



The *Web phrases* collection



The *Learning Collocations* collection

7. Language learning resources

FLAX includes two large language learning resources: Web Phrases and Learning Collocations.

This section examines these resources and how they can be utilized in language learning. They contain authentic written text drawn from various sources and representing contemporary English use. The first, Web Phrases, is built from web text, which has been preprocessed and organized into a searchable database, along with a user interface and flexible searching and browsing facilities to cater for different user needs. The second, Learning Collocations, is built from the British National Corpus, the British Academic Written English and Wikipedia, again preprocessed and organized as a searchable database with a similarly flexible user interface, which in both cases the text.

The next two sections describe the Web Phrases and Learning Collocations resources. Following that, we examine how these resources can be used to support general and academic writing, using a series of scenarios that take place within a genuine teaching and learning context.

Web phrases

Type in your word(s) (up to 4 words)
 use * or - to find words in between, for example is ** responsible"

search for phrases following

return up to phrases

group by word type

Result

Fragment	Frequency
be	2,300,000,000
be responsible	6,000,000

- + be responsible for (5,100,000)
- + be responsible or (200,000)
- + be responsible to (170,000)
- + be responsible and (54,000)
- + be responsible in (37,000)
- + be responsible if (34,000)
- + be responsible of (8,000)
- + be responsible with (7,500)
- + be responsible only (5,700)
- + be responsible citizens (5,400)

Searching for *be responsible* in Web Phrases

- + be responsible for (5,100,000)
- + be responsible for the (1,000,000)
- + be responsible for any (450,000)
- + be responsible for all (200,000)
- + be responsible for lost (85,000)
- + be responsible for providing (82,000)
- + be responsible for ensuring (69,000)
- + be responsible for their (64,000)
- + be responsible for a (63,000)
- + be responsible for items (56,000)
- + be responsible for developing (56,000)
 - + be responsible for developing and (18,000)
 - + be responsible for developing the (5,400)
 - + be responsible for developing a (5,100)
 - + be responsible for developing new (2,800)
 - + be responsible for developing an (1,200)
 - + be responsible for developing business (1,000)
 - + be responsible for developing relationships (380)
 - + be responsible for developing policies (350)
 - + be responsible for developing procedures (280)
 - + be responsible for developing their (280)
 - + be responsible for developing sales (270)

Further exploration of *be responsible*

- + be held responsible (1,700,000)
- + be solely responsible (95,000)
- + be a responsible (50,000)
- + be more responsible (26,000)
- + be directly responsible (24,000)
- + be fully responsible (23,000)
- + be financially responsible (22,000)
- + be primarily responsible (21,000)
- + be made responsible (16,000)
- + be personally responsible (12,000)
- + be the responsible (11,000)
- + be partly responsible (10,000)
- + be legally responsible (9,200)
- + be fiscally responsible (8,600)
- + be socially responsible (7,500)
- + be partially responsible (6,200)
- + be ultimately responsible (6,000)
- + be jointly responsible (5,700)
- + be hold responsible (5,200)
- + be largely responsible (4,800)
- + be entirely responsible (4,400)
- + be completely responsible (3,900)

Results of the search *be * responsible*

7.1 Web Phrases

The Web Phrases resource was developed from a database containing a vast set of word sequences in the English language, along with their frequencies. The data was collected from publicly accessible Web pages that together comprised approximately one trillion word tokens. The word sequences range from single words to units of five consecutive words. FLAX's Web Phrases resource contains 50,000 unique words, 14 million two-word sequences, 420 million three-word sequences, 500 million four-word sequences, and 380 million five-word sequences. It allows free exploration of word combinations, unconstrained by grammatical class. With it, users can study particular words and phrases to check whether and to what extent what they are writing represents common usage.

Users can find what words most commonly follow a particular word or phrase. The interface contains three parts, shown in the top illustration. Here, the user has typed the phrase *be responsible* into the upper part of the interface. A small statistical table shows the frequency with which this phrase, and any constituent prefix phrases (here, the word *be*), appears in the Web Phrases collection. Beside it is an expandable list (only the first ten lines are shown) that displays associated phrases in reverse frequency order, along with their frequency counts.

The most frequent words following *be responsible* are *for*, *or*, *to*, and, etc. (in that order). When the plus sign beside *be responsible for* is clicked, the tree expands as shown in the lower left-hand image, displaying the extensions of these phrases, again in frequency order; here, the expanded phrase *be responsible for developing* has also been clicked. In addition the table and graph update accordingly (not shown in the illustration).

A phrase can be expanded up to five words, or until no further extensions are found. Once the phrase length reaches five words, the database contains no further extensions – but if you click on a five word phrase, the system will retrieve from the Web examples of text that use it.

The illustration shows searching in the forward direction, but users can also search backwards by specifying the *phrases preceding* option – giving, in this case, phrases like *will be responsible*, *shall be responsible*, *may be responsible*.

