

CAMBRIDGE

ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS IN USE

How words work
together for fluent
and natural English

Self-study and
classroom use

Second Edition

Intermediate

Michael McCarthy
Felicity O'Dell

Experience
Better
Learning

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fragrant perfume, have a taste, smell danger
significant number, come to a total of, rare species
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*promising start, bring something to an end
make a breakthrough, fail miserably
cause alarm, adverse effects, have a major impact
vaguely remember, blot out a memory, have a feeling
settle a dispute, agree to differ, heated argument
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arrive at a decision, have second thoughts, tough choice
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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, *do* and *homework* go together, as do *make* and *mistakes*; *tall* goes with *man/woman* and *high* with *mountain*.

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 your homework’ or say ‘My uncle is a very high man’ but your language will sound unnatural and might perhaps confuse. Did you mean that your uncle is two metres tall or did you mean that he has a high position in government or business?

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.

How were the collocations in the book selected?

The collocations presented in this book were mainly selected from those identified as significant by the Cambridge International Corpus of written and spoken English (now known as the Cambridge English Corpus) and also the CANCODE corpus of spoken English, developed at the University of Nottingham in association with Cambridge University Press. The Cambridge English Corpus is a vast database of real English taken from a range of sources, such as books, newspapers, advertising, letters and emails, websites, conversations and speeches, radio and television. By studying this corpus we obtained a representative picture of how English is really used and which words naturally and frequently go together. We also made much use of the Cambridge Learner Corpus, a corpus of learner English made up of exam scripts from students taking Cambridge English examinations all over the world. This particular corpus 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 on Eating and drinking we include, for example, *have a quick snack* and *processed food* but not *cocoa butter*, which is a very strong collocation, but one which has very limited use for most people.

Secondly, we decided it would be most useful for you if we focused on those collocations which are not immediately obvious and which the Cambridge Learner Corpus shows can cause problems for students. *A friendly girl*, *cold water* or *to eat an apple* 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 – though equally useful – word combinations, with, for instance, *make friends* (not *get friends*) and *heavy rain* (not *strong rain*).

Idioms are a special type of collocation where a fixed group of words has a meaning that cannot be guessed by knowing the meaning of the individual words. 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 about collocations in general. Then there are sections looking at grammatical and other special aspects of collocations. The rest of the book deals with collocations that relate to particular topics such as *Weather* or *Business*, concepts such as *Time* or *Change* and functions such as *Agreeing and disagreeing* or *Liking and disliking*.

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?

We recommend that you work through the five 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. We strongly recommend the *Cambridge Learner's Dictionary* or the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, as both of these give exactly the kind of information that you need to have about collocations. They do this both through the examples provided for each word entry and through their special collocations boxes or mini-panels. For more information about Cambridge dictionaries and to do online searches you could go to <http://dictionary.cambridge.org>. Your teacher, however, may also be able to recommend other dictionaries that you will find useful.

So, a study of collocation is **highly recommended** (Unit 6) if you want to **make a good impression** (Unit 2) with your natural and accurate use of English. Above all, we hope that you will not only learn a lot but will also **have fun** (Unit 9) as you **do the exercises** (Unit 7) in this book.

1

What is a collocation?

A

A collocation is a pair or group of words that are often used together. These combinations sound natural to native speakers, but students of English have to make a special effort to learn them because they are often difficult to guess. Some combinations just sound ‘wrong’ to native speakers of English. For example, the adjective *fast* collocates with *cars*, but not with *a glance*.

We say ...	We don't say ...
fast cars fast food	quick cars quick food
a quick glance a quick meal	a fast glance a fast meal

Learning collocations is an important part of learning the vocabulary of a language. Some collocations are fixed, or very strong, for example **take a photo**, where no word other than *take* collocates with *photo* to give the same meaning. Some collocations are more open, where several different words may be used to give a similar meaning, for example **keep to / stick to the rules**. Here are some more examples of collocations.

You must **make an effort** and study for your exams (NOT ~~do~~ an effort)

Did you **watch TV** last night? (NOT ~~look at~~ TV)

This car has a very **powerful engine**. It can do 200 km an hour. (NOT ~~strong~~ engine)

There are some **ancient monuments** nearby. (NOT ~~antique~~ monuments)

Sometimes, a pair of words may not be absolutely wrong, and people will understand what is meant, but it may not be the natural, normal collocation. If someone says *I did a few mistakes*, they will be understood, but a fluent speaker of English would probably say **I made a few mistakes**.

B

Compounds and idioms

Compounds are units of meaning formed with two or more words. Sometimes the words are written separately, sometimes they have a hyphen and sometimes they are written as one word. Usually the meaning of the compound can be guessed by knowing the meaning of the individual words. Some examples of compounds are **car park**, **post office**, **narrow-minded**, **shoelaces**, **teapot**.

It is not always easy to separate collocations and compounds and, where they are useful for learners or an important part of the vocabulary of a topic, we include some compounds in this book too.

Idioms are groups of words in a fixed order that have a meaning that cannot be guessed by knowing the meaning of the individual words. For example, **pass the buck** is an idiom meaning ‘to pass responsibility for a problem to another person to avoid dealing with it oneself’. We deal with idioms in detail in the book *English Idioms in Use* in this series.

C

Why learn collocations?

Learning collocations is a good idea because they can:

- give you the most natural way to say something: *smoking is **strictly forbidden*** is more natural than *smoking is strongly forbidden*.
- give you alternative ways of saying something, which may be more colourful/expressive or more precise: instead of repeating *It was **very** cold and **very** dark*, we can say *It was **bitterly cold** and **pitch dark***.
- improve your style in writing: instead of saying *poverty **causes crime***, you can say *poverty **breeds crime***; instead of saying *a **big meal*** you can say *a **substantial meal***. You may not need or want to use these in informal conversations, but in writing they can give your text more variety and make it read better: this book includes notes about formality wherever the collocations are especially formal or informal.

