

Notes on Collocations or Word Clusters in E4VPA (lexical / grammatical / aesthetic collocations)

What is a collocation?

A collocation is two or more words that often go together. These combinations just sound “right” to a native English speaker, who uses them all the time. On the other hand, other combinations may be unnatural and just sound “wrong” – even if the meaning would seem the same.

Compare, for example, the following:

- ✧ *fast food* [✓] vs *quick food* [✗]
- ✧ *a quick meal* [✓] vs *a fast meal* [✗]
- ✧ *to watch a movie* [✓] vs *to look at a movie* [✗]
- ✧ *ancient monuments* [✓] vs *antique monuments* [✗]
- ✧ *opera house* [✓] vs *opera home* [✗]
- ✧ *home theatre* [✓] vs *house theatre* [✗]
- ✧ *performing arts* [✓] vs *performative arts* [✗]

How to learn collocations

- ✧ treat collocations as **single blocks of language**, think of them as individual blocks 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*);
- ✧ learn collocations in groups that work for you – e.g. you could learn the **by topic or by a particular word**;
- ✧ you can find information on collocations (often in bold) in any good **dictionary** – both monolingual and bilingual – as well as on www.wordreference.com;
- ✧ you can also find specialised dictionaries of collocations, such as the *Oxford Collocations Dictionary* (2001), the *MacMillan Collocations Dictionary* (2010) and www.ozdic.com

Types of collocations

There are several different types of collocations made from combinations of items from the various word-classes – being they lexical or grammatical. Some of the most common types are:

- ✧ **adv + adj** ➔ *absolutely stunning*
- ✧ **adj + n** ➔ *fine arts; still life; rave reviews*
- ✧ **n + n** ➔ *box office; action movie*
- ✧ **n + v** ➔ *This novelist wrote more than thirty books.*
- ✧ **v + n** ➔ *to perform a song*
- ✧ **v + adv** ➔ *to dance barefoot*



LEXICAL COLLOCATIONS

- ✧ **v + preposition** ➔ *to apply for; to depend on; to focus on; to deal with; to result in; to result from; to be composed of; to listen to*
- ✧ **adj + preposition** ➔ *interested in; dependent on; independent from; consistent with; responsible for*
- ✧ **linking expressions** ➔ *according to / in accordance with / on the basis of; as well as; as well; such as; due to / because of; in order to; so far*



GRAMMATICAL COLLOCATIONS

N.B.: Metaphors and metonymies, as well as phrases containing sound repetition, such as alliteration or paronomasia, are referred to as **AESTHETIC COLLOCATIONS**:

- ✧ *blue Monday*
- ✧ *black Friday*
- ✧ *the golden age*
- ✧ *to make a mistake*
- ✧ *fixtures and fittings*
- ✧ *to face facts*