

COLLOCATIONS IV - USING A DICTIONARY TO FIND THEM

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 **41** /ədˈvaɪs/ US **41** /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.

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/ (US) /'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.

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.