



# IIT Madras

## BSc Degree

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**English – 1 (Basic English)**  
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**What is Good Vocabulary - Part 2**

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**WHAT IS GOOD VOCABULARY**  
**- PART 2**



Hello and welcome to this second session on What is Good Vocabulary. Today in this session, we are going to talk about some more synonyms and antonyms and something called collocation; in other words, which words go with which other words, let us look at some of these examples.

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We know **Synonyms and Antonyms**.



We already know what synonyms and antonyms are; synonyms constitute a group of words with shared meanings, having similar meanings. So, for example, when you say good, you understand that good can be replaced quite often, though not always, by words like fine, nice, excellent, marvellous, outstanding, extraordinary, marvellous, splendid, all of these words can go to replace good.

What are the antonyms of good? Words that mean opposite. So, for example, you can say bad, you can say stinking, you can say rotten, you can say filthy, ugly, dirty, low, very low, all of these things, somehow for some reason in terms of height, high is related to good and low is related to bad, some of these things are not logical.

So, anyone who claims and for anyone for whom you claim, we claim that they have a good vocabulary, we mean to say that they have a large body of, they have a large talk of synonyms and antonyms. It is hardly ever the case in any language that you know Tamil, Hindi, Vietnamese, Swahili, French or German; you often have many words for similar meanings because God, in His wisdom, created lots of things with unique shades, shapes, sizes.

There may be a generic term called a basket, but we have baskets of different sizes, small basket, big basket and we have words for them, we have case and cassette, we have a big case and a small cassette to indicate they are both cases, they both perform the same function. So, all-natural languages, all human languages have a variety of words for similar things.

And using which we indicate shades of meanings. We also have since in the world we not only have light we also have darkness, we not only have rich people we also have poor, we also have another set of words which is called antonyms nearly all languages have them, you have good, bad, light, dark, high, low, come, go, you have this kind of words.

So, anyone of us who knows a language, who has a vocabulary of a reasonable size also have knowledge of these things of a variety of words related in some way with one another or opposite to each other, one another in some other manner. Let us look at some more examples.

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## ACTIVITY

1. Find synonyms and antonyms for the following words.

a. Come b. Go c. Merchant d. Big e. Quick

Check your answers with a thesaurus or a dictionary



For instance, words like come, the opposite is go. But how many other words we know for come? How many other words do we know for go? Or take randomly a profession like a merchant or teacher or occupant or house anything, any commoner and you will find that you have a variety of other words related to it in similar meaning.

A word like make, you can say manufacture, you can say create, you can say design, you can say come up with I mean all kinds of words are possible to indicate different shades of meaning. If you take a word like big, the opposite is small. What other words can you think of for small? Quick, the opposite is slow. You can, for both of them you can think of a variety of words, and if you cannot, then you cannot be said to know the language.

If it is English, you should know enough words which have a similar meaning as big which have a similar meaning as quick. So, knowledge of words one's vocabulary includes not just the knowledge of a few words but also the relationship of these words with other words that may be similar in meaning or may be totally different, opposite in meaning. So, that is what we mean by synonyms and antonyms and a good stock of words, good vocabulary.

Actually, it may be a good idea to find words that mean something similar like, come, go, merchant, big, quick, find at least four or five words for each of them and then compare your work, check your answers with a thesaurus. Yesterday I told you that a thesaurus is a compendium, a collection of words grouped according to meaning just as dictionary groups, words, alphabetically, words with a come before words with b, words with b come before words with c, words with c a come before words with c e.

So, the dictionary is an arrangement of words alphabetically, whereas a thesaurus is an arrangement of words meaning wise, semantically, words that mean, the meaning starts with say

for instance fruit, so what other words do you have from fruit, what other words do you have for drink, so like that it goes on.

Lookup a dictionary, look up a thesaurus, anyone who wants to be a good writer or a good speaker should have a dictionary and a thesaurus on their table while preparing for your talk, while writing your article, while writing your paper, they are very helpful. So, check your answers with a thesaurus or a dictionary or with the work we have done; look at it.

