



Learn English Through
Stories.

U Series

Advanced Collocations

Adapted and modified by

Kulwant Singh Sandhu.

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A New Start in Whitby Bay by K S Sandhu



Sarah had always dreamed of living in a picturesque town by the sea. One rainy morning in March, she finally arrived in the small coastal village of Whitby Bay. The place was a truly picturesque location, with narrow cobbled streets, brightly painted houses, and wide views of the restless ocean. Although the inclement weather had made the long bus journey tiring and wet, Sarah felt deliriously happy when she stepped onto the platform, breathing in the salty air.

She had auburn hair that caught the light even on cloudy days, and she carried one large suitcase full of dreams and hopes. At the little bed-and-breakfast near the harbour, the owner, Mrs Thompson, opened the door and welcomed her with a broad smile.

"Come in quickly, love, before you drown!" Mrs Thompson said in her warm, broad accent that sounded soft and northern.

Over the next few weeks, Sarah began her new life. She found work at the local museum, helping to prepare a special exhibition about the town's fishing history. One afternoon, the manager called an urgent staff meeting.

"I'm sorry, everyone," he said, "but we must adjourn the meeting. The storm is getting worse, and with this inclement weather, we cannot continue safely.

"Sarah nodded. She was in broad agreement – it was sensible to wait for better conditions.

That same day, Sarah met her neighbour, Tom, a calm man with gentle eyes. They started talking over tea in the tiny garden, and soon they became close friends. One evening, Tom told her about his past.

"I made mistakes when I was younger," he said quietly. "I got into trouble with the police. But the judge listened carefully. There were mitigating circumstances – my father had died suddenly, and I was trying to support my family. The court also considered other mitigating factors, so I received a shorter sentence.

"Sarah listened with sympathy. "I'm glad justice was fair," she replied. "You were honest today, and that matters.

"As spring arrived, the bad weather disappeared. The town looked even more beautiful under blue skies. One bright Saturday, Sarah and Tom walked along the cliff path above the sea. The sun sparkled on the waves, and wild flowers covered the grass.

Tom turned to her with another broad smile. "You know, Sarah, you've brought real happiness to this picturesque town.

"She laughed, her auburn hair dancing in the soft wind. She took his hand, feeling deliriously happy.

In the distance, they could see the old courthouse where Tom's trial had taken place years earlier. "They had to adjourn the trial twice because of heavy snow," Tom remembered. "But in the end, everything worked out.

"Sarah squeezed his hand. They stood together, watching the horizon, in broad agreement that sometimes life offers second chances in the most unexpected, beautiful places.

2

Strong, fixed and weak collocations

A Strong collocations

A strong collocation is one in which the words are very closely associated with each other. For example, the adjective **mitigating** almost always collocates with **circumstances** or **factors**; it rarely collocates with any other word. *Although she was found guilty, the jury felt there were **mitigating circumstances**.* [factors or circumstances that lessen the blame] Here are some other examples of strong collocations.

collocation	comment
Inclement weather was expected.	(very formal) = unpleasant weather <i>Inclement</i> collocates almost exclusively with <i>weather</i> .
She has auburn hair.	<i>Auburn</i> collocates only with words connected with hair (e.g. <i>curls, tresses, locks</i>).
I felt deliriously happy.	= extremely happy Strongly associated with <i>happy</i> . Not used with <i>glad, content, sad</i> , etc.
The chairperson adjourned the meeting.	= have a pause or rest during a meeting/trial <i>Adjourn</i> is very strongly associated with <i>meeting</i> and <i>trial</i> .

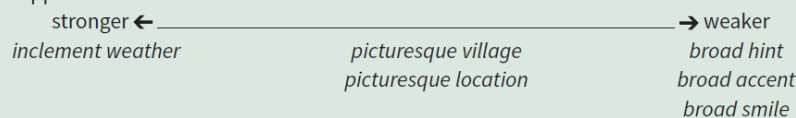
B Fixed collocations

Fixed collocations are collocations so strong that they cannot be changed in any way. For example, you can say *I was walking **to and fro*** (meaning I was walking in one direction and then in the opposite direction, a repeated number of times). No other words can replace *to* or *fro* or *and* in this collocation. It is completely fixed. The meaning of some fixed collocations cannot be guessed from the individual words. These collocations are called idioms and are focused on in the book *English Idioms in Use*.

