teachers. Their comments have had a great influence on the final manuscript and we are very grateful to them. In particular, we would like to thank the following teachers from all over the world who have reviewed the material throughout its development:

Garan Holcombe, UK  
Terry Nelson, Korea  
Brendan O'Se, Ireland  
Paul Pauwels, Belgium  
Artur Polit, UK  
Mark Tondeur, UK

Produced by Kamae Design, Oxford

Illustrations by Kathy Baxendale, Jo Blake, Robert Calow, David Mostyn and Sam Thompson

## 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, *pay* and *attention* go together, as do *commit* and *crime*; *blond* goes with *hair* and *heavy* with *rain*.

### 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 a crime* or say *there was very hard rain this morning*, but your language will sound unnatural and might perhaps confuse. Did you mean that there was a lot of rain or perhaps that there was a hailstorm?

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. In advanced level exams, marks are often specifically awarded for the appropriate handling of collocation.

At an advanced level an appreciation of collocation can also be helpful in terms of appreciating other writers' use of language. Skilled users of the language may choose to create effects by varying the normal patterns of collocation, with the aim of either startling or amusing their audience. This technique is particularly popular with poets, journalists and advertisers. From an appreciation of the way in which creative writers play with language, you may then even want to move on to use words in more original ways yourself. You are more likely to be able to do this effectively if you have assimilated the standard patterns of language use presented in this book.

### How were the collocations in this book selected?

The collocations presented in this book were all selected from those identified as significant by the CANCODE corpus of spoken English, developed at the University of Nottingham in association with Cambridge University Press, and the *Cambridge International Corpus* of written and spoken English. We also made extensive use of the *Cambridge Learner Corpus*, a corpus of student language which 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 *Health and medicine* we include, for example, **shake off a cold** and **respond well to treatment** but not **grumbling appendix**, which is a strong collocation, but one which – we hope – most of you will not feel the need for.

Secondly, we decided it would be most useful for you if we focused on those collocations which are not immediately obvious. **A pretty girl**, **a modern car** or **to buy a ticket** 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 word combinations, for instance, **flatly contradict** (not ~~strongly~~ contradict) and **bitter enemies** (not ~~serious~~ enemies).

Some of you may have already used our *English Collocations in Use Intermediate*. In general, we have tried to avoid focusing on collocations that we dealt with in that book. The one exception is with collocations that the *Cambridge Learner Corpus* highlighted as causing frequent problems for students, even in advanced level exams. We felt that it would be useful to draw attention to such collocations again, even if we had dealt with them previously.

Idioms can be seen as one type of collocation. 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 relating to learning about collocations in general. Then there is a section focusing on different types of collocation. The rest of the book deals with collocations that relate to particular topics such as *Student life* and *Film and book reviews*, concepts such as *Sound* or *Difficulty* and functions such as *Cause and effect* or *Comparing and contrasting*.

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?

It is strongly recommended that you work through the six 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. At this level we strongly recommend the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* as this gives exactly the kind of information that you need to have about collocations. It does this both through the examples provided for each word entry and through special collocations boxes or mini-panels. Your teacher, however, may also be able to recommend other dictionaries that you will find useful. If you have access to the Internet, you will also find this a useful source of information about language use and we occasionally suggest possible activities using the web.

So, a study of collocation is **highly recommended** (*Unit 8*) if you want to impress people with your natural and accurate use of language and to **gain more marks** (*Unit 1*) in English exams. Above all, we **sincerely hope** (*Unit 57*) both that this book will help you **acquire the knowledge** (*Unit 17*) you need about English collocations and also that you will **thoroughly enjoy** (*Unit 8*) working through the units in *English Collocations in Use Advanced*.