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## ANSWERS

Come	Go	Merchant	Big	Quick
Arrive	Depart	Businessman	Enormous	Express
Join	Exit	Dealer	Gigantic	Fast
Reach	Leave	Salesman	Huge	Immediate
Report	March	Trader	Large	



So, for example, for come, you can say arrive, you can say join, you can say reach, you can say the report, not that they all have exactly the same meaning they do not, but they have a huge extent of shared meaning, you can almost replace one with another, you can say Ruth came to Chennai last month, you can also say Ruth joined Chennai last month, though the shade of meaning will slightly change, slightly, minimally.

Similarly, when you say go, you can say depart, you say go away from here, you can tell somebody who is not very pleasant to you, you can also say please depart from here, you can say the plane goes from here to Calcutta at 12:30 hours, you can also say the plane departs from here at 12:30 hour or exits from here or leaves here, or it may sound very very much more clichéd, very much more formal than necessary, you can also say the plane marches on or flies on. So, all of these things will become synonyms or synonyms of go; antonyms have come.


Merchant, many words, some frequently used word in place of merchant you can write businessman, I know a merchant who sold me a pen, you can also say I know a businessman who sold me a pen, Flipkart and Amazon's are merchants, you can also say they are business

companies or businessmen or businesswomen. They are also dealers; they deal in a variety of goods, they buy from somewhere, sell them somewhere, so they are also salesmen, they are also traders, so with different shades of meaning they mean the same thing as a merchant, big in size.

But you can also use enormous, gigantic, huge, large, great, overwhelming, mountainous; you can bring simulation metaphors, quick you can say express, fast, immediate, at once, all of these words are possible, all of these things make synonyms and antonyms. And if you have any ambition of learning a language well be it English or any other language it is then important that you should pay attention to this aspect of language as well.

Do you have only one word for one thing, or do you have more than one word for the same thing? If you are more you are a better learner of the language, better user of language, if you have only one, well, you can still use that language, but then you will be considered a beginner, an elementary level, like all very young infants they begin with one or two words, they know papa, they know mummy, they do not know parents, but when they grow up they also learn words like parents, they learn words like a grandfather, grandmother, they also learn a word like grandparents, they learn words like brother and sister, they also learn words like siblings. So, this extension, this extra thing brings power to your vocabulary, next.

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- Words are related by form.
  - Words that sound alike but mean different things are called **homophones**.  
Right~Write



There is another aspect of vocabulary, for each word you know, no word is used in isolation, do you imagine that you ever understand, ever stand on a road and you say good, you do not, unless, of course, you are doing a magic show where you want to attract people by being unusual, otherwise good is always followed by good is an adjective, it is always followed by a noun, you can say good morning, you can say good evening, you can say good day, you can say a good cup of tea, you can say a good man, a good woman, a good friend, a good student, a good boy, a good girl, it is always followed by a noun.



So, we know as we claim we have a vocabulary, we also know that each word in a vocabulary is related to some other word in some other manner so that they are used in a context, they are used with one another, in a continuous speech you do not use one word in isolation, you use words together.

Since we use words together, it is also fixed by a rule which words will go with which words that is collocation; we will come to that a little later but just now, just as we talked about synonyms and antonyms, let us also talk about homophones. What are homophones? Homophones are those words that sound alike; they may differ in spelling.

Say, for example, right and write, they both have the same sounds right 'ra aa ii ta' but they are spelt differently one is 'r i g h t' and the other is 'w r i t e', so they are spelt differently, but they are pronounced alike. They also are on the other hand; please go.

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For example:

Beat (Verb)	Beat (Noun)
to assault;	domain, rhythm on a percussion instrument.

Count (Verb)	Count (Noun)
enumerate;	a kind of landlord with a certain position.

Deal (Verb)	Deal (Noun)
to do business with;	a purchase.