Exercises

1.1 Read A and B and answer these questions.

- 1 What is a collocation?
- 2 Which of these words does *fast* collocate with: *car, food, glance, meal*?
- 3 Which of these are compounds: *computer, narrow-minded, teapot, ancient monument, car park*?
- 4 What do we call expressions like *pass the buck* and *be over the moon*?

1.2 Make ten collocations from the words in the box.

an effort ancient bitterly make breakfast cold dark
engine forbidden mistakes have make meal monument
pitch powerful strictly substantial TV watch

1.3 Are these statements about collocations true or false?

- 1 Learning collocations will make your English sound more natural.
- 2 Learning collocations will help you to express yourself in a variety of ways.
- 3 Learning collocations will help you to write better English.
- 4 Using collocations properly will get you better marks in exams.
- 5 You will not be understood unless you use collocations properly.

1.4 Put the expressions from the box into the correct category in the table below.

make a mistake a storm in a tea cup live music checkpoint key ring
pull somebody's leg heavy snow valid passport teapot bitterly disappointed

compound	collocation	idiom

1.5 Underline the collocations in this text.

When I left university I made a decision to take up a profession in which I could be creative. I could play the guitar, but I'd never written any songs. Nonetheless, I decided to become a singer-songwriter. I made some recordings but I had a rather heavy cold, so they didn't sound good. I made some more, and sent them to a record company and waited for them to reply.
So, while I was waiting to become famous, I got a job in a fast-food restaurant. That was five years ago.
I'm still doing the same job.



COLIN LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

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* [I or T] (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.

A good learner's dictionary will give you information on collocations. Sometimes the information is highlighted in some special way. In other cases, the examples used in the dictionary include the most common collocations.

In the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (CALD)*, common and useful collocations are given in **bold type**. Look at the CALD entry for the word *pain* and note how useful collocations are highlighted in bold.

pain **E** /peɪn/ *noun* [C or U] **1** a feeling of physical suffering caused by injury or illness: *Her symptoms included abdominal pain and vomiting.* ◦ *Are you **in** (= suffering from) pain?* ◦ *She was in **constant** pain.* ◦ *These tablets should help to **ease** the pain.* ◦ *I felt a **sharp** pain **in** my foot.* ◦ *He's been suffering various **aches and pains** for years.* **2** emotional or mental suffering: *It's a film about the pains and pleasures of parenthood.* ◦ *The parents are still in great pain **over** the death of their child.*

- a **pain (in the neck)** *INFORMAL* someone or something that is very annoying: *That child is a **real** pain in the neck.*

Online dictionaries are very useful because you can search for a lot more information very quickly. The Cambridge Dictionary (dictionary.cambridge.org) provides definitions as well as more examples including the key word and links to the SMART Thesaurus. The SMART Thesaurus gives synonyms, related words and phrases of the word you are looking up. Here is the entry for 'advice' in the Cambridge online dictionary.

advice

noun [U] • **UK**  /ədˈvaɪs/ • **US**  /ədˈvaɪs/

★ **A2** an opinion that someone offers you about what you should do or how you should act in a particular situation:

Steven **gave** me some good advice.

I think I'll **take** your advice (= do what you suggest) and get the green dress.

Can I give you a **piece of** advice?

I need some advice **on** which computer to buy.

[+ to infinitive] My advice is **to go** by train.

We went to Paris **on** Sarah's advice.

More examples

The centre provides expert advice for people with financial problems.

I decided to follow her advice and go to bed early.

The service offers young people practical advice on finding a job.

I've always valued her advice.

You should get some legal advice before you take any further action.

A good dictionary will also tell you if a collocation is formal or informal. For example, CALD indicates that **to take somebody up on an offer** is an informal collocation (**accept an offer** would be a more formal alternative).

offer **E** /'ɒf.ə/  /'ɑː.fə/ *noun* [C] when someone asks you if you would like to have something or if you would like them to do something: *"If you like I can do some shopping for you."* *"That's a very kind offer."* ◦ *I must say the offer **of** a weekend in Barcelona quite tempts me.* ◦ *INFORMAL* One day I'll **take** you **up on** (= accept) that offer.

Tip

When you buy a dictionary, make sure it gives good, clear information about collocations. When you look up words, if you don't know the collocations, highlight them in your dictionary or transfer them to your vocabulary notebook.

Exercises

3.1 Answer these questions about collocations and dictionaries.

- 1 How does the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* show collocations?
- 2 Which five collocations can you see in the top box on the opposite page?
- 3 Why is an online dictionary particularly useful?
- 4 What information does the online Thesaurus usually show?
- 5 How does the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* indicate that a collocation is informal?
- 6 Look at the dictionary that you normally use. Does it indicate collocations? If so, how?
- 7 Look up *pain* in your own dictionary. Which of the collocations on the left-hand page does it either highlight or illustrate in example sentences?
- 8 Look up the noun *offer* in your own dictionary. What collocations can you find? Does the dictionary indicate whether the collocations are formal or informal? If so, how?

3.2 Put the expressions from the box into the correct category in the table below.

to alleviate pain to cause pain to complain of pain
to ease pain to experience pain to feel pain to inflict pain
to lessen pain to be racked with pain to relieve pain
to soothe pain pain subsides to suffer pain

making others experience pain	the experience of being in pain	making pain go away

3.3 Look in a good learner's dictionary. What collocations do you find there for the word *ache*?

Over to you

Look up two or three words that you have recently learnt, using a good learner's dictionary. Write down any interesting collocations that are shown for those words.

