

Learning about vocabulary

Collocation

A collocation is a pair of words that are often used together. There are many different types of collocation. Here are some examples:

ADJECTIVE + NOUN	<i>private school</i>
VERB + NOUN	<i>do your homework</i>
ADVERB + ADJECTIVE	<i>highly educated</i>
VERB + ADVERB	<i>study hard</i>

Collocations are sometimes very different in English and your first language, for example:

In English we say...	We <u>don't</u> say...
<i>take an exam</i>	write <i>an exam</i>
<i>make a mistake</i>	did <i>a mistake</i>
<i>a primary school</i>	<i>a basic</i> school
<i>a tall student</i>	<i>a high</i> student

Native speakers will usually understand mistakes like *write an exam*, but learning collocations will help you sound more natural and fluent.

Finding collocations with SKELL

Sketch Engine for Language Learning (SKELL)¹ is an online tool that helps language learners understand more about how words are used in English. The **Word sketch** tool (1) will help you find useful collocations to learn, and the **Examples** tool (2) will show you simple examples of how words and phrases are used in real life.

SKELL

Examples Word sketch Similar words More features More languages

2 1

Sketch Engine for Language Learning

Discover the English language through a billion-word collection of news, scientific papers, Wikipedia articles, fiction, web pages and blogs.

Examples: search for a word or a phrase and get short and meaningful example sentences for it.

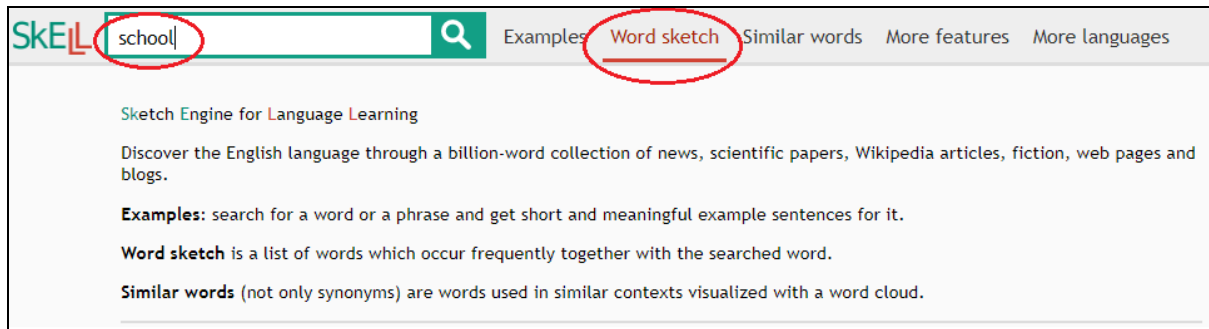
Word sketch is a list of words which occur frequently together with the searched word.

Similar words (not only synonyms) are words used in similar contexts visualized with a word cloud.

¹ SKELL is available for free here: <https://skell.sketchengine.co.uk/run.cgi/skell>

(1) Word sketch

To find useful collocations, enter a word in the search box and click on 'Word sketch' with the mouse. For example, the word *school*:



The screenshot shows the SKELL search interface. The search box contains the word "school". The "Word sketch" tab is selected and highlighted with a red circle. Below the search box, there is a description of the tool and instructions on how to use it.