Words which have the same spelling, the same sounds but different meanings. So, for example, when you say beat, past tense bet, then it means to assault. The culprit was badly bitten by the crowd or metaphorically, you can say the Indian team was badly beaten by the visitors, that means they lost, they were defeated, so that is a metaphorical meaning, but the basic meaning is beat, the meaning of beat is assault, physical assault.

But beat can also be a noun; it can be a domain, the policeman was on his beat, the reporter of the newspaper was on his beat, newspapers have reporters assigned to different localities. So, for example, there may be a reporter covering only events at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, so the Indian Institute of Technology Madras is his beat or her beat, their beat.

So, beat, in this case is noun which has a different meaning, it does not mean assault, it means a domain, a region, a province, pocket. So, there can be words that have the same spelling, same pronunciation but different meanings in a different context, someone with a good vocabulary knows these things; they know that the same word can have a different meaning in different contexts and in each context, they also know whether it is a noun or a verb, an adjective or adverb. Look at words like count, one meaning as a verb, another meaning as a noun. Words like deal, one meaning has a verb, another meaning as a noun, next.

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## ACTIVITY

2. Find at least 10 words that have similar pronunciations but different meanings.



It may not be a bad idea for you since I, as I have been saying, languages are learned best when learners do something rather than just listen or only read, when you create an exercise for yourself or when you do the given exercise then your learning is best, quick and sure. Look at it.



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## ANSWERS



<b>Board (N):</b> a group of managers;	<b>Board (V):</b> to climb
<b>Express (V):</b> to speak or write;	<b>Express (adj):</b> fast
<b>Interest (N):</b> a charge on capital loan;	<b>Interest (V):</b> attract
<b>Light (N):</b> opposite of dark;	<b>Light (Adj):</b> opposite of heavy
<b>Miss (N):</b> a prefix before an unmarried woman's name;	<b>Miss (V):</b> to be late for something and thus not get it, such as a missed call, to miss a train
<b>Part (N):</b> an organ;	<b>Part (V):</b> to leave



Say, for example, I have selected these words randomly, you can check with the dictionary whether they mean the same thing, the board can be a noun, the board can be a verb, you board a train, you board a bus, you board a plane, you board a ship, you board a boat. But there can also be a board a group of managers, the managing board, the managing community. Similarly, in other words, you can also create your own set of words, exercises of this kind, go next, go next.

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For every word it is fixed which words it can follow, and which other words it can be followed by. This relationship among words is called **Collocation**.



Let us come back to collocation which I mentioned which is also a part of the knowledge of words; actually, this is huge, as we go on, fewer people make mistakes with synonyms and antonyms than with collocation; you cannot use much with countable things, you cannot say

much boys, much girls, much students. What can we do? We can say many students, many boys, many girls.

Similarly, we cannot use much which is uncountable, we cannot, sorry, pardon me, we cannot use many with things that are uncountable, we cannot say many water, we cannot say many milk, we cannot say many tea, many sugar, many air, we can only say much there, much milk, much water, much sugar, much air, they are both adjectives of quantity, many and much they are both quantifiers, they are used to indicate adjectives are quantity.

They also, we also have their antonyms in place of many, we can say few, but you cannot use few with uncountable things, you cannot say few water, you cannot say few milk, you cannot say few air, you cannot say few tea, few coffee, few juice, few can only be used with countable nouns, just as little can only be used with uncountable nouns, you can say little water, little milk, little coffee, little air, you can do that sort of thing.

So, collocation is the relationship; collocation is a big name for something pretty simple, the relationship between two words which word can be followed by which word or which word can be preceded by which word, if you want to show the quantity of water you cannot say many water, you will you can only say little water, sorry you can only say much water, if you want to show that it has hardly any water then you will have to say little water, Chennai has little water, Chennai has many more people than the amount of water it has, it has little water for so many people. You cannot say it has few water for so many people.

So, what is a collocation? Collocation is the constraint, the relationship, the rule that decides which word can be followed by which word or which word can come before which word, I gave you an example, I gave an example of much and many, I gave you the example of little and few like that there are lots of other examples.

