

# 2

## Finding, recording and learning collocations

### A

#### Finding collocations

There are two main ways in which you can find collocations.

- You can train yourself to notice them whenever you read or listen to anything in English.  
Look at the collocations that are worth learning from this short text in English.

After **giving** Mark a lift to the airport, Julie **made her way** home. What an exciting **life** he led! At times Julie felt **desperately jealous** of him. She **spent her time** doing little more than **taking care** of him and the children. Now her sister was **getting divorced** and would doubtless be **making demands on** her too. Julie had promised to **give her sister a call** as soon as she got home but she decided to **run herself a bath** first. She had a **sharp pain** in her side and hoped that a hot bath might **ease the pain**.

#### Tip

Get into the habit of making a note of any good collocations you come across in any English text you read.

- You can find them in any good learner's dictionary.

For example, if you look up the word *sharp* you will find some of these collocations:

- a **sharp pain**
- a **sharp bend/turn**
- a **sharp contrast/difference/distinction**
- a **sharp rise/increase/drop**

#### Tip

When you look up a new word, make a point of noting it down in several different collocations.

### B

#### Recording collocations

The best way to record a collocation is in a phrase or a sentence showing how it is used. Highlight the collocation by underlining it or by using a highlighting pen.

For example: I don't have access to that kind of secret information.

Or: Jim gave me a very useful piece of advice.

### C

#### Learning collocations

Learning collocations is not so different from learning any vocabulary item. The key things are to:

- regularly revise what you want to learn
- practise using what you want to learn in contexts that are meaningful for you personally
- learn collocations in groups to help you fix them in your memory. You might group together collocations relating to the same topic. Or you might group collocations based on the same word, for example:

I must **find a way** to help him.

Can you **find your way** back to my house?

I **learnt the hard way** that Jack can't be trusted.

Please tell me if I'm **getting in your way**.

You must **give way to** traffic from the left.

I've **tried every possible way** to get him to change his mind.

# Exercises

## 2.1 Underline 11 collocations in this text.

My friend Abigail is desperately worried about her son at the moment. He wants to enrol on a course of some sort but just can't make a decision about what to study. I gave Abigail a ring and we had a long chat about it last night. She said he'd like to study for a degree but is afraid he won't meet the requirements for university entry. Abigail thinks he should do a course in Management because he'd like to set up his own business in the future. I agreed that that would be a wise choice.

## 2.2 Match the beginning of each sentence on the left with its ending on the right.

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1 She's having | her duty.      |
| 2 She's taking | a lecture.     |
| 3 She's giving | a party.       |
| 4 She's making | an exam.       |
| 5 She's doing  | good progress. |

## 2.3 Correct the eight collocation errors in this text. Use a dictionary to help you if necessary.

In the morning I made some work in the garden, then I spent a rest for about an hour before going out to have some shopping in town. It was my sister's birthday and I wanted to do a special effort to cook a nice meal for her. I gave a look at a new Thai cookery book in the bookshop and decided to buy it. It has some totally easy recipes and I managed to do a good impression with my very first Thai meal. I think my sister utterly enjoyed her birthday.

## 2.4 Look at this entry for the verb *lead* in the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. What collocations could you learn from this entry? Underline or highlight them. Then write one new sentence for each of them.

**lead** CONTROL **E** /li:d/ *verb* [t or ʔ] (led, led) to control a group of people, a country, or a situation: *I think we've chosen the right person to lead the expedition.* ◦ *I've asked Gemma to lead the discussion.* ◦ *Who will be leading the inquiry into the accident?*  
● **lead sb by the nose** INFORMAL to control someone and make them do exactly what you want them to do

See also **Unit 3, Using your dictionary.**

### Over to you

Use a dictionary to find three or four other good collocations for each of these words:

desperately    pain    wise    run

Write the collocations you find in an appropriate way in your vocabulary notebook.

## II Reading

Did you have a good day today? Or did everything go wrong. Read the following and learn how to recognise the signs that you're going to have a really bad day.

You know it's going to be a bad day when:

You wake up in the street with a terrible hangover.

You open your bedroom window and there are six vultures staring at you.

You put both contact lenses in the same eye.

You go to put your shoes on and can only find two single shoes.

None of your trousers fit you any longer.

Your partner comes down for breakfast and says, "Morning Bill"; or "Morning Jane", when your name is really Frank or Mary.

You put on the news and they're showing emergency routes out of the city.

You see a film crew outside your house waiting to interview you.

As you're driving to work, the car horn goes off accidentally, and gets stuck while you're driving behind a police car.

There are no parking spaces, and you have to drive home, leave the car and walk to work.

As you're walking to work, you step in something a dog left there.

On arriving at work, you find there's a piece of toilet paper sticking out of the back of your trousers.

As you walk into the office, the boss says, "Sit down and don't bother taking off your coat".

You turn on your computer and nothing happens.

It's your birthday, but no one remembered.

Your blind date turns out to be your ex-wife or husband. The cheque you sent to pay the credit card bill has bounced. You call Suicide Prevention, and they put you on hold.

- 1) What's one of the signs that you're going to have a really bad day?
  - A) Waking up in the street with a terrible hangover.
  - B) Finding your favorite book on the nightstand.
  - C) Receiving a surprise gift from a friend.
  
- 2) What do you see when you open your bedroom window?
  - A) A clear blue sky.
  - B) Six vultures staring at you.
  - C) Your neighbor waving.
  
- 3) What's a sign of a bad day involving your contact lenses?
  - A) Putting them on perfectly.
  - B) Putting both in the same eye.
  - C) Finding your glasses instead.
  
- 4) What happens when you try to put on your shoes?
  - A) They fit perfectly.
  - B) You can only find two single shoes.
  - C) They magically tie themselves.
  
- 5) What's a change in your clothing situation?
  - A) All your trousers fit perfectly.
  - B) None of your trousers fit you any longer.
  - C) Your new shirt is too stylish.
  
- 6) How does your partner greet you at breakfast?
  - A) "Morning Frank/Mary."
  - B) "Morning Bill/Jane."
  - C) "Good afternoon!"
  
- 7) What's being shown on the news that's unsettling?
  - A) A new movie release.
  - B) Emergency routes out of the city.
  - C) A cooking recipe.
  
- 8) Who is waiting outside your house?
  - A) Your neighbors.
  - B) A film crew.
  - C) Delivery people.
  
- 9) What happens while you're driving behind a police car?
  - A) The car horn works perfectly.
  - B) Your car horn goes off accidentally and gets stuck.
  - C) The police car waves at you.
  
- 10) What do you have to do due to lack of parking spaces?
  - A) Park your car easily.
  - B) Drive home and take a walk.
  - C) Get a parking ticket.