

What are Word Collocations?

Worksheet

Collocations are word combinations that habitually co-occur—'take a break,' 'light rain,' 'strong password'—learned as units because they're more natural than alternatives like 'make a break' or 'weak rain.'

Questions

1. Which is NOT a natural collocation?
A) make a difference
B) make a plan
C) make a possibility
D) make an effort
2. Why are collocations hard to learn by grammar alone?
A) grammar allows many options
B) they're irregular
C) dictionaries don't list them
D) native speakers use random words
3. '____ traffic' — what word fits?
A) strong
B) hard
C) heavy
D) thick
4. What's the key to learning collocations?
A) memorize rules
B) read and listen to native speakers
C) translate word-by-word
D) use a dictionary
5. Which collocation is correct: 'make a mistake' or 'do a mistake'?
6. Fill in the collocation: 'reach a ____'
7. Choose the natural collocation: 'strong/heavy rain'?
8. Define: What is a word collocation?
9. Define: Why do collocations matter?
10. Define: 'Make or do?' Example: ____ homework

Answer Key

1. C) make a possibility — 'Make a possibility' is unnatural. Say 'create a possibility' or 'open a possibility' instead.
2. A) grammar allows many options — Grammar allows 'strong/heavy rain,' but collocations narrow it to 'heavy rain.'
3. C) heavy — 'Heavy traffic' is the collocation. 'Strong/hard traffic' sounds wrong.
4. B) read and listen to native speakers — Collocations are learned by exposure to natural language, not rules.
5. 'Make a mistake' is the natural collocation. 'Do a mistake' is grammatically possible but unnatural. Native speakers always say 'make a mistake.'
6. Answer: 'reach a decision' or 'reach an agreement' Other options like 'reach a choice' sound awkward. Native speakers use 'reach' with formal/binding outcomes.
7. 'Heavy rain' is the standard collocation. 'Strong rain' is grammatically possible but sounds odd. Collocations ignore logic—we learn them by exposure.
8. A combination of words that naturally occur together, like 'make a decision' or 'heavy traffic.'
9. Native speakers use them automatically. Unnatural collocations sound awkward even if they're grammatically correct.
10. Do homework. 'Make' doesn't collocate with homework.

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