



Learn English Through
Stories.

U Series

Advanced Collocations

Adapted and modified by

Kulwant Singh Sandhu.

<https://learn-by-reading.co.uk>

Banta and His PGCE Course by K S Sandhu

Banta is completing his PGCE at the University of Wolverhampton, a demanding postgraduate course that prepares graduates to become qualified teachers in secondary schools. He has always dreamed of inspiring young minds, but the final months have tested his resilience more than he expected.

One stormy autumn evening, as the wind howled through the narrow streets of Wolverhampton, Banta sat in his small rented room reviewing lesson plans. His teeth chattered from the cold that seeped through the old windows, but he refused to take it easy for a while. Deadlines loomed, and he knew that if his standards slipped even slightly, his tutor might question his commitment.

The next day brought an unexpected challenge. During a teaching placement at a busy comprehensive school, a spate of disruptive behaviour erupted in his Year 11 class. A group of students, frustrated by recent exam pressure, started ignoring instructions and chatting loudly. Banta felt a barrage of doubt: was he really cut out for this profession?

Evidence suggests that many trainee teachers face similar moments of crisis, but Banta remembered advice from his mentor: when opportunity arises, seize it. Instead of losing his temper, he paused and drew up a simple contract with the class right there on the whiteboard. It outlined mutual respect, clear consequences, and rewards for effort. To his surprise, most students signed it willingly, and the atmosphere improved almost immediately.

That small victory gave him confidence, but greater tests awaited. A severe flu outbreak hit the school, and the disease spread rapidly among staff and pupils. Classes were halved, and Banta had to adapt lessons for online delivery overnight. The pressure was intense; he had to withstand the impact of exhaustion, technical glitches, and worried parents emailing at all hours.

One afternoon, his head of department offered him a tempting escape: postpone his final assessed lesson and reschedule for after half-term. It would mean less strain and more preparation time. Many would have passed up such a chance to avoid failure under stress, but Banta saw it differently. "No," he replied firmly. "This is the real test. If I can't handle it now, how will I cope in a full-time job?"

He prepared meticulously, incorporating snippets of student feedback from previous weeks. On the day of the observation, everything aligned perfectly.

The lesson flowed, engagement was high, and even the most reluctant learners participated. His tutor later praised his ability to maintain high expectations when others might have let standards slip.

Looking back, Banta realised that moment had been a stroke of luck combined with determination. The chaotic term had not broken him; it had forged him. He no longer viewed challenges as idle threats to his dream but as essential steps toward becoming the teacher he aspired to be.

As winter approached and smoke rose from chimneys across the city, Banta walked to campus with a quiet sense of pride. He had put early doubts behind him and embraced every difficulty. The PGCE was nearly complete, but the real journey—of lifelong learning and unwavering dedication—was only just beginning.

3

Grammatical categories of collocation

A Verb + noun

verb	noun	example	meaning of verb
draw up	a list a contract	Our lawyer drew up a contract for us to sign.	prepare something, usually official, in writing
pass up	a chance an opportunity	I didn't want to pass up the chance of seeing Hong Kong, so I agreed to go on the trip.	fail to take advantage of
withstand	pressure the impact	The police officer's vest can withstand the impact of a bullet.	bear

B Noun + verb

noun	verb	example
opportunity	arise	An opportunity arose for me to work in China, so I went and spent a year there.
standards	slip	People feel educational standards slipped when the government cut finances.

C Noun + noun

- Noun + noun collocations used to describe groups or sets:
 - There's been a **spate of attacks/thefts** in our area recently. [unusually large number happening in close succession]
 - The minister had to put up with a **barrage of questions/insults** from the angry audience. [unusually large number, happening at the same time]
- Noun + noun collocations used with uncountable nouns:
 - By a **stroke of luck** I found my keys in the rubbish bin! [sudden, unexpected piece of luck]
 - She gave me a **snippet of information** which is top secret. [small piece of information]

D Adjective + noun

This is not an **idle threat**; I will call the police if this happens again! [simply a threat]
 He waited in the **vain hope** that the minister would meet him. [unlikely to be fulfilled hope]
 There is **mounting concern/criticism/fury** over the decision. [growing concern, etc.]
 The **simple/plain truth** is that no one was aware of the problem.