C Weak collocations

Weak collocations are made up of words that collocate with a wide range of other words. For example, you can say you are **in broad agreement** with someone [generally in agreement with them]. However, *broad* can also be used with a number of other words – **a broad avenue, a broad smile, broad shoulders, a broad accent** [a strong accent], **a broad hint** [a strong hint] and so on. These are weak collocations, in the sense that *broad* collocates with **a broad range** of different nouns.

Strong collocations and weak collocations form a continuum, with stronger ones at one end and weaker ones at the other. Most collocations lie somewhere between the two. For example, the (formal) adjective *picturesque* collocates with *village, location* and *town*, and so appears near the middle of the continuum.



D Types of collocations in this book

The collocations in this book are all frequently used in modern English. We used a corpus (a database of language) to check this. We have also selected the collocations which will be useful to you as an advanced learner. We pay most attention to those that are not predictable. *A broad avenue*, for example, would be predicted by any student who knows *broad* and *avenue*. However, the use of *broad* to mean *strong* as in **a broad accent** is more difficult to predict.

Exercises

2.1 Complete the collocations using the words in the box. You will need to use some words more than once.

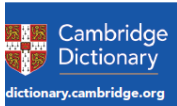
adjourn auburn broad deliriously inclement mitigating picturesque

- 1 a accent
- 2 in agreement
- 3 circumstances
- 4 factors
- 5 hair
- 6 happy
- 7 a smile
- 8 a location
- 9 a meeting
- 10 a town
- 11 a trial
- 12 weather

2.2 Rewrite each sentence using a collocation from 2.1.

- 1 Melissa has quite a strong Scottish accent.
- 2 Bad weather led to the cancellation of the President's garden party.
- 3 We were all very happy when we heard we'd won the award.
- 4 Their new home was in a very pretty location.
- 5 Because there were circumstances that made the theft less serious, the judge let him off with a warning.
- 6 I think we should stop the meeting now and continue it tomorrow.
- 7 She had a big smile on her face when she arrived.
- 8 She has lovely reddish-brown hair.
- 9 I think we're generally in agreement as to what should be done.

2.3 Think of as many collocations as you can for each word. Then look in a dictionary such as the Cambridge Online Dictionary for other suitable words. Write W (weak) or S (strong) next to each group depending on how many words you found.



- 1 extremely
- 2 an effort
- 3 cancel
- 4 deliver
- 5 a living
- 6 a meeting
- 7 feature
- 8 engage
- 9 bright

2.4 How useful do you think the collocations you have worked on in 2.2 and 2.3 are for you personally? Choose which collocations are most important to you and make sentences with them.

Over to you

Choose an English-language text that you have worked on recently. Underline five collocations in it. Are these collocations weak, strong or fixed?

Answers

Unit 2

- 2.1**
- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 a broad accent | 7 a broad smile |
| 2 in broad agreement | 8 a picturesque location |
| 3 mitigating circumstances | 9 adjourn a meeting |
| 4 mitigating factors | 10 a picturesque town |
| 5 auburn hair | 11 adjourn a trial |
| 6 deliriously happy | 12 inclement weather |

- 2.2**
- 1 Melissa has quite a **broad** Scottish accent.
 - 2 **Inclement** weather led to the cancellation of the President's garden party.
 - 3 We were all **deliriously** happy when we heard we'd won the award.
 - 4 Their new home was in a very **picturesque** location.
 - 5 Because there were **mitigating** circumstances, the judge let him off with a warning.
 - 6 I think we should **adjourn** the meeting **till/until** tomorrow.
 - 7 She had a **broad** smile on her face when she arrived.
 - 8 She has lovely **auburn** hair.
 - 9 I think we're **in broad** agreement as to what should be done.

2.3 Example answers:

	stronger	weaker
1 extremely hot / tired / easy / expensive	✓	
2 make / require / be an effort		✓
3 cancel a class / a meeting / a match / an agreement	✓	
4 deliver a letter / a warning / a baby / goods	✓	
5 earn / make / scrape a living		✓
6 in / have / call / hold a meeting	✓	
7 main / new / unique / best feature	✓	
8 engage with / the services of		✓
9 bright light / sunshine / idea / future	✓	

2.4 Possible example sentences:

I felt deliriously happy when I passed all my exams.
I must make an effort to learn more collocations.
It's difficult nowadays to make a living as a small shopkeeper.
We had to cancel the match because of the rain.

Follow-up

Ask your teacher to check your answers if you are not confident about them.