4

Types of collocation

There are many different types of collocation. Here are some examples.

A

Adjectives and nouns

Notice adjectives that are typically used with particular nouns.

Emma always wears red or yellow or some other **bright colour**.

We had a **brief chat** about the exams but didn't have time to discuss them properly.

Unemployment is a **major problem** for the government at the moment.

Improving the health service is another **key issue** for government.

B

Nouns and verbs

Notice how nouns and verbs often go together. The examples below are all to do with economics and business.

The **economy boomed** in the 1990s. [the economy was very strong]

The company has **grown** and now employs 50 more people than last year.

The company has **expanded** and now has branches in most major cities.

The two **companies merged** in 2013 and now form one very large corporation.

The company **launched the product** in 2012. [introduced the product]

The price increase **poses a problem** for us. [is a problem]

The internet has **created opportunities** for our business. [brought new opportunities]

C

Noun + noun

There are a lot of collocations with the pattern *a ... of ...*.

As Max read the lies about him, he felt **a surge of anger**. [literary: a sudden angry feeling]

Every parent feels **a sense of pride** when their child does well or wins something.

I felt **a pang of nostalgia** when I saw the old photos of the village where I grew up.

D

Verbs and expressions with prepositions

Some verbs collocate with particular prepositional expressions.

As Jack went on stage to receive his gold medal for the judo competition you could see his parents **swelling with pride**. [looking extremely proud]

I was **filled with horror** when I read the newspaper report of the explosion.

When she spilt juice on her new skirt the little girl **burst into tears**. [suddenly started crying]

E

Verbs and adverbs

Some verbs have particular adverbs which regularly collocate with them.

She **pulled steadily** on the rope and helped him to safety. [pulled firmly and evenly]

He **placed** the beautiful vase **gently** on the window ledge.

'I love you and want to marry you,' Dylan **whispered softly** to Madison.

She **smiled proudly** as she looked at the photos of her new grandson.

F

Adverbs and adjectives

Adjectives often have particular adverbs which regularly collocate with them.

They are **happily married**.

I am **fully aware** that there are serious problems. [I know well]

Harry was **blissfully unaware** that he was in danger. [Harry had no idea at all, often used about something unpleasant]

Exercises

4.1 Complete each sentence with a collocation from A.

- 1 Come to my office ten minutes before the meeting so we can have ...
- 2 With her lovely dark hair Ella looks best when she wears ...
- 3 In your essay on the influence of TV, don't forget to discuss these ...
- 4 There is some crime in our town but it isn't ...

4.2 Replace the underlined words with a collocating verb from B.

- 1 We are going to introduce an exciting new product in June.
- 2 The economy was extremely high 30 years ago.
- 3 The new university they are planning will provide a lot of job opportunities.
- 4 There are always some problems when two companies join together but I think it will be worth it in the long run.
- 5 The increase in oil prices certainly creates a problem for us.
- 6 The company got bigger and has now added children's clothing to its product range.

4.3 Choose the correct feeling from the box to complete each sentence.

anger	horror	tears	nostalgia	pride	pride
-------	--------	-------	-----------	-------	-------

- 1 Most older people feel a slight pang of as they think back on their schooldays.
- 2 Grace's father was filled with when he saw that she had dyed her beautiful black hair blonde.
- 3 When Daniel saw how harshly the poor were treated by the wealthy landowners he felt a surge of
- 4 Swelling with, Jack watched his daughter pick up her violin and play.
- 5 When she saw her exam results, Kate burst into
- 6 If people have a sense of in their town, they are more likely to behave well there.

4.4 Look at E and F and choose the correct adverb to complete these sentences.

- 1 Perhaps it's a good thing that Liam's unaware of what people really think of him.
- 2 I am aware that there will be problems whatever we decide.
- 3 Stella smiled as she watched the children playing happily in the garden.
- 4 My grandparents have been married for 45 years.
- 5 Place the glasses in the box – they're very fragile.
- 6 William whispered in Anna's ear that he would always love her.

4.5 Which of the sections A-F on the opposite page would each of these collocations fit into?

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 make a decision | 6 roar with laughter |
| 2 blissfully happy | 7 a key factor |
| 3 tread carefully | 8 prices rise |
| 4 a surge of emotion | 9 a ginger cat |
| 5 acutely embarrassing | 10 burst into song |

Over to you

Make a page in your vocabulary notebook for each of the types of collocation listed on the opposite page.

Often, collocations rather than individual words suggest a particular register. For example, phrases using *pretty* meaning *fairly* sound informal when used with negative adjectives (**pretty awful**, **pretty dreadful**, **pretty dull**), and are typical of spoken English.

A

Spoken English

Here are some more collocations which are almost exclusively found in spoken English.

I'm **bored stiff**¹ in this lesson!



¹ extremely bored

You **badly need** a haircut!



I'll **have a think** about it and let you know.



Give me a ring² when you get home.



² give me a phone call

B

Formal English

Some collocations are typical of formal English and are most likely to be found in an official, often legal, context, such as in notices.

Passengers must not **alight from the bus** whilst it is in motion.



[get off the bus]

CYCLISTS must **dismount** here



[get off their bicycles]

Trespassers will be prosecuted



[people who go onto someone's land or enter their building without permission will be taken to court]

Please **dispose of**¹ **unwanted items** in the **receptacle**² provided



¹ throw away
² container used for storing or putting objects in

C

Newspaper English

Some collocations – particularly ones that use short, dramatic words – are found mainly in newspapers. In most cases they would not normally be used in everyday conversation.