Sketch Engine for Language Learning

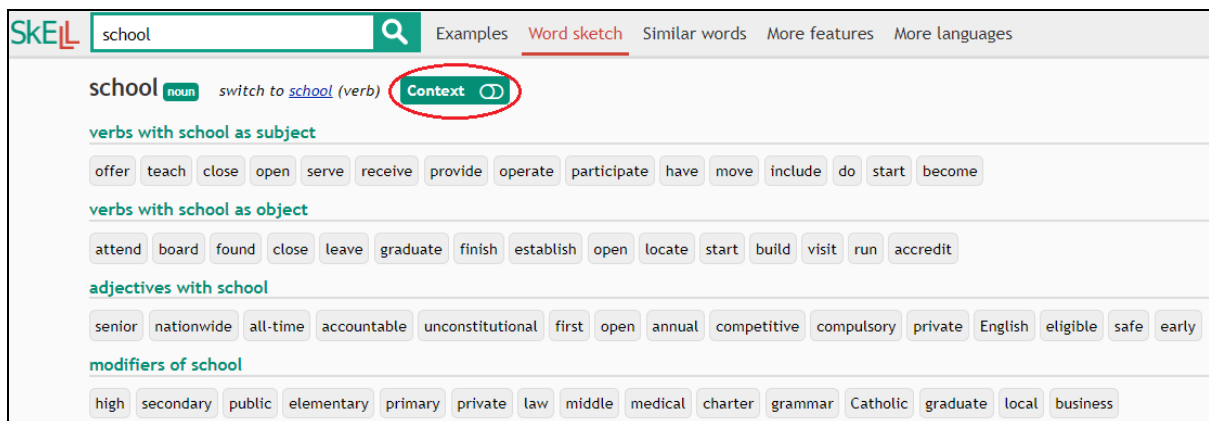
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Examples: search for a word or a phrase and get short and meaningful example sentences for it.

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Here you can see the most useful collocations with the word *school*. To see more information, click on 'Context'.



The screenshot shows the SKELL search interface with the "Context" tab selected and highlighted with a red circle. Below the search box, there are several categories of collocations for the word "school".

school **noun** switch to [school](#) (verb) **Context**

verbs with school as subject

offer teach close open serve receive provide operate participate have move include do start become

verbs with school as object

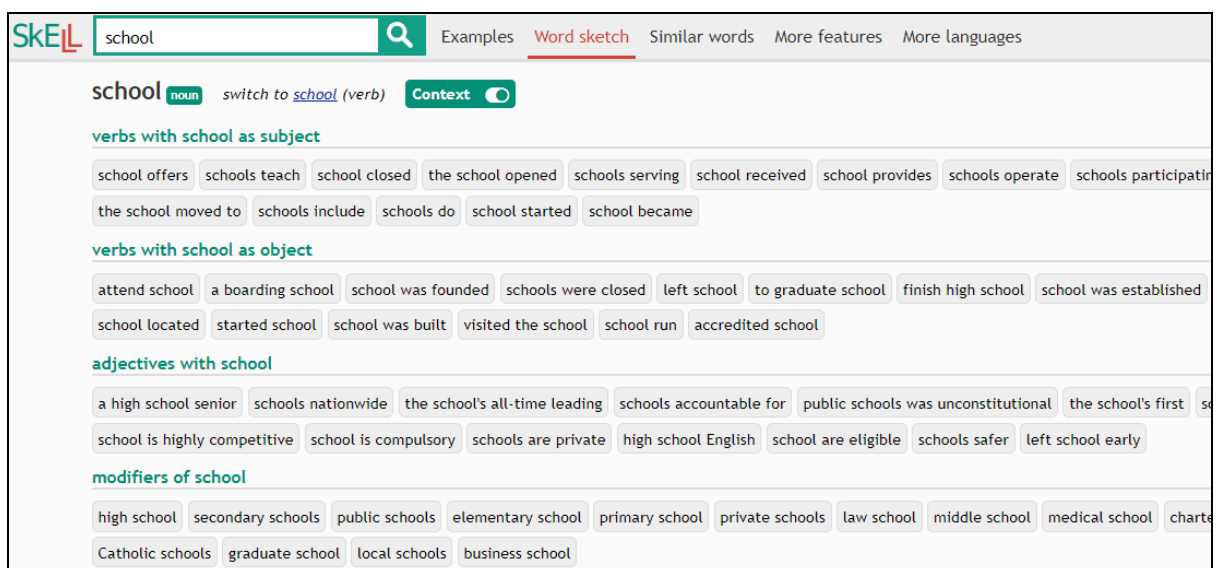
attend board found close leave graduate finish establish open locate start build visit run accredit

adjectives with school

senior nationwide all-time accountable unconstitutional first open annual competitive compulsory private English eligible safe early

modifiers of school

high secondary public elementary primary private law middle medical charter grammar Catholic graduate local business