E Adverb + adjective

The article provides an **intensely personal** account of the writer's relationship with his sons.
 Joe's sister was a **stunningly attractive** woman.

F Verb + adverb or prepositional phrase

The teenager tried to persuade his mother that he was innocent but he **failed miserably**.
 I don't like to travel with my brother because he **drives recklessly**. [wildly, without care]
 As soon as the singer came on stage she **burst into song**.
 If your dog starts to **foam at the mouth**, you should take it to the vet immediately.

G More complex collocations

Mary was looking forward to retiring and **taking it easy for a while**.
 It's time you **put the past behind you** and started focusing on the future.

Exercises

3.1 Match a word from each box to form collocations. Not all the collocations appear on the opposite page, so use a dictionary such as the Cambridge Online Dictionary to help you if necessary.

Cambridge
Dictionary
ry.cambridge.org

disease	evidence	opportunity	smoke
standards	teeth	wind	withstand

arises	chatter	howls	pressure
rises	slip	spreads	suggests

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 1 | 5 |
| 2 | 6 |
| 3 | 7 |
| 4 | 8 |

3.2 Complete each sentence using a collocation from 3.1 in the appropriate form.

- The scientific human beings first emerged in Africa.
- The was all night and it was raining, so I couldn't sleep.
- The machine has to be made of materials that can a lot of
- Oh, no! There's a fire. Look at the from those buildings.
- It was so cold I couldn't stop my from
- Our survey shows that parents believe have at the school.
- You must accompany Mason on one of his business trips to Asia, if the ever
- An alarming new is among cattle in the south of the country.

3.3 Rewrite the underlined part of each sentence using a collocation from the opposite page.

- I don't want to say no to the chance of meeting such a famous person.
- We'll have to write a contract before you start work, as it's a new position.
- You're working too hard. You should try to relax for a short period of time.
- This new bullet-proof car can take the impact of a rocket-propelled grenade.
- Do you have any interesting little bits of information about our new boss to tell us?
- The minister faced a large number of questions from reporters.
- I had some luck last week. The police found my stolen wallet and nothing was missing.
- There's been a number of violent attacks in the area recently.
- After her divorce Mandy was determined to forget the past and build a new life.

3.4 Answer these questions.

- Who do you think is the most stunningly attractive person you have ever seen?
- What should you do if you are in a car with someone who is driving recklessly?
- Do you prefer walking in the country if there is a gentle breeze or a strong wind?
- Would you write your most intensely personal thoughts and feelings in your diary?

3.5 Choose the correct collocation.

- He said he would throw us out, but it was just a(n) *vain / idle / lazy* threat.
- They rushed the victim to hospital, in the *idle / simple / vain* hope of saving her life.
- The government is encountering *mounting / climbing / rising* criticism of its policies.
- There is *raising / mounting / vain* concern across the world about climate change.
- The horse was *fuming / foaming / fainting* at the mouth, so we called the vet.
- Suddenly, without warning, Marta *busted / bustled / burst* into song.
- The *right / straight / plain* truth is that I hate my job.
- I tried to persuade her but I'm afraid I failed *desperately / miserably / wholeheartedly*.

Answers

3.1 The collocations are:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 disease spreads | 5 standards slip |
| 2 evidence suggests | 6 teeth chatter |
| 3 opportunity arises | 7 wind howls |
| 4 smoke rises | 8 withstand pressure |

- ### 3.2
- 1 evidence suggests
 - 2 wind; howling
 - 3 withstand; pressure
 - 4 smoke rising

- 5 teeth; chattering
- 6 standards; slipped
- 7 opportunity; arises
- 8 disease; spreading

- ### 3.3
- 1 pass up
 - 2 draw up
 - 3 take it easy for a while
 - 4 withstand
 - 5 snippets
 - 6 barrage
 - 7 a stroke of
 - 8 spate
 - 9 put the past behind her

3.4 *Author's answers:*

- 1 My husband, of course!
- 2 You could tell them to drive more carefully or you could say that you want to get out.
- 3 It depends on my mood. A gentle breeze is pleasant but a strong wind can be very exhilarating.
- 4 Sometimes I do. But then I have to remember to be careful not to leave my diary lying around.