COMPUTER FACTORY TO **AXE** JOBS

[make staff redundant]

AIRLINE SLASHES PRICES

[cuts prices drastically]

Government **spending** will **rocket** this year

POLICE CRACK DOWN ON SPEEDING

[start dealing with it in a more severe way]

POLICE QUIZ 16-YEAR-OLD IN MURDER ENQUIRY

[ask questions]

FLU OUTBREAK HITS SOUTHERN EUROPE

D

Business English

Some collocations are characteristic of business English.

to **submit a tender** [present a document offering to do a job and stating the price]

to **raise capital** [get money to put into a business]

to **go into partnership with** someone [agree to start or run a business with someone]

to **start up a business**

Exercises

5.1 Underline formal (F) or informal (I) collocations in these sentences (one per sentence) and put F or I in the brackets at the end.

- 1 Cyclists should dismount before crossing the footbridge. ()
- 2 Never dispose of batteries and similar items by throwing them onto a fire. ()
- 3 The students were all bored stiff by the lecture. ()
- 4 Passengers must alight from the bus through the rear door. ()
- 5 The grass badly needs cutting. ()
- 6 Please place all used tickets in the receptacle provided as you leave the building. ()

5.2 Underline typical news/media collocations in these newspaper clips.

1 **OIL COMPANIES SLASH PRICES**
There was good news for motorists today as pump prices were lowered by the major oil companies.

3 **FLOODS HIT CENTRAL REGION**
Towns and villages in the Central region were battling against floods tonight as heavy rain continued.

2 **DETECTIVES QUIZ BUSINESSMAN OVER MISSING TEENAGER**
Senior detectives interviewed a man who has been named as prime suspect in the case of a missing 18-year-old who is feared to have been abducted.

4 **CAR FIRM TO AXE 200 JOBS**
The Presco car firm has announced that 200 workers will be made redundant at its Kenton factory. The job losses are the result of falling profits.

5.3 Rewrite the headlines in exercise 5.2 using collocations more typical of ordinary conversation, as if you were telling a friend the news. Start each answer with 'Have you heard ...?' Use a dictionary if necessary.

5.4 Match the beginning of each sentence on the left with its ending on the right to make typical collocations used in business English.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1 We raised | partnership to develop a new range of products. |
| 2 They submitted | capital to expand the business. |
| 3 They went into | a business to supply sports equipment to schools. |
| 4 We started up | a tender for the new stadium. |

5.5 Choose a formal or informal collocation as instructed at the end of each sentence. Use a dictionary if necessary.

- 1 She was *dead* / *extremely keen* to meet the new coach. (informal)
- 2 We will be *boarding the aircraft* / *getting on the plane* in about ten minutes. (formal)
- 3 Mr Trotter *paid for* / *bore the cost of* the repairs. (formal)
- 4 I *withdrew from* / *dropped out of* my university course after a year. (informal)
- 5 The marketing manager *launched into* / *embarked upon* a detailed explanation of her new strategy. (informal)

6

Intensifying adverbs

In English there are lots of other ways of saying *very* or *very much*. For example, we can use words such as *highly*, *utterly*, *bitterly*, *deeply*. These alternatives collocate strongly with specific words, and other combinations often sound unnatural.

A

Highly

collocations	comments
(un)likely unusual successful competitive profitable effective controversial recommended	<i>Highly</i> is used with some probability words (<i>likely</i> , <i>unusual</i>). With the exception of highly controversial it usually combines with very positive words. Extremely can also be used with all the opposite adjectives except <i>recommended</i> .

It is **highly unlikely** that I'll finish my work on time.
Julia's **highly unusual** behaviour began to worry her parents.

B

Absolutely, utterly

collocations	comments
ridiculous stupid impossible wrong alone appalled convinced devastated miserable	<i>Absolutely</i> and (slightly more formal) <i>utterly</i> combine with adjectives with very extreme meanings where we can't use <i>very</i> . For example, we say absolutely/utterly exhausted , not <i>very exhausted</i> , whereas we say <i>very tired</i> , but not <i>absolutely</i> or <i>utterly tired</i> . Often, but not always, these words have negative connotations.

It was an **absolutely stupid** comment to make.
The whole area was **utterly devastated** after the earthquake.

C

Bitterly, deeply, ridiculously, strongly

word	collocations	comments
bitterly	disappointing/disappointed resent criticise regret complain cry weep	carries a feeling of deep sadness; used slightly more in writing than in conversation
deeply	ashamed concerned shocked committed moved affected hurt (of feelings) regret care religious unhappy	collocates mainly with words associated with feelings; used slightly more in writing than in conversation
ridiculously	cheap expensive easy low high long short small large early	suggests something extreme, which seems unbelievable or unreasonable
strongly	oppose influence believe deny recommend support condemn suggest feel argue object	collocates with verbs, particularly verbs that relate to having an opinion

I was **bitterly disappointed** when I failed the exam.
Professor McDellvit was always **deeply committed** to her students.
The restaurant was **ridiculously expensive**. I don't think we'll go there again.
I would **strongly recommend** that you learn a foreign language.

Exercises

6.1 Choose an adverb from the box to replace *very* in each of these expressions.

utterly strongly bitterly ridiculously highly deeply

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 very ashamed | 6 very disappointing |
| 2 very cheap | 7 very opposed |
| 3 very controversial | 8 very ridiculous |
| 4 very stupid | 9 very easy |
| 5 very successful | 10 very concerned |

6.2 Use a collocation from exercise 6.1 to complete each of these sentences.

- The flight from London to Rome was It only cost 20 euros.
- Some people love her new book, others are very angry about it. It is
- His father was a peace campaigner all his life and was to war.
- The exam results were for the whole class. We had all expected to do much better.
- When I realised how much my selfish behaviour had upset everyone, I was
- In the 1990s she ran a(n) company which made outstanding profits.
- Everyone got more than 95% correct in the test; it was
- You must apologise immediately. It was a(n) remark to make.
- She has always been about the environment and would like to work for a conservation agency.
- That you should even *think* that I would steal money from you is ! You must be crazy!

