

69 Word partners (collocation) I

What is a collocation?

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

verb + noun

make an arrangement, set up a business, reach a decision

adjective + noun

fixed cost, part-time job, competitive advantage

noun + noun

insurance company, business plan, information technology

sentence heads

What exactly do you mean by ...?, Give my best wishes to ...

fixed expressions

Last but not least, Time is money, See you later.

The English language is full of collocations, and every unit of this book includes many examples. Why are they important? Because learning words individually is only half the story. You also have to learn how words combine with each other. And if you can learn the whole collocation as one item – instead of thinking of the individual words one-by-one – your speech will become more fluent.

This unit and the next unit focus on verb + noun collocations.

Collocations for key business words

company

Somebody or something can ... a company.

<i>buy/take over</i>	<i>leave/resign from</i>
<i>close down</i>	<i>manage/run</i>
<i>establish/set up/start</i>	<i>reorganize/restructure</i>
<i>join</i>	<i>work for</i>

And a company can ...

<i>be in trouble</i>	<i>go out of business</i>
<i>expand/grow</i>	<i>make/manufacture sth</i>
<i>go bankrupt/bust/under</i>	<i>offer/provide sth</i>
<i>go into liquidation</i>	<i>run into difficulties</i>

contract

Somebody can ... a contract.

<i>alter/amend</i>	<i>get out of</i>
<i>break</i>	<i>go over/review</i>
<i>(re)negotiate</i>	<i>keep to</i>
<i>draw up</i>	<i>renew</i>
<i>enter into</i>	<i>sign</i>
<i>finalize</i>	<i>terminate</i>

And a contract can ...

<i>be worth ...</i>	<i>come to an end/expire</i>
<i>come into effect/start</i>	<i>run until ...</i>

costs

Somebody or something can ... the cost/costs

<i>absorb</i>	<i>figure out/work out</i>
<i>bring down/cut/reduce</i>	<i>pay/meet</i>
<i>cover</i>	<i>spread</i>

And costs can ...

<i>be associated with ...</i>	<i>go down/up</i>
<i>fall/rise</i>	<i>stay (more or less) the same</i>

customer/client

Somebody or something can ... customers/clients.

<i>attract</i>	<i>look after/take care of</i>
<i>deal with</i>	<i>lose</i>
<i>entertain</i>	<i>serve the needs of</i>

The sentences below show some of these collocations in use, and others not mentioned above.

*His father **set up the company** twenty years ago.*

*I **work for a company** in the **hospitality sector**.*

*I knew that **the company was in trouble**, but I didn't know they had **gone out of business**.*

***The company went bust** last year. Sad, really.*

*Our **legal department** is **drawing up the contract**.*

*I'd like to **go over the details** one more time.*

*This **contract** could **be worth** millions!*

*The **contract comes into effect** on the first of March and **runs until** the end of October.*

*We can **absorb** some of the extra **costs**, but not all of them.*

*We should **cover** our **costs** if we can sell 3,000 units, then after that we begin to **make a profit**.*

*It would be easier if we could **spread the costs** between ourselves and our **business partners**.*

***The costs associated with** buying a house are quite high. We should be able to **attract** a lot of **new customers** with our '**buy-one-get-one-free**' promotion.*

*I **deal with** our large **corporate clients**.*

Exercises

69 WORD PARTNERS (COLLOCATION) I

69.1 Complete Claudia's description of her family company with the words in the box.

closed down expand grew join leave
makes restructure run set up take over

It's a medium-sized business in the north of Italy that ¹ _____ leather goods. My father ² _____ the company over 30 years ago – I wasn't even born then! Nowadays he doesn't really ³ _____ it on a day-to-day basis – he leaves that to my brother – but of course he gives advice when it's needed.

At first the company ⁴ _____ organically, increasing sales year after year. But about ten years ago my father took an important strategic decision. It was to ⁵ _____ one of our competitors that had run into difficulties. Of course putting the two companies together wasn't easy, and my father had to ⁶ _____ everything, including the management team. That was when they asked me to ⁷ _____ them. They said they needed someone with my language skills and background in sales to ⁸ _____ the business.

Well, it wasn't an easy decision – I was working for another company at the time. But in the end my father persuaded me to ⁹ _____ that company, and I'm glad I did. Do you know why? I drove past their offices the other day and it looks like the company has ¹⁰ _____! The building is empty and the sign above the gate has gone. It's a shame really.

69.2 Look at the words the speaker says. Then complete the comment below using a word from the box.

amend get out of keep to
draw up go over renegotiate

- 'The situation is completely different now. The old agreement is not valid any more.'
She wants to _____ the contract.
- 'There are one or two things here that I'm still not clear on. Can you explain it again?'
He wants to _____ the contract again.
- 'Before we finalize things, there are one or two points that we would like to change.'
She wants to _____ the contract.
- 'OK, the details are all agreed in principle, now we need to get everything in writing.'
Now the legal department need to _____ the contract.
- 'Is there any way we can avoid doing this?'
He wants to _____ the contract.
- 'I hope they do what they said they would do.'
She hopes they will _____ the contract.

69.3 Write the correct word in italics in the answer box.

- If you agree to a minimum order of 10,000 pieces, we will *meet/spread* the cost of customizing the product in the way you explained.
- The company we use for all our transport and logistics has told me their prices will be going up. We'll have to try to *absorb/cut* some of the extra cost ourselves. I don't think we can pass it all on to our customers.
- It's a very complex project involving a lot of people and a lot of resources. I'm using a spreadsheet to help me *figure out/pay* all the costs.
- They are offering us very attractive terms of payment – 20% on delivery, 40% after 30 days, and the remainder after 60 days. That will help to *cut/spread* the cost.
- Sales have been disappointing and we're not going to make a profit. The good news is that we should at least *cover/figure out* our costs, so it's not a complete disaster.

69.4 One word in each sentence is wrong.

Write the correct word at the end.

- Our customer services team deal ~~for~~ people who call us with an enquiry or a complaint. _____
- He was forced to resign of the company when his boss saw his Facebook page. _____
- There are a lot of costs associated to doing all your Research and Development internally. These days we outsource most of it. _____
- A lot of small shops in the town centre have gone out from business since the hypermarket opened. _____
- I'd like to go across the contract again if you don't mind. There are still some points that need clarification. _____
- I take care from all our customers in the north of the country. _____
- We try to serve the needs with the whole community. _____
- The contract runs by the end of the year, then after that we can renew it if we want to. _____

69.5 Write one of these words in each space to make adjective + noun collocations: *company, contract, costs, customer*.

considerable	1 _____	limited	3 _____
fixed		parent	
hidden		start-up	
unnecessary		well-run	
exclusive	2 _____	key	4 _____
major		potential	
two-year		regular	
valid		satisfied	

Check the meaning of any unknown adjectives in a good dictionary.