Verb Collocations

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Grammar Notes

A. Introduction to Collocations

Collocations are sets of words that naturally go together in a language. These word combinations are used together for a long time until one combination sounds “right” (e.g., make a phone call) and another combination with a similar meaning sounds “wrong” (e.g., do a phone call).

Collocations can be difficult to learn because there often seems to be no reason for the choice of words in the combination. Don’t worry! The more exposure you have to English, the more you will be able to recognize words that go together. Read and listen to English as often as you can. You should also study and use collocations whenever you get a chance.

Examples of Collocations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverb + Adjective</th>
<th>Adjective + Noun</th>
<th>Verb + Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• highly recommended</td>
<td>• heavy rain</td>
<td>• run errands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• absolutely necessary</td>
<td>• strong coffee</td>
<td>• do homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• bitterly cold</td>
<td>• express bus</td>
<td>• make the bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ridiculously cheap</td>
<td>• live music</td>
<td>• give a presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• blissfully ignorant</td>
<td>• major problem</td>
<td>• catch a cold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Verb Collocations

In this lesson, we will focus on common collocations with the verbs have, get, take, come, and go. In these collocations, the verb is usually followed by a noun, but it can also be followed by a preposition or adverb.

You will learn ten collocations for each verb, and then you will practice each verb set separately before trying mixed exercises involving all five verbs.
## Exercise 1

### COLLOCATIONS WITH HAVE

#### A. Reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collocation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>have breakfast/lunch/dinner/a snack</td>
<td>to eat breakfast/lunch/dinner/a snack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a cup of coffee/tea</td>
<td>to drink a cup of coffee/tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have an idea</td>
<td>to think of something for the first time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a party</td>
<td>to throw a party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a good time</td>
<td>to enjoy oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a baby</td>
<td>to give birth to a baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a headache</td>
<td>to suffer from a headache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a fight/argument</td>
<td>to fight/argue with someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a problem</td>
<td>to have an issue/trouble with something/someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have an accident</td>
<td>to get into an accident/to hurt oneself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 1 cont.

B. Practice

Fill in the blanks with a collocation from the previous page. Use each collocation only once. You may need to change the word form.

Ex. Let's _________ have a party _________ to celebrate our anniversary.

1. I don't feel well. I _______________ and a sore throat.

2. I _______________. Why don’t we go swimming after class?

3. I hope you _______________ at the concert tomorrow evening.

4. They _______________ yesterday. They haven’t been getting along lately.

5. On Saturday night, let’s _______________ at our favorite restaurant.

6. Mark just called from the hospital. Julia is _______________!

7. We _______________ while driving home last night. The roads were so icy.

8. Do you have time to _______________ with me? It’s my treat, so order a large if you want to.

9. I _______________. I’m in love with two people, and I don’t know who to choose.
## Exercise 2

### COLLOCATIONS WITH GET

#### A. Reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collocation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>get a job</td>
<td>to start a new position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get married</td>
<td>to become legally joined in a ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get divorced</td>
<td>to end a marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get together</td>
<td>to spend time with someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get a haircut</td>
<td>to have one's hair cut by someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get home</td>
<td>to arrive at one's house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get in trouble</td>
<td>to do something wrong and be caught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get dressed</td>
<td>to put on clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get lost</td>
<td>to not know where one is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get ready</td>
<td>to prepare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 2 cont.

B. Practice

Rewrite each sentence using a collocation from the previous page. Use each collocation only once. You may need to change the word form.

Ex. I only have 15 minutes to put on some clothes.

   *I only have 15 minutes to get dressed.*

1. I didn’t know where I was yesterday.

2. I arrived home at 6:00 pm.

3. Let’s hang out tomorrow night.

4. They will have their wedding in June.

5. My brother was punished for breaking the window.

6. His hair looks shorter today than it did yesterday.

7. They ended their marriage last year.

8. She started working at a new company last week.

9. It took us all night to prepare for our presentation.
## Exercise 3

### COLLOCATIONS WITH TAKE

#### A. Reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collocation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>take a seat</td>
<td>to sit down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take a while</td>
<td>to take a long time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take a photo</td>
<td>to use a camera to get a picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take a rain check</td>
<td>to postpone until a later time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take a taxi</td>
<td>to use a taxicab for transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take a shower/bath</td>
<td>to have a shower/bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take a chance</td>
<td>to do something risky or unpredictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take a break</td>
<td>to have a short rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take a look</td>
<td>to look at something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take care</td>
<td>to be careful or look after oneself or someone/something else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 3 cont.