Furthermore, an asterisk (*) can be used to stand for any word. This allows users to find words that occur between other words of a phrase. The lower right-hand illustration shows the adverbs that intervene between *be* and *responsible* – *solely*, *directly*, *fully*, etc.. Further asterisks can be added, for example, *be ** responsible*, *be *** responsible*, and *be * responsible * the*.

Finally, common words like *the*, *a*, *of*, and *to* are dominant constituents of phrases, and often make it hard for users to discern useful language patterns. The *group by word type* option addresses this problem by letting users look up the words following or preceding a phrase by their grammatical part of speech – preposition, verb, noun, adjective, etc..

used as a noun							
research + noun		research project	303		research contract	103	
		research programme	237		research work	102	
		market research	209		research students	95	
		research findings	141		research interests	82	
		research team	130		research methods	80	
>>>> more							
adjective + research		social research	159		medical research	90	
			social research	159		ch research	70
			social science research	20		research	60
			Social research	11		ch	59
			social research methods	4		research	56
noun + of + research			quantitative social research	3	>>> more		
			social mobility research	2		research	34
			social work research	2		rch	26
			social survey research	2		arch	25
			social science research students	2		research	23
			empirical social research	2		arch	22
			contemporary social research	2	>>> more		
			social scientific research	2		research	9
			social services research	1		n research	9
			social science research computing projects	1		between research	9
research + preposition + noun			basic social research	1		research	9
			social policy research unit	1		between research	9
			in-depth social science research	1		research	9

related words							
research	hypothesis	scientific	empirical	method	prediction	academic	researcher
hourglass	quantitative	journal	knowledge	criticism	evidence	vary	outcome
	scientific method	3		scientific information	1		
	embodied in the scientific method	1		scientific methods	1		
	variety of scientific matters	1		scientific testing	1		
	application of the scientific method	1		classical scientific methods	1		
	rounds of scientific testing	1		scientific research	1		
	alternative to purely scientific methods	1		use the scientific method	1		
	purely scientific	1		provides scientific information	1		
	in the scientific method	1		funding for scientific research	1		
	scientific matters	1					
>>> more							
definitions							
Research can be defined as the search for knowledge, or as any systematic investigation, with an open mind, to establish novel facts, solve new or existing problems, prove new ideas, or develop new theories, usually using a scientific method. [Wikipedia]							
extended definitions from wiktionary							
related topics in Wikipedia							
Social sciences				Research and development			
Science				Peer review			
Academic journal				Discovery (observation)			
Academic conference				Case study			
Pure research				Knowledge			

Searching for *research* in *Learning Collocations*

7.2 Learning Collocations

The Learning Collocations resource contains a host of collocations covering most English words. It is split into three databases, each sourcing collocations from a different body of text: standard and general English (the British National Corpus), specialized academic written text (the British Academic Written English Corpus), and a contemporary crowd-sourced resource (Wikipedia). Word combinations that follow 17 common syntactic patterns (verb + noun, noun + noun, adjective + noun, noun + *of* + noun, etc.) are extracted, sorted by frequency, and presented in an easy-to-use interface, with links to their original context.

This resource works as follows. The user types a term of interest and selects one of the three databases: standard, academic, and contemporary English. In the illustration, the term is *research*, with the contemporary English (Wikipedia) database. The system retrieves and displays collocations and other information about the term.

At the top are family words, that is, inflected and derived forms of the query term — in this case *researches*, *researching*, *researched*, *researcher* and *researchers*. Clicking any of these will re-invoke a search using it as the query term. Links to the term's synonyms and antonyms appear on the right: standard resources (WordNet and Roget's thesaurus) are used to identify these.

The illustration shows collocations of the word *research* "used as a noun", and four syntactic patterns are visible: *research* + noun, adjective + *research*, noun + *of* + *research*, *research* + preposition + noun. There are five further patterns, that can also be shown. And *research* can also be "used as a verb", with a further seven patterns.

For each pattern, ten collocations are displayed, along with their frequencies. Clicking one — *social research*, in the illustration — brings up a superimposed panel displaying similar collocations, with links that retrieve samples in context from the original text. Learners can use the cherry icon to place collocations of interest into their cherry basket (Section 5.5).

The panel beneath shows words that are related to the query term: in this case, *hypothesis*, *scientific*, *empirical*, *method*, *prediction*, *academic*, *researcher*, Here, *scientific* has been clicked, bringing up a panel showing collocations associated with that word: *scientific method*, *scientific information*,

At the bottom, FLAX gives a definition of the query term (from Wikipedia), and related topics (also derived from Wikipedia). Mousing over a topic brings up its definition.

Typing more than one word retrieves collocations containing all the query terms, regardless of word order. This is a good way to expand a learner's knowledge of correct usage. For example, the query *benefit public* yields *public benefit*, *benefit to the public*, *benefit the public*, *reserved for the public benefit*, and so on.

used as a noun

alcohol + noun	alcohol consumption	116	alcohol limit	18
	alcohol misuse	116	alcohol consumption	18
noun + of + alcohol	Correlations between alcohol consumption and incidences were evaluated by