

Notes on Collocations or Word Clusters in E4PS (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* [✗]
- ✧ *unemployment rate* [✓] vs *joblessness rate* [✗]
- ✧ *job market* [✓], *labour market* [✓] vs *work market* [✗]
- ✧ *goods and services* [✓] vs *services and goods* [✗]
- ✧ *supply and demand* [✓] vs *demand and supply* [✗]
- ✧ *assets and liabilities* [✓] vs *actives and passives* [✗]
- ✧ *credit card* [✓] vs *credit paper* [✗]
- ✧ *soft skills* [✓] vs *transversal skills* [✗]

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.

LEXICAL COLLOCATIONS



- ✧ **adv + adj** ➔ *extremely low*
- ✧ **adj + n** ➔ *Political Science; developing countries*
- ✧ **n + n** ➔ *stock exchange; unemployment rate; travel agency*
- ✧ **n + v** ➔ *The US Congress approved the tax-cutting package.*
- ✧ **v + n** ➔ *They entered politics in the hope of changing society.*
- ✧ **v + adv** ➔ *to increase dramatically*

GRAMMATICAL COLLOCATIONS



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

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

AESTHETIC COLLOCATIONS:

- ✧ *white collars*
- ✧ *fat cat*
- ✧ *to make a mistake*
- ✧ *to face the facts*