6.3 In each of these sets of phrases, one is not a correct collocation. Cross out the incorrect one.

- strongly recommend strongly influence strongly love strongly dislike
- highly educated highly profitable highly unusual highly exhausted
- bitterly regard bitterly regret bitterly resent bitterly criticise
- absolutely convinced absolutely tired absolutely devastated absolutely absurd
- deeply unhappy deeply religious deeply successful deeply committed

6.4 In this short text, the writer has often misused the word *strongly*. Correct the wrong collocations using adverbs from the box. Use each adverb once only.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Everyone was complaining strongly when they heard about the new plan. People were strongly shocked to hear that children would be strongly forbidden to use the sports ground and most people were strongly opposed to the new rules. Even people who normally never expressed an opinion were strongly appalled by the proposals.



bitterly strictly deeply utterly

This unit deals with *make* and *do*, two verbs that many learners have problems with. If you remember that the basic meaning of *make* is about producing something and the basic meaning of *do* is about performing an action, then the collocations on this page may seem more logical.

A

Make

collocation	example
make arrangements for	The school can make arrangements for pupils with special needs.
make a change / changes	The new manager is planning to make some changes .
make a choice	Amelia had to make a choice between her career and her family.
make a comment / comments	Would anyone like to make any comments on the talk?
make a contribution to	She made a useful contribution to the discussion.
make a decision	I'm glad it's you who has to make the decision , not me.
make an effort	Michael is really making an effort with his maths this term.
make an excuse	I'm too tired to go out tonight. Let's make an excuse and stay at home.
make friends	Caroline is very good at making friends .
make an improvement	Repainting the room has really made an improvement .
make a mistake	They've made a mistake in our bill.
make a phone call	I've got to make some phone calls before dinner.
make progress	Holly is making progress with all her schoolwork.

B

Do

collocation	example
do your best	All that matters in the exam is to do your best .
do damage	The storm did some damage to our roof.
do an experiment	We are doing an experiment to test how the metal reacts with water.
do exercises	We'll do some exercises practising these collocations tomorrow.
do someone a good turn / do someone a favour	Could you do me a favour and pick me up some milk from the supermarket? Jess did me a good turn by lending me her car while mine was in the garage.
do harm	Changing the rules may do more harm than good.
do your hair	No, I'm not ready. I haven't done my hair yet.
do your homework	My son has to do his homework straight after school.
do the ironing/shopping/washing, etc.	I'll do the washing if you do the ironing .
do some work	We'll do some work on our project and then we'll go to the cinema.

Tip

Notice all the patterns that you can see in these tables. For example, *make a comment*, *make an excuse* and *make a contribution to a discussion* are all connected with saying things. Noticing connections like this may help you to remember the correct collocation.

Exercises

7.1 Use a collocation with *make* and a noun instead of the underlined words in each of these conversations.

- Naomi: The bill says we've had three desserts. We only had two.
Stella: The waiter must have been mistaken.
- Avery: It's so difficult. Should I take the job or not?
Owen: I know it's difficult. But you have to decide one way or the other.
- Grace: Can you and Ethan come to dinner on Saturday?
Lily: Yes, we'll have to arrange to get a babysitter, but it should be OK.
- Zoe: Did you hear about the air traffic controllers' strike in the USA?
Aaron: Yes. We had to change our travel itinerary because of it.
- Luke: Can I have chips *and* rice with my lunch?
Clare: No, you have to choose, chips or rice, but not both.
- Gavin: Do you intend to speak at the meeting?
Victoria: Yes, I hope I can contribute to the debate.

7.2 Choose the correct collocation, *do* or *make*.

- Did the fire *do / make* much damage to the factory?
- I hate *doing / making* my homework at the last minute.
- You must *do / make* an effort to work harder.
- Did you *do / make* any work at the weekend?
- We are trying to *do / make* improvements to the system for registering.
- Do you think it would *do / make* any harm if I cut some leaves off this plant?

7.3 You are designing a questionnaire for your school website. Complete each question with *do* or *make*.



80%

HOW NICE ARE YOU?

1 Do you your best to be on time when meeting a friend?
 ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

2 Do you ever the cooking at home?
 ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

3 Do you excuses if someone asks you to a big favour for them?
 ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

4 Do you ever negative comments about your friends' hair, clothes, etc?
 ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

5 Do you find it easy to friends?
 ALWAYS SOMETIMES NEVER

Give yourself three points for 'always', two for 'sometimes', one for 'never'. Turn the page to find out how nice you really are.

8

Everyday verbs 2

Get is a very common verb in English, but it is not always appropriate for talking about changes. Note also alternatives to *get* which can improve your style.

A

Go, not get

Go is used for changes in people's personality, appearance and physical abilities:
People **go mad/bald/grey/blind/deaf**.

Go is often used for sudden, usually negative, changes:
He was very embarrassed and his face **went red**.
Suddenly the sky **went** very **dark** and it started to rain.

Go can also be used for slower colour changes:
The pages of the book had **gone yellow** over the years.

B

Turn, not get

Turn often collocates with colours:
The sky **turned gold** as the sun set.
When the tomatoes **turn red**, the farmers pick them and sell them.
The news gave his mother such a shock that her hair **turned white** overnight.

