**Collocation** refers to how **words** go together or form fixed relationships. **Collocations** may be strong or weak. Strong **collocations** are where the link between the two **words** is quite fixed and restricted. Weak **collocations** are where a **word** can **collocate** with many other **words**.

In the [English language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language), [collocation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collocation) refers to a natural combination of [words](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Word) that are closely affiliated with each other. Some examples are "pay attention" ,"fast food", "make an effort", and "powerful engine". Collocations make it easier to avoid overused or ambiguous words like "very", "nice", or "beautiful", by using a pair of words that fits the context better and has a more precise meaning. Skilled users of the language can produce effects such as humor by varying the normal patterns of collocation. This approach is especially popular with [poets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poet), [journalists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journalist) and [advertisers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advertiser).

Collocations may seem natural to natural writers and speakers, but are not obvious to non-native English speakers. For instance, the adjective "dark" collocates with "chocolate", but not with tea.

**Compare**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **natural English** | **unnatural English** |
| the fast train | the ~~quick~~ train |
| fast food | ~~quick~~ food |
| a quick shower | a ~~fast~~ shower |
| a quick meal | a ~~fast~~ meal |

**Types**

There are many different types of collocations.

**adjective and nouns**

* Joe always wears blue or white or some other **bright color**.
* We had a **brief chat** about Iraq but didn’t have time to discuss it properly.
* Unemployment is a **major problem** for the government these days.
* Improving the health service is another **key issue** for the UK.

**Nouns and verbs**

* The **economy boomed** in 2002.
* The **company has grown** and now employs over 30 people.
* The **company has expanded** and now has branches in most major countries.
* The four **companies merged** in 2013.
* They **launched the product** in 1998.
* The price increase **poses a problem** for them.
* The internet has **created opportunities** for his company.

**Noun + noun**

There are a lot of collocation with pattern **a ... of ...**

* a surge of anger
* a sense of pride
* a pang of nostalgia

**Verb and expression with prepositions**

* As Bob went on stage to receive his medal you could see his sister *swelling with pride*.
* I was *filled with horror* when I read the newspaper report of the war.
* When she spilt apple-juice on her new blue skirt the little girl *burst into tears*.

**Verbs and adverbs**

* He **pulled steadily** on the rope and helped her to safety.
* She **placed** the beautiful jar **gently** on the window ledge.
* ‘I love you and want to marry you,’ Michael **whispered softly** to Clare.
* He **smiled proudly** as he looked at the photos of his new granddaughter.

**Adverbs and adjectives**

* Ben and Jane are **happily married**.
* You are **fully aware** that there are serious problems.
* George was **blissfully unaware** that he was in danger.