

flax
interactive language learning

library demos downloads about Login

The Best of Password

About Collection Search Browse Activities Collocations Wordlist My Cherry Basket

Browse Documents by Title

All Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4

- Adventure sports (Level 4)
- The beekeeper (Level 1)
- Family history, genealogy and whakapapa (Level 4)
- Fishing (Level 2)
- Going to the doctor (Level 1)
- Holiday plans (Level 1)
- The kwi bach (Level 3)
- Kiwi food (Level 2)
- Lifelines (Level 1)
- Making goals for learning English (Level 2)
- A Maori creation story (Level 2)
- The parliamentary system in NZ (Level 3)
- Preserving Te Reo Maori (Level 3)
- Using the internet to study English (Level 3)
- What do you eat? (Level 2)
- Why do you need to keep your first language? (Level 4)
- Will you be my CUP? (Level 4)
- Witi Ihimaera -- a Maori writer (Level 4)
- Working on organic farms (Level 2)
- Writing poetry in English (Level 4)

The Best of Password collection

The Best of Password

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About this collection

This collection contains 20 items originally published in *Password*, a magazine for new speakers of English that contains articles, exercises and teaching notes. They were republished by Puriri Press in *The Best of Password 7*, edited by H. Denny, A. Sachtleben and V. Yee. We gratefully acknowledge the editors' permission to build and distribute this digital library collection. For more information, or to subscribe to *Password*, please go to www.password.org.nz

About the Best of Password collection

2. Collections

FLAX organizes documents into *collections* ranging from one or two documents to millions of them. Typically, language teachers either build a small collection themselves with a handful of documents that they choose, or make use of collections that others have built or ones distributed with FLAX as samples. Collections need not be small, however; underpinning the FLAX system is digital library technology that can accommodate vast collections, including entire libraries. First we look at how collections are used – by both students and teachers. Later we will see how to create them (Chapter 6).

The top picture opposite shows the “browsing” page of a FLAX collection entitled *The Best of Password* (this collection is distributed with the software). Beneath that is the “home page,” which is where you go when you click the *About Collection* button in the control bar near the top of the page. The other buttons let you access the documents in different ways. (Some of them do not always appear; it depends on how the collection was built.)

This is what the buttons do:

- *Search* enables you to search the collection for particular documents, paragraphs, or sentences that contain particular words; or search for particular collocations
- *Browse* lets you browse the documents by title
- *Activities* takes you to language games that have been built for the collection, and allows you to create new ones
- *Collocations* lets you study the collocations in the documents
- *Wordlist* presents the words in the collection, sorted by how often they occur
- *My Cherry Basket* shows you any collocations (“cherries”) that you have collected.

As the home page explains, this collection contains articles published in *Password*, a New Zealand magazine for new speakers of English that contains articles, exercises and teaching notes.³

³ Published by Puriri Press as *The Best of Password 7*, edited by H. Denny, A. Sachtleben and V. Yee. We gratefully acknowledge the editors' permission to build and distribute this collection. To subscribe to *Password*, please visit <http://www.password.org.nz>.

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[<=Back to document list](#)

Adventure sports

Original wordlist adjective noun preposition verb

Audio (British English)



Many young tourists are attracted to New Zealand because of the exciting adventures that are easily available.

Young New Zealanders have developed these activities because of the special thrill there is in facing and overcoming danger. The adventures can take place on land, in the air or in the water.

Water sports are very popular. The many fast-flowing rivers provide the opportunity for rafting -- particularly in the Bay of Plenty and around Queenstown. Trips can be from a few hours to several days, and a trained guide stays with the group to ensure safety and provide all the necessary equipment. If the trip follows the river underground through caves, it is called black-water rafting. On these rivers you can also go jet-boating. You will have to fasten your seat belt before powering through narrow rocky places or swooping along shallow streams.

A recent activity is canyoning, where the adventure junkie goes down rivers, waterfalls and rock faces all provided by nature. For those who like diving, it is possible to see mako sharks close up from inside the safety of a cage lowered into the water.

There are adventures on land, too. Wind-powered go-karts race along sandy beaches at high speed, and zorbing (a Kiwi invention) has you strapped inside a plastic ball that rolls downhill at speeds of up to 50km per hour.