C

Get and become

Get and *become* can often be used with the same collocations, but *become* is more formal and is therefore more appropriate in essays:

She gave up smoking when she **became pregnant**.
I would like to **become involved** in raising money for charity.

The same is true for collocations with adjectives such as *angry, bored, excited, depressed, upset, impatient, violent*:
He **became depressed** after his wife's death.

Become, not *get*, is used with the following: *extinct, (un)popular, homeless, famous*.
Our local baker's has **become famous** for its apple tarts.

D

Alternatives to get and become

She **fell ill** and was taken to hospital.
Everyone **fell silent** when they heard the shocking news.
As my father **grew older**, he spent less time working.
The noise **grew louder** and soon we realised it was a plane approaching.

E

Overusing and misusing get

Here are some sentences from students' essays where *get* is wrongly used.

sentences with <i>get</i>	more appropriate alternatives
I was able to get new friends.	I was able to make new friends .
A year ago he got a heart attack.	A year ago he had/suffered a heart attack .
If I get a child of my own one day ...	If I have a child of my own one day ...
I was getting crazy.	I was going crazy .
In June, I got a baby, James.	In June, I had a baby , James.

Exercises

8.1 Answer these questions using collocations from A and B.

- 1 What can happen to men as they get older? (Clue: Think of their hair.)
- 2 What can happen if you are embarrassed? (Clue: Think of your face.)
- 3 What can happen if you get bad news? (Clue: Think of your face or hair.)
- 4 What can happen to the pages of a newspaper after a long time?
- 5 What happens to strawberries as they ripen?
- 6 The poet John Milton lost his eyesight at the end of his life. What is another way of saying that?
- 7 The composer Beethoven lost his hearing at the end of his life. What is another way of saying that?
- 8 At the end of Shakespeare's play, Hamlet loses his mind. What is another way of saying that?
- 9 If it is about to rain, what might happen to the sky?

8.2 Look at C, D and E opposite. Correct these sentences.

- 1 Dinosaurs got extinct thousands of years ago.
- 2 When I get married, I'd like to get lots of children.
- 3 Jasmine fell depressed after failing her final exams.
- 4 Niklas has always dreamt of getting famous.
- 5 Would you be interested in growing involved in this project?
- 6 More people have got homeless this year than in any previous year.
- 7 My sister got a baby last week.
- 8 My grandfather got a heart attack last winter.

8.3 Replace each use of *get* with a verb from the box.

fall	become	grow	have	make
------	--------	------	------	------

As you get older, you'll begin to understand your parents better. Getting angry with them all the time doesn't help. You may not want to go to summer camp when none of your friends will be there, but your parents know you will soon get new friends there. You would all have gone on a family holiday together if your grandmother hadn't got ill, but surely you can understand why they don't want to leave her. You'll feel much more sympathetic to your parents' feelings when you get a child of your own!



8.4 Complete the collocations in these sentences.

- 1 I think I'd go if I had to put up with such a terrible boss!
- 2 It was a wonderful sunset. The sky gold and we sat on the terrace enjoying it.
- 3 Once upon a time the walls were probably cream but they have brown now and badly need repainting.
- 4 When I start grey, I'm definitely going to dye my hair.
- 5 As the head teacher walked into the hall, the children all silent.
- 6 The noise on the street louder and I looked out of the window to see what was happening.
- 7 My grandmother is a little afraid of ill while she is abroad.
- 8 I was so embarrassed that I bright red.

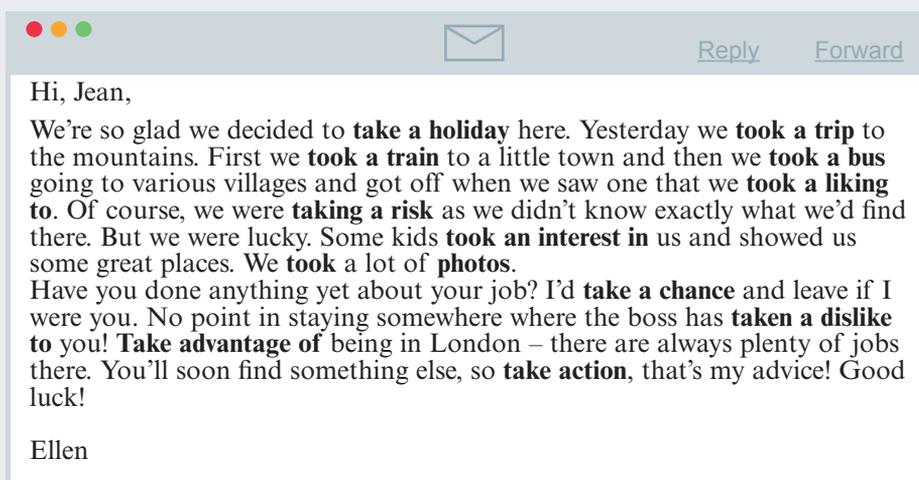
A

Have

Note that these verbs collocate with *have* rather than any other verb (e.g. *get* or *make*).

collocation	example
have an accident	Mr Grey had an accident last night but he's OK now.
have an argument / a row	We had an argument / a row about how to fix the car.
have a break	Let's have a break when you finish this exercise.
have a conversation/chat	I hope we'll have time to have a chat after the meeting.
have difficulty	The class had difficulty understanding what to do.
have a dream/nightmare	I had a nightmare last night.
have an experience	I had a frightening experience the other day.
have a feeling	I have a feeling that something is wrong.
have fun / a good time	I'm sure you'll have fun on the school trip.
have a look	The manager wanted to have a look at what we were doing.
have a party	Let's have a party at the end of term.
have a problem / problems	Ask the teacher if you have problems with the exercise.
have a try/go	I'll explain what to do and then you can have a go/try .