B. Practice

Fill in the blanks with a collocation from the previous page.
Use each collocation only once. You may need to change the word form.

Ex. I can't make it tonight. Can I _______ take a rain check _______?

1. What a beautiful sunset! I'm going to __________________________ to show my friends.

2. I __________________________ every morning. I like to be clean before I get dressed.

3. There won't be any parking near the stadium. Let's __________________________.

4. You look tired. Why don't you __________________________ from your homework?

5. Please __________________________, everyone. The show is about to start.

6. Can you __________________________ at my essay before I hand it in?

7. It __________________________ for everyone to exit the building during yesterday’s fire drill. We need to move faster next time.

8. I'm relieved that your surgery went well. Please __________________________ of yourself until you're all better.

9. She __________________________ and asked him to the dance. She didn't think he would say yes, but he did!
Exercise 4

COLLOCATIONS WITH COME

A. Reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collocation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>come close</td>
<td>to almost complete something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come in first</td>
<td>to achieve first place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come back</td>
<td>to return to a place where one is already at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come prepared</td>
<td>to arrive ready for something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come on time</td>
<td>to arrive on time (not early or late)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come to a conclusion</td>
<td>to figure something out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come to a decision</td>
<td>to make a decision about something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come to an agreement</td>
<td>to reach an understanding with someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come to an end</td>
<td>to reach the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come up with something</td>
<td>to think of an idea or plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Practice

Rewrite each sentence using a collocation with *come*. Use each collocation only once. You may need to change the word form.

Ex. After reading about the different types of software, I figured out which one to buy.

*After reading about the different types of software, I came to a conclusion about which one to buy.*

1. I still don’t have a topic for my presentation, but I’ll think of something.
Exercise 4 cont.

B. Practice cont.

2. She finished the marathon in first place.

3. I love it here. Let’s return next year.

4. I felt sad when I reached the end of my book.

5. Your presentation was very disorganized. Please be ready next time.

6. He was so close to passing his driver’s test, but he’ll have to take it again.

7. You’ve been late to these meetings all week. Why can’t you be on time?

8. I got accepted to five universities. After comparing them all, I finally made a decision about which one to attend.

9. After a long discussion, my roommate and I finally reached an understanding about the division of chores.
## Exercise 5

### COLLOCATIONS WITH GO

#### A. Reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collocation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>go home</td>
<td>to return to one’s house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go downtown</td>
<td>to go to the downtown area of a city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go back</td>
<td>to return to a place where one is not at now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go to bed</td>
<td>to get into bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go to school</td>
<td>to go to one’s school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go to work</td>
<td>to go to one’s workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go to a meeting</td>
<td>to arrive at a meeting place (usually at work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go on a trip</td>
<td>to leave for a destination (usually for a vacation or work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go for a run</td>
<td>to go jogging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go (out) for (a) coffee</td>
<td>to go out and get a cup of coffee (usually while meeting up with someone)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 5 cont.

B. Practice

Fill in the blanks with a collocation from the previous page.
Use each collocation only once. You may need to change the word form.
Pay special attention to the different prepositions that follow “go”
(depending on which noun is used).

Ex. I'm _______ going to a meeting _______ at 9:00 am sharp tomorrow, so I can't be late for work.

1. I need to finish my homework this morning before I _______ ________________________ .
   I want to know the answer when my teacher calls on me in class.