To experience thrills in the air, there is fly-by-wire, another Kiwi invention. In this sport you sit in a car and swing to and fro like a pendulum. The thermal air currents in the central Otago region are perfect for parapenting -- a mixture of hang-gliding and parachuting. You sit in a harness under a small parachute that you can steer, moving along on the air currents. Sky-diving is even more thrilling, starting with the 30 seconds of free fall at the alarming speed of 200km per hour when you jump from the plane, but then the parachute opens and you drift down and enjoy the view. A combination activity that is most enjoyable is heli-skiing. You go up the mountains in the helicopter, and land at the top of a good slope. Then you simply ski down. There is a 10-kilometre run from the Tasman Glacier in Mt Cook National Park.

"Adventure sports," a document in the *Best of Password* collection

2.1 Documents

There are 20 documents in the *Best of Password* collection. Here is one, called "Adventure sports." Most of them address topics relevant to New Zealand, and this is no exception. It is often helpful for teachers to create their own collections that contain documents relevant in a local context, or focused on a particular topic area (such as business, or geology). That way, students can work with documents they can easily relate to, and learn vocabulary and expressions used in that context. You will soon learn how to create collections of your own documents (Chapter 6).

The text talks about adventure sports in New Zealand. The illustration shows the original form of the document; you can also display a version in which collocations are highlighted. The tab labeled *wordlist* highlights certain words in the document: ones in the top 1000 English words, or the top 2000, or academic words (you can choose). The *adjective* tab highlights collocations that begin with an adjective. *Noun*, *preposition* and *verb* do the same for other parts of speech. Not all such collocations are highlighted because part of speech detection is done automatically, and is not infallible. (For example, sentence-initial nouns are tagged as proper nouns and excluded from collocations.) We will learn more about collocations and how they are identified later (Section 4.2).

The accompanying image illustrates white-water rafting and rock-climbing. It is easy to associate images with documents when creating your own collections. Often just one image is associated with each document, and it is displayed at the beginning as an introductory illustration (as here). Sometimes people make collections where each "document" is an image, along with a caption or some explanatory text. It is possible to associate several images with a document, in which case they are equally spaced throughout it. The documents you include in FLAX collections are intended to be simple: controlled image placement is not possible. You can also associate YouTube movies with documents.

Audio versions of the document are available too. If the player widget above the document image is activated, FLAX reads the document to you. In fact, there are two audio versions of documents in this collection: one in British English (as shown) and the other in New Zealand English (accessed by the menu). This facility allows students to listen to documents as well as read them -- but you can include any audio accompaniment, not just a spoken version. Being able to listen to documents enables various "dictation" activities. When creating your own collections it is up to you to provide appropriate audio files, if you want. You need to record them separately, not in FLAX.

The screenshot shows the FLAX website interface. At the top, there is a logo for 'flax interactive language learning' and navigation links for 'library', 'demos', 'downloads', 'about', and 'Login'. Below the logo is a green banner with the text 'The Best of Password'. A navigation bar contains buttons for 'About Collection', 'Search', 'Browse', 'Activities', 'Collocations', 'Wordlist', and 'My Cherry Basket'. The 'Search' button is highlighted. Below the navigation bar, there is a search box with the text 'Search for articles that contain the words young' and a 'search' button. Below the search box, there is a green banner that says 'Search Result: 4 documents matched the query'. Below this banner, there is a list of four items: 'Preserving Te Reo Maori', 'Adventure sports', 'Fishing', and 'Family history, genealogy and whakapapa'.

Searching the *Best of Password* collection for the word “young”

The screenshot shows the FLAX website interface. At the top, there is a logo for 'flax interactive language learning' and navigation links for 'library', 'demos', 'downloads', 'about', and 'Login'. Below the logo is a green banner with the text 'The Best of Password'. A navigation bar contains buttons for 'About Collection', 'Search', 'Browse', 'Activities', 'Collocations', 'Wordlist', and 'My Cherry Basket'. The 'Search' button is highlighted. Below the navigation bar, there is a search box with the text 'Search for collocations that contain the words identity' and a 'search' button. Below the search box, there is a green banner that says 'Search Result: 3 collocation(s) matched the query.'. Below this banner, there is a table with two columns: 'Verb (2)' and 'Adjective (1)'. The table contains three rows of results. The first row is 'retain their identity' with a cherry icon. The second row is 'keeping their identity' with a cherry icon. The third row is 'cultural identity' with a cherry icon. Each row has a small icon of a cherry next to it.