B

Take


Hi, Jean,

We're so glad we decided to **take a holiday** here. Yesterday we **took a trip** to the mountains. First we **took a train** to a little town and then we **took a bus** going to various villages and got off when we saw one that we **took a liking to**. Of course, we were **taking a risk** as we didn't know exactly what we'd find there. But we were lucky. Some kids **took an interest in** us and showed us some great places. We **took** a lot of **photos**.

Have you done anything yet about your job? I'd **take a chance** and leave if I were you. No point in staying somewhere where the boss has **taken a dislike to** you! **Take advantage of** being in London – there are always plenty of jobs there. You'll soon find something else, so **take action**, that's my advice! Good luck!

Ellen

C

Pay

collocation	example
pay attention	You must pay attention to the teacher.
pay a compliment	I was trying to pay her a compliment but she misunderstood.
pay your (last) respects	At a funeral people pay their last respects to the person who has died.
pay tribute [formal]	When Jack retired, his boss made a speech paying tribute to all he had done for the company.

Tip

There are other common verbs in English which have strong and possibly surprising collocations. Notice any that you find with, for example, *break*, *fall*, *run* and *take*.

Exercises

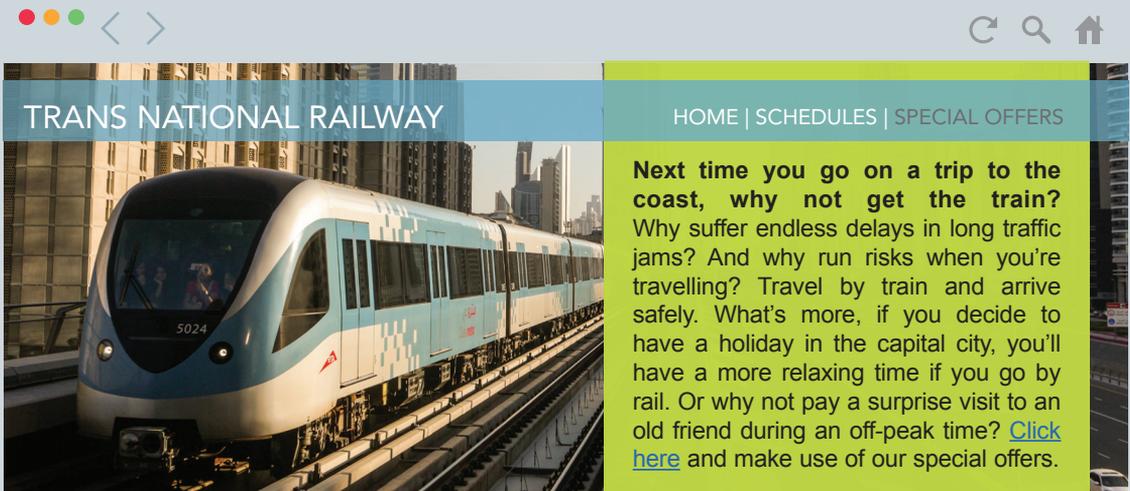
9.1 Complete the questions using collocations from A opposite.

- 1 You want a friend to look at a letter you have written before you send it.
YOU: Could you?
- 2 You want to know why your two friends aren't speaking to each other.
YOU: Why aren't you speaking to Hazel? Did you?
- 3 A friend comes to school on crutches with a bandage round her head.
YOU: What happened? Did you?
- 4 You want to know if a friend did lots of enjoyable things on their recent holiday.
YOU: How was the holiday? Did you?
- 5 You are having a meeting with some colleagues. You think it is time to stop for half an hour or so.
YOU: Shall we?
- 6 A friend has just bought a new bicycle. You'd like to ride it to see what it's like.
YOU: Nice bike! Can I?
- 7 You want to talk informally to your tutor about what to do next year.
YOU: When you're free, could I?
- 8 A friend is trying with difficulty to read your address, which you have just written down for them.
YOU: What's the matter? Are you?

9.2 Choose the correct collocation.

- 1 She *had / took / paid* attention to what I told her and started working harder.
- 2 I *had / made / took* over a hundred photographs on my trip to Antarctica.
- 3 She *made / paid / brought* me a nice compliment yesterday.
- 4 I *got / made / had* a bad dream last night and woke up sweating.
- 5 The President *made / gave / paid* tribute to all the people who had supported him.
- 6 I *got / took / had* a liking to my new doctor the moment I met her.
- 7 I *gave / made / had* a feeling I had met Richard before, but I couldn't remember where.
- 8 I went to Douglas Farnham's funeral to *give / take / pay* my last respects to a fine man.
- 9 I think I'll *take / make / do* a chance and leave my flight booking till the last minute.
I may get a cheaper ticket.
- 10 Shall we *make / get / have* a party for Ruby? She's moving to Manchester next week.
- 11 We need to *make / get / take* action immediately!
- 12 I *had / got / took* a feeling that he was trying to hide something from me.