The screenshot shows the SKELL search interface with the "Context" tab selected and highlighted with a red circle. Below the search box, there are several categories of collocations for the word "school", each with a list of example phrases.

school **noun** switch to [school](#) (verb) **Context**

verbs with school as subject

school offers schools teach school closed the school opened schools serving school received school provides schools operate schools participat
the school moved to schools include schools do school started school became

verbs with school as object

attend school a boarding school school was founded schools were closed left school to graduate school finish high school school was established
school located started school school was built visited the school school run accredited school

adjectives with school

a high school senior schools nationwide the school's all-time leading schools accountable for public schools was unconstitutional the school's first se
school is highly competitive school is compulsory schools are private high school English school are eligible schools safer left school early

modifiers of school

high school secondary schools public schools elementary school primary school private schools law school middle school medical school chart
Catholic schools graduate school local schools business school

Now click on a collocation to see example sentences. For example, the collocation *attend school*:

The screenshot shows the SKEL website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with 'school' entered and a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar are links for 'Examples', 'Word sketch', 'Similar words', 'More features', and 'More languages'. Below the search bar, the word 'school' is displayed with a 'noun' tag and a 'switch to school (verb)' option. A 'Context' button is also visible. The page is organized into several sections:

- verbs with school as subject:** school offers, schools teach, school closed, the school opened, schools serving, school received, school provides, schools operate, schools participatir, the school moved to, schools include, schools do, school started, school became
- verbs with school as object:** attend school (circled in red), a boarding school, school was founded, schools were closed, left school, to graduate school, finish high school, school was established, school located, started school, school was built, visited the school, school run, accredited school
- adjectives with school:** a high school senior, schools nationwide, the school's all-time leading, schools accountable for, public schools was unconstitutional, the school's first, school is highly competitive, school is compulsory, schools are private, high school English, school are eligible, schools safer, left school early
- modifiers of school:** high school, secondary schools, public schools, elementary school, primary school, private schools, law school, middle school, medical school, charte, Catholic schools, graduate school, local schools, business school

For common collocations like *attend school*, you can see up to 40 example sentences.

The screenshot shows the SKEL website interface for the collocation 'attend + school'. At the top, there is a search bar with 'school' entered and a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar are links for 'Examples', 'Word sketch', 'Similar words', 'More features', and 'More languages'. Below the search bar, the collocation 'attend + school' is displayed with '6.97 hits per million'. Below this, there is a list of 10 example sentences:

- 1 The participants were children attending primary schools .
- 2 The students attended high school under harsh conditions.
- 3 From years 1-6 students attend primary school .
- 4 Every major character attended high school here.
- 5 It turned worse while attending middle school .
- 6 My son has been attending catholic school since pre k 4.
- 7 These fees prevented many students from attending school .
- 8 Don attended country schools through the eighth grade.
- 9 Until age 13 she attended segregated schools .
- 10 All students are required to attend summer school .

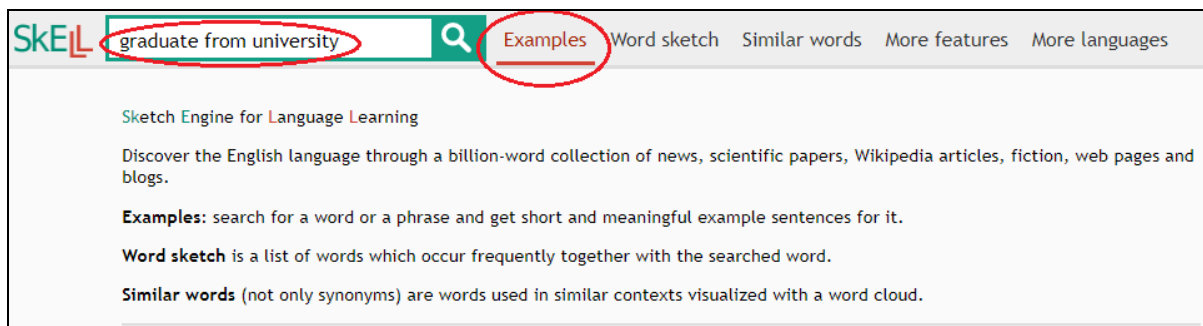
Practice

1. Brainstorm words on the topic of the education. Choose a word that interests you and use the *Word sketch* tool to search for collocations. Draw a mind map with your word and four or five collocations.