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Electric	light, guitar, line
Electrical	engineer, energy
Cold	day, sweat, wave, shoulder, drink



Look at this, electric, can you say electric engineer, can you say electric energy? No, you can only say electric light, electric guitar, electric line, but you can say electrical engineer, you can say electrical energy, you can say cold day, cold sweat, cold wave, cold place, cold welcome, cold reception, cold mountain, cold river, cold sea, you can say anywhere where metaphorically or otherwise temperature can come.

But can you say cold book? Maybe in some context, some special context you can say that. Can you see the cold camera? Maybe in some artificial, some highly restricted context, perhaps you can, but it is not very usual. Can you say cold tree? Perhaps not. So, there are constraints on what adjectives can occur with what nouns or what nouns can be preceded by what adjectives.

If you have a cloud, what adjectives can go with cloud? You can say thick, you can say black, you can say grey, you can say silver, maybe you can also say red or white, but can you say running clouds, you can only say floating clouds. Can you say flowing cloud? No, that is reserved for water, you can say flowing water, flowing river, flowing stream, you cannot say floating water, you cannot say floating stream, floating river but you can say floating boat, you can say floating yacht, you can say floating live built.

So, all of these things are fixed that only some words can go with some words, only some words can come before some words, and only some words can follow some words. Look at some more examples, please.

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## ACTIVITY



3. The adjectives given below usually occur only with some nouns. Fill in the blanks with appropriate nouns.

Adjectives	Nouns
hard, soft	cover, boiled, core, soap, sell, shoe, spoken tissue, target, pedal, top, toy, copy, surface, work, drink, back, ball, core, court, disk, labour, line, luck, work
<b>Hard</b>	
<b>Soft</b>	



Say, for example, look at this work. Two very ordinary adjectives, hard and soft, daily life, occur frequently. Now, here are some nouns; what noun can it go with? You can try and fill in the blanks I have given you hard and soft, take nouns from the second box and fill in the blanks, which nouns can follow which adjectives, next.

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In this manner, you can create tables with a few verbs and nouns.



You can also check your answer, but the point here is, the point I am making is, and this is perhaps the most important point where we can stop and talk about how we can have a great vocabulary. A great vocabulary can, like other aspects of language, cannot be created by others for you; each learner has to create it for themselves, for himself, for herself.

While you read, pay some attention not just to content, pay all the attention to content but a little maybe 20 per cent, maybe 10 per cent or sometimes even less pay attention to how one word goes with another, what different kinds of words have been used in any given context. And you will then realize that all writers use only one particular word for that context because that is the best word that would fit there from a given field. It is true that good can be replaced by words like fine, nice, splendid, marvellous, excellent, wonderful, outstanding, extraordinary and other words.

But if you want to be very accurate when you talk about size, thinness, then you can say fine slices were cut, very fine, razor-thin slices were cut. If you want to talk about something very, something is smelling nice, then you cannot say smelling fine, you can, but it will not be the same thing as saying smelling nice.

Similarly, somebody has, he was given a target that you should write ten pages today, and that student has written 11 or 12 or 13 pages then that student has excelled, has done more than expected, then you can say excellent, you have excelled, you have done more than you were expected to do.

Similarly, the kind of work that creates wonder, that creates marvel is marvellous, imagine a child, a five or a 6-year-old child knowing the spelling of all the words in a dictionary, then you

can definitely say, oh great! that child is marvellous, you can only marvel at it, or that child is wonderful, hardly under ten yet and can spell any word from this dictionary.

So, how do we acquire them? We acquire them by reading, by listening, reading and listening to good speakers, good writers and by paying at least part of the time, most of the time, please pay attention to content but part of the time it is good to pay attention to language and this aspect of the vocabulary in coming sessions in both our modules on reading and our modules on grammar and vocabulary we will bring in texts and draw your attention to some of these things, it will be wonderful if you can create some exercises for yourselves and created those exercises and did them on your own, checking with the dictionary. But there is only one way to learn a language well, and that is when you take charge of learning. Thank you very much. Have a good day.

