

# 3

## Grammatical categories of collocation

### A Verb + noun

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

### B Noun + verb

noun	verb	example
opportunity	arise	An <b>opportunity arose</b> for me to work in China, so I went and spent a year there.
standards	slip	People feel educational <b>standards slipped</b> 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 to help you if necessary.

<b>A</b> disease standards	evidence teeth	opportunity wind	smoke withstand	<b>B</b> arises rises	chatter slip	howls spreads	pressure suggests
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|---------|---------|
| 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 Bob 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, Marjorie *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*.