

COLLOCATIONS

A collocation is two or more words that often go together. These combinations just sound "right" to native English speakers, who use them all the time. On the other hand, other combinations may be unnatural and just sound "wrong". Look at these examples:

natural English...

the fast train

fast food

a quick shower

a quick meal

unnatural English...

the quick train

quick food

a fast shower

a fast meal

Types of collocation

There are several different types of collocation made from combinations of verb, noun, adjective etc. Some of the most common types are:

- adverb + adjective: completely satisfied (NOT downright satisfied)
- adjective + noun: excruciating pain (NOT excruciating joy)
- noun + noun: a surge of anger (NOT a rush of anger)
- noun + verb: lions roar (NOT lions shout)
- verb + noun: commit suicide (NOT undertake suicide)
- verb + expression with preposition: burst into tears (NOT blow up in tears)
- verb + adverb: wave frantically (NOT wave feverishly)

There are several different types of collocation. Collocations can be adjective + adverb, noun + noun, verb + noun and so on. Below are seven main types of collocation in sample sentences.

1. adverb + adjective

- Invading that country was an utterly stupid thing to do.
- We entered a richly decorated room.
- Are you fully aware of the implications of your action?

2. adjective + noun

- The doctor ordered him to take regular exercise.
- The Titanic sank on its maiden voyage.
- He was writhing on the ground in excruciating pain.

3. noun + noun

- Let's give Mr Jones a round of applause.
- The ceasefire agreement came into effect at 11am.

- I'd like to buy two bars of soap please.

4. noun + verb

- The lion started to roar when it heard the dog barking.
- Snow was falling as our plane took off.
- The bomb went off when he started the car engine.

5. verb + noun

- The prisoner was hanged for committing murder.
- I always try to do my homework in the morning, after making my bed.
- He has been asked to give a presentation about his work.

6. verb + expression with preposition

- We had to return home because we had run out of money.
- At first her eyes filled with horror, and then she burst into tears.
- Their behaviour was enough to drive anybody to crime.

7. verb + adverb

- She placed her keys gently on the table and sat down.
- Mary whispered softly in John's ear.
- I vaguely remember that it was growing dark when we left.

Fill in the blanks using appropriate verbs that would complete the collocation.

1. If you park there, you will have to a fine.

- a) pay b) take c) have

2. He no attention to my requests.

- a) paid b) took c) had

3. I a cough to catch her attention.

- a) gave b) paid c) took

4. Although the doctors tried hard, they couldn't his life.

- a) save b) bring c) take

5. Abbreviations space and hence they are very common in newspaper headlines.

- catch b) save c) take

6. Do you a diary?

a) keep b) have b) save

7. Few people can a secret.

a) keep b) save c) have

8. He still in touch with most of his old school mates.

a) keeps b) saves c) take

9. I asked her what her problem was but she quiet.

a) kept b) took c) saved

10. They close to hitting each other.

a) came b) took c) brought

Answers

1. If you park there, you will have to pay a fine.

2. He paid no attention to my requests.

3. I gave a cough to catch her attention.

4. Although the doctors tried hard, they couldn't save his life.

5. Abbreviations save space and hence they are very common in newspaper headlines.

6. Do you keep a diary? ★

7. Few people can keep a secret.

8. He still keeps in touch with most of his old school mates.

9. I asked her what her problem was but she kept quiet.

10. They came close to hitting each other.