2. Click on the collocations to see example sentences. Write down two or three sentences that show how each collocation is often used in real life.

(2) Examples

To find examples of words or phrases, enter a single word or phrase in the search box and click on 'Examples' with the mouse. For example, the phrase *graduate from university*:



The screenshot shows the SKEL search engine interface. The search box contains the text "graduate from university" and a magnifying glass icon. The "Examples" button is highlighted with a red circle. Below the search box, there is a navigation bar with links for "Word sketch", "Similar words", "More features", and "More languages". The main content area includes the following text:

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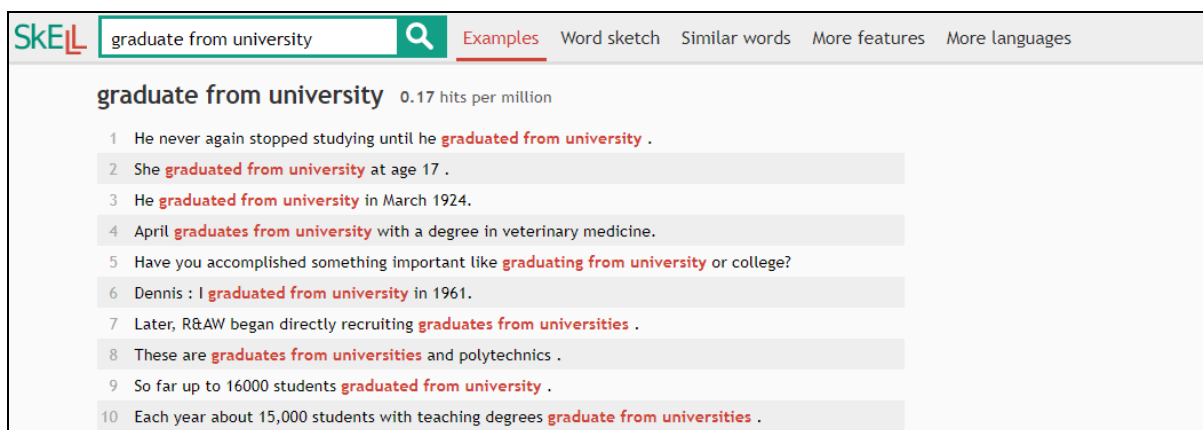
Discover the English language through a billion-word collection of news, scientific papers, Wikipedia articles, fiction, web pages and blogs.

Examples: search for a word or a phrase and get short and meaningful example sentences for it.

Word sketch is a list of words which occur frequently together with the searched word.

Similar words (not only synonyms) are words used in similar contexts visualized with a word cloud.

For common words or phrases, you can see up to 40 example sentences.



The screenshot shows the SKEL search engine interface with the search results for "graduate from university". The search box contains the text "graduate from university" and a magnifying glass icon. The "Examples" button is highlighted with a red circle. Below the search box, there is a navigation bar with links for "Word sketch", "Similar words", "More features", and "More languages". The main content area includes the following text:

graduate from university 0.17 hits per million

- 1 He never again stopped studying until he **graduated from university** .
- 2 She **graduated from university** at age 17 .
- 3 He **graduated from university** in March 1924.
- 4 April **graduates from university** with a degree in veterinary medicine.
- 5 Have you accomplished something important like **graduating from university** or college?
- 6 Dennis : I **graduated from university** in 1961.
- 7 Later, R&AW began directly recruiting **graduates from universities** .
- 8 These are **graduates from universities** and polytechnics .
- 9 So far up to 16000 students **graduated from university** .
- 10 Each year about 15,000 students with teaching degrees **graduate from universities** .

Practice

1. Brainstorm phrases (two or more words) on the topic of the education. Choose a phrase that interests you and use the *Examples* tool to search for example sentences. Write down two or three sentences that show how the phrase is often used in real life.