9.3 Which collocations in this text could be replaced by collocations with *take* instead of the verbs used?



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A

Common synonym pairs

The (a) and (b) words in each pair in the table have similar meanings. Sometimes either word can be used in a sentence to give the same meaning, but in the collocations below only one word is possible.

synonyms	(a) example	(b) example
(a) close (b) shut	The chairperson closed the meeting at 4.30. [We close meetings/discussions/conferences , etc.]	She was very rude. She said ' Shut your mouth! ' [impolite way of telling someone not to speak] A dentist might ask you to <i>close</i> your mouth. <i>Shut</i> is generally more informal.
(a) start (b) begin	It was a cold morning and I could not start my car . [<i>Start</i> , NOT <i>begin</i> , is used for engines and vehicles.]	Before the universe began , time and space did not exist. [<i>Begin</i> is preferred in more formal and abstract contexts.]
(a) big (b) large	It was a big decision to make. There were some big problems to solve.	I wanted the sweater in the large size but they only had medium.
(a) end (b) finish	The film ended with the hero dying. They ended their relationship a year ago. [<i>End</i> here means decide to stop.]	I haven't finished my homework yet. [<i>Finish</i> here means complete.]

B

Groups of words with similar meanings

Words meaning 'old'

I met an **old friend** the other day. It's a very **old building**.
She studied **ancient history**. In **ancient times**, life was very hard.
This shop sells **antique furniture**. She collects **antique jewellery**. [old and valuable]
I helped an **elderly person** who was trying to cross the road. [*elderly* is more polite than *old*]

Words meaning 'with no one or nothing else or with nothing similar'

Donna is a **single parent**; it's difficult for her to work full time.
He lives in a very **lonely place/spot** up in the mountains.
At first I felt **desperately lonely** when I moved from London to the countryside.
I **live alone**, but I don't like **travelling alone**; it's nice to be with someone.
There was just one **solitary figure** on the otherwise deserted beach. [one person on their own]
She was the **sole survivor** of the crash. Everyone else died. [only survivor]
I am an **only child**; I sometimes wonder what it would be like to have a brother or sister.
This is a **unique occasion**, with three past Prime Ministers all together in one room.

C

Other synonym pairs

synonyms	(a) example	(b) example
(a) charge (b) load	I need to charge my phone . [used for batteries, electrical items]	They loaded the lorry and drove away. [used for cargoes, lorries, vans, ships, etc. and for weapons]
(a) injure (b) damage	Three injured people were taken to hospital after the accident. [collocates with words to do with people]	The shop tried to sell me a damaged sofa but I noticed it just in time. [collocates with words for things]
(a) grow (b) raise	In the south the farmers grow crops . [collocates with crops, plants]	In the north the farmers mostly raise cattle . [collocates with animals, children]

Exercises

10.1 Choose the correct collocation.

- The dentist told me to *shut / close* my mouth.
- I didn't know what to do when I got into my car and couldn't *start / begin* the engine.
- I want to buy a sweater for my dad. He needs one in a *big / large* size.
- I haven't *finished / ended* my essay yet. I can't decide how to *finish / end* it.
- At what time do you plan to *shut / close* the conference?
- All societies develop their own stories about how the world *started / began*.
- It's far too *big / large* a problem for you to solve on your own.
- It's never easy to *finish / end* a relationship.

10.2 Look at B. Complete each phrase with a word meaning either 'old' or 'alone'.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 a figure on the horizon | 6 to live |
| 2 a shop selling furniture | 7 to feel desperately |
| 3 to be an child | 8 to catch up with friends |
| 4 the survivor of the accident | 9 support for parents |
| 5 to study history | 10 a home for people |

10.3 Correct these sentences.

- Were many people damaged in the earthquake?
- Single parents who are growing children without a partner's support are entitled to financial help from the government.
- My mobile isn't working. I need to load the battery.
- She has a lot of beautiful elderly jewellery.
- When we moved house, two men helped us to charge the van.
- That's not news – it's antique history!
- I don't know how to charge a gun, let alone fire one.
- I've never been very successful at raising plants.

10.4 Which of the collocations on the opposite page do these pictures illustrate?



Over to you

Look up *big* and *large* in a good learner's dictionary of English and see what other collocations it suggests for them.

A

Verbs connected with gaining, winning and achieving

Note these typical collocations connected with 'gaining' or 'achieving'.

verb	collocates with	example	comments
gain	power, control, access	The Socialist Party gained control of the National Assembly.	<i>Gain</i> is often used with abstract nouns relating to political authority.
gain [formal]	a reputation, publicity, recognition, an advantage	Her paintings gained recognition thanks to a major exhibition in New York.	<i>Gain</i> is often used with abstract nouns that suggest benefit to the 'gainer'.
win	an award, a prize, a medal, a match	He won a medal in the 2016 Olympic Games.	<i>Win</i> is often used in contexts associated with competition.
win	a battle, a war, an election	The Conservative Party won the 2015 General Election .	<i>Win</i> is often used in contexts associated with fighting.
earn	a salary, money	I earn \$2110 a month.	You earn money by working for it.
make	a profit, money	The company made a profit last year.	You can make money by investing etc., not just by working.
achieve	success, your goals, your aims	It's difficult to achieve success in international sport.	<i>Achieve</i> is used mainly with abstract nouns.
beat/defeat	a team, an opponent	He defeated his opponent in the tennis final.	You win a match but beat/defeat an opponent . <i>Defeat</i> is more formal than <i>beat</i> .

B

Other words that are often confused



You'll need to **take** warm **clothes** when you go to Alaska. (NOT *carry*)



I always **carry** my **mobile phone** whenever I go out. (NOT *wear*)



She was **wearing a hat**. (NOT *carrying*)



He kindly offered to **carry** my **bag** for me.



She's **wearing a dress**. (NOT *using*)



He's **using a laptop**.

Common mistakes

Notice how *spend* is used when talking about time and money.

We **spent three days** in the mountains. It was wonderful. (NOT *passed*)

If you buy a big car you'll have to **spend more money** on petrol. (NOT *use*)

Last night I **spent two hours** watching TV. (NOT *stayed*)

I **spent an hour** looking for the keys before I found them in my bag. (NOT *passed*)