

Fun with Sketch Engine

Collocations

What is a collocation?

A collocation is a pair or group of words that are often used together.

Examples: fast food spend time take a bath

Some combinations sound wrong or unnatural to a native speaker of English. For example, we say fast cars but not a ~~fast glance~~ (we say quick glance).

1 Spot a Collocation: Underline collocations in this text

Imagine yourself lying on a white sand beach in Hawaii. Picture a cool drink in your hand, warm breeze on your face and the ocean tides churning in front of you. One question you might not have asked yourself is where and how Hawaii gets its energy?

Currently, Hawaii has the highest dependence on oil of any state in the United States, relying on oil for nearly 90% of its primary energy. However, Hawaii has ample access to renewable energy resources, such as solar, wind, geothermal, and ocean energy. In 2015, Hawaii was the first state in the U.S. to establish a 100% renewable energy goal.

2 Odd One Out: Decide which word cannot be used with these words

Research:	conduct research	do research	make research
Data:	collect data	acquire data	obtain data
Exam:	pass an exam	take an exam	make an exam
Hypothesis:	confirm a hypothesis	accept a hypothesis	agree a hypothesis
Analysis:	carry out an analysis	do an analysis	put an analysis
Discussion:	spark a discussion	mean a discussion	join a discussion
Ideas:	exchange ideas	pass ideas	share ideas

3 Choose the correct collocation

1. The book *rises* / *raises* some key questions but fails to deal with them in more detail.
2. The writer of the article *declares* / *states* his opinion very clearly.
3. You must *submit* / *subscribe* your paper before the end of June.
4. Several students have decided to *withdraw from* / *stop* the course this year.
5. *Participating* / *Attending* a conference in your field can broaden your network.
6. The book *draws* / *designs* an analogy between the birth of the universe and a lottery.

6 Guess the meaning

a) Litmus test

The party is using attitudes about gun control as a *litmus test* for political candidates.

b) DNA

I think that giving up *is in her DNA*.

c) Epicentre

The lockdown of Wuhan, the *epicentre* for the coronavirus outbreak, is officially over.

d) Electrifying

The Quit India Movement created an *electrifying* atmosphere in the country and resulted in the achievement of independence after five years.

e) Viral

There's no surefire way to make a given video go *viral*, even if it features a celebrity.

f) Inertia

Many teachers were reluctant to use computers in their classrooms simply out of inertia.

g) Vacuum

No artist works in a *vacuum* - we are all influenced by others.

Extra task: When reading specialised texts, notice the words that you could potentially use in a metaphorical way. You can compare your ideas with examples in Sketch engine.

KEY:

1 Suggested answers – others might be possible too:

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1. The book *raises* some key questions but fails to deal with them in more detail.
2. The writer of the article *states* his opinion very clearly.
3. You must *submit* your paper before the end of June.
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5. *Attending* a conference in your field can broaden your network.
6. The book *draws* an analogy between the birth of the universe and a lottery.

4A Answer these questions:

What is most likely to be heated?	discussions
What is most likely to be icy?	look
What is most likely to be magnetic?	personality
What is most likely to be sour?	face
What is most likely to be stormy?	debate

4b

Examples:

Bright: future, candidate, mind

Warm: welcome, smile, hospitality

Cold: war, (in) cold blood, cold hard facts

5

1a, 2b, 3a, 4b, 5a, 6a, 7b, 8b, 9b, 10a

6

a) *Litmus test*: a test in which a single factor (such as an attitude, event, or fact) is decisive

b) *To be in somebody's DNA*: to be an important part of who somebody is

c) *Epicentre* can also refer to the centres of things that may seem in their own way as powerful

d) *Electrifying* can mean arousing a sudden sense of great excitement; thrilling

- e) *Viral*: used to describe something that quickly becomes very popular or well known by being published on the internet or sent from person to person by email, phone, etc.
- f) *Inertia*: the tendency not to change what is happening
- g) *Vacuum*: a state of isolation from outside influences