Searching for collocations that involve the word *identity*

2.2 Searching

When you press the *Search* button you get a standard box into which you type a word (or words) to seek. The illustration shows a search for the word “young.” In this case four documents are returned, and their titles are shown. Clicking the second one, for example, leads to the “Adventure sports” article we saw earlier. The only difference is that (depending on your Web browser setup) the search term – the word “young” – is highlighted in yellow wherever it appears in the document.

Searching is case-insensitive: the result is the same whether the query uses capital letters or small letters (*Young* is the same as *young*). However, you need to get the ending right – *computers* is *not* the same as *computer*. And if you specify more than one word, documents that contain any of them are returned. If you want to look for a phrase like *adventure sports* you need to put it in quotation marks.

Searching in FLAX is fast: even collections with millions of documents are searched almost instantly. If it seems slow for you, that’s because of the network connection, not the searching itself. FLAX is built on digital library technology that is extremely efficient for large collections.

As well as searching articles and titles, you can also search collocations. You do this by pulling down the menu labeled *Search for articles* and selecting *collocations*. For example, a search for *identity* returns three collocations:

- *retain their identity*
- *keeping their identity*
- *cultural identity*.

Each of these appears in an article in the collection. The first two involve verbs, and are shown in the bottom image; the third involves an adjective and appears under the *Adjective* tab. Alongside each is shown the context in which it appears. There are ways of exploring collocations further – e.g., clicking *retain* in the second example brings up many other collocations that use this word. There are ways of seeking documents that contain that particular collocation on the Web. And there are ways of “picking” the collocation and putting it into your own basket of favorite collocations. We will learn more about these when we look at FLAX’s collocation facilities (Section 4.2).

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar with the 'flax' logo and 'interactive language learning' text. Below the logo are links for 'library', 'demos', 'downloads', 'about', and 'Login'. The main heading is 'The Best of Password'. A secondary navigation bar contains buttons for 'About Collection', 'Search', 'Browse', 'Activities', 'Collocations', 'Wordlist', and 'My Cherry Basket'. Below this is a section titled 'Browse Documents by Difficulty Level' with buttons for 'All', 'Level 1', 'Level 2', 'Level 3', and 'Level 4'. The 'Level 1' button is highlighted, and a list of documents is displayed:

- Holiday plans
- The beekeeper
- Lifelines
- Going to the doctor

Browsing the *Best of Password* collection: Level 1 documents

The screenshot shows the same website interface as above, but with the 'Level 2' button highlighted in the 'Browse Documents by Difficulty Level' section. The list of documents is:

- A Maori creation story
- Fishing
- Kiwi food
- What do you eat?
- Making goals for learning English
- Working on organic farms

Browsing the *Best of Password* collection: Level 2 documents

2.3 Browsing

The *Browse* button on the collection's home page lists all the documents in it. We saw earlier the twenty documents in the *Best of Password* collection. Clicking any one displays the document, just as before.

Each document is assigned a difficulty level by the user when the collection is created. The illustration shows the Level 1 and Level 2 documents separately. In this example the levels range from 1 to 4, easy to hard. However, you can type in your own levels when you create a collection, so that instead of numbers the levels might be the words *easy*, *moderate*, and *hard*. When you create a collection it's up to you to decide what difficulty scale to use.

You can see just the documents at a particular difficulty level using the buttons on the browsing page above the list of document titles.

2.4 Activities, collocations, wordlist, cherry basket

The remaining four navigation buttons on the collection's home page are discussed later.

- *Activities* takes you to language games that have been built for the collection, and allows you to create new ones.

FLAX activities are discussed in Chapter 4. This button does not appear if you are working in Moodle, where language activities are instead integrated into the course and you create new ones using Moodle's *Add an activity* menu.

- *Collocations* lets you study the collocations in the documents.

Collocations are small sequences of words that often appear together. They are discussed in Section 4.2.

- *Wordlist* shows you the words in all the documents in the collection.

You can look at all the words, or just the words in various standard lists – the most common 1000 or 2000 words in English, or the academic words. This is discussed in Section 5.2.

- *My Cherry Basket* shows you the collocations ("cherries") that you have collected.

FLAX provides a facility for "picking" favorite collocations and saving them in a kind of notebook that we call a cherry basket. These are discussed in Section 5.5.