Learning collocations

When learning words it is helpful to notice and to learn some of the words that they often occur with (their collocations). The dictionary helps you to know which words are frequently used together. One of the ways information is given on collocations is in a box at the end of an entry. Notice the small number in the box. This tells you which meaning of the word is used with these words.

Activity 1
Write down words you think are frequently used before the adjective interested. Find the entry for the word interested in the dictionary, and look at the Words frequently used with interested box at the end of the entry. Check your answers.

________________ ________________ interested

Activity 2
Write down nouns you think are frequently used with the verb combat. Find the entry for combat in the dictionary, and look at the Words frequently used with combat box at the end of the entry. Check your answers.

combat ______________ ______________

Activity 3
Read the questions and circle the correct words. Check your answers in the dictionary.

a Three of these six adverbs are frequently used with the verb love. Which are they?

dearly strongly passionately truly effectively highly

b Three of these six adjectives are frequently used with the noun memory. Which are they?

colourful untidy painful fond bright vivid

Activity 4
List three words that you think typically occur with each of these words (a–f). Check your answers in the dictionary by looking at the Words frequently used with … box at the end of each entry.

a verbs __________________ __________________ _____________ payment

b nouns __________________ __________________ __________________

c adjectives __________________ __________________ _____________ kiss

d nouns __________________ __________________ __________________

e verbs __________________ __________________ _____________ leg

f adjectives __________________ __________________ _____________ possession
Learning collocations

Introduction
When learning words it is helpful to notice and to learn some of the words that they often occur with (their collocations). This helps learners to manipulate ‘chunks’ of language, and to work with greater fluency.

Aim of worksheet
To help students to make use of the ways in which the *Macmillan English Dictionary* (MED) gives information on collocations. One way this information is given is in a box at the end an entry. The box is titled *Words frequently used with* ... The small number on the right in this box shows which meaning of the word is used with these collocations.

Time and materials
Allow 5 minutes each for Activities 1 to 3, and up to 15 minutes for Activity 4. Students need access to a copy of the *Macmillan English Dictionary*.

Procedures

► Activity 1
1. Hand out a copy of the worksheet to each student and go through the introduction with the whole class.
2. Ask the students to write down adverbs they think are frequently used with the word *interested*.
3. Next, ask them to find the word *interested* in the MED, and to look at the *Words frequently used with interested* box at the end of the entry to check their answers.
4. Discuss their findings.

Answers
*Words frequently used with interested*
deeply, extremely, genuinely, keenly, mainly, particularly, primarily, principally, really, seriously

► Activity 2
1. Ask students to write down nouns they think are frequently used with the verb *combat*.
2. Ask them to find the entry for *combat* in the MED, and to look at the *Words frequently used with combat* box at the end of the entry to check their answers.
3. Discuss their findings.

Answers
*Words frequently used with combat*
crime, discrimination, disease, fraud, inflation, poverty, racism, terrorism, unemployment, violence
Teacher’s Notes

► Activity 3
1 Ask students to read the questions in a–c and circle the correct words.
2 Ask them to check their answers by looking at the Words frequently used with ... box at the end of the MED entry for the words love, memory and negotiate.

Answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dearly, passionately, truly</td>
<td>painful, fond, vivid</td>
<td>contract, price, deal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

► Activity 4
1 Ask students to list three words that they think typically occur with each of the words (a–f).
2 When the students are ready, ask them to check in the Words frequently used with ... box at the end of the entry for each word in the dictionary.

Example answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accept, authorize, delay, demand, enforce, make, meet, receive, secure, suspend, withhold</td>
<td>belief, misconception, myth, opinion, view</td>
<td>affectionate, big, gentle, passionate, quick, sloppy, tender</td>
<td>acceptance, confidence, experience, ideas, information, insight, popularity, recognition, understanding</td>
<td>bend, cross, kick, lift, raise, straighten, stretch, swing</td>
<td>material, personal, precious, prized, treasured, valued, worldly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Follow up
In the next few lessons, get your students thinking about words that typically occur together. Here are some ideas:

1 Ask students to find examples of words that often occur together in their mother tongue.
2 Ask students to find examples of words that typically occur together in the texts you are using in your lesson.
3 When learning a new word, try to place the word in the context of another word that it might occur with.
   Check with the dictionary to find possibilities.
4 Invite students to find a Words frequently used with ... box in the MED, and to make sentences using the collocations.
   Discuss the meaning of the sentences.
5 Encourage students to refer to the Words frequently used with ... box when writing compositions, stories or letters.

Hints and tips
1 Remember to do the activities yourself in order to understand some of the difficulties your students may face.
2 Ask students to talk about problems they find when using the dictionary, and invite them to suggest and try out solutions.
3 Ask students what else they might have noticed at random while using the dictionary, and encourage such ‘random noticing’ as another benefit of dictionary use.