2. After work, I usually go to the gym. Sometimes I _______ ________________________ instead.

3. I invited my friend to _______ ________________________ after work today. We need to catch up!

4. We are going to _______ ________________________ next month. I can’t wait to explore a new city!

5. I _______ ________________________ early last night because I was so tired.

6. We decided to _______ ________________________ next Saturday night. I love the nightlife in our city!

7. They had a wonderful time in Tokyo last year. They loved it so much that they are
   _______ ________________________ next year!

8. Our class ends in five minutes. Then I am going to _______ ________________________ and take a nap!

9. I usually don't work on weekends, but I have to _______ ________________________ this Saturday
to finish a big project.
Exercise 6

MIXED COLLOCATION REVIEW

A. Matchup 1

Match these collocations with their correct definitions.

1. go back
   a) to return to a place where one is already at
2. have a good time
   b) to arrive ready for something
3. get dressed
   c) to spend time with someone
4. take a while
   d) to use a taxicab for transportation
5. come back
   e) to fight/argue with someone
6. go to bed
   f) to take a long time
7. get together
   g) to put on clothes
8. have an argument
   h) to enjoy oneself
9. come prepared
   i) to get into bed
10. take a taxi
    j) to return to a place where one is not at now

B. Matchup 2

Match each collocation with an example sentence with the same meaning.

1. have a headache
   a) Don't worry. I'll think of a good present for your birthday.
2. take a photo
   b) We have reservations for 6:00 pm at the restaurant.
3. get ready
   c) My head hurts. Do you have any aspirin?
4. have breakfast
   d) I'm not afraid to try new things.
5. come in first
   e) I need to buy food and decorate for the party.
6. go on a trip
   f) I want to get a picture of us in front of this statue.
7. take a chance
   g) Tell me all about your vacation in Hawaii!
8. come up with something
   h) I'd like some pancakes, please.
9. get lost
   i) She won the race.
10. have dinner
    j) I don't know where I am!
Exercise 6 cont.

C. Pair Work

Write ten questions using collocations from this lesson. Then ask your partner each question. Continue the conversation with another question or two.

Example:

When was the last time you went for coffee with someone?

A: When was the last time you went for coffee with someone?
B: I went for coffee last weekend.
A: Who did you go with?
B: My best friend. We always go for coffee on Saturday mornings.
A: It’s nice that you see your best friend so often. Where do you usually go?
B: We usually go to the Starbucks on Main Street.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 
Appendix

A. Collocations Vs. Phrasal Verbs

A phrasal verb is a pair of words (a verb and preposition) that has a set meaning. Phrasal verbs are not literal (i.e., the meaning of the phrasal verb doesn't match the separate meanings of the verb and preposition).

Phrasal verbs are different from collocations because with collocations, the meaning of the words is often the actual, literal meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Literal?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phrasal Verb</td>
<td>Let's call off the party.</td>
<td>Let's cancel the party.</td>
<td>No. We aren't calling anyone on the phone or naming anything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collocation</td>
<td>She is making a long-distance call.</td>
<td>She is calling someone far away on the phone.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrasal Verb</td>
<td>I ran out of milk.</td>
<td>I don't have any more milk.</td>
<td>No. I didn't jog outside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collocation</td>
<td>Let's go for a run.</td>
<td>Let's go running/jogging.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix cont.

### B. Collocations Vs. Idioms

An idiom is an expression where the meaning of the words is not literal (i.e., it doesn’t match the separate meaning of the words). Phrasal verbs are one type of idiom. Other idioms are clauses or sentences.

Idioms are different from collocations because the meaning of the collocation usually matches the literal meaning of the words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Literal?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Idiom</strong></td>
<td>It is <strong>raining cats and dogs</strong>.</td>
<td>It is raining a lot.</td>
<td>No. Cats and dogs are not falling from the sky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collocation</strong></td>
<td>We are expecting <strong>heavy rain</strong> tomorrow.</td>
<td>We are expecting a lot of rain tomorrow.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Idiom</strong></td>
<td>You've had your <strong>head in the clouds</strong> all day.</td>
<td>You've been daydreaming all day.</td>
<td>No. Your head is not actually in the sky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collocation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nod your head</strong> if you can hear me.</td>
<td><strong>Move your head up and down.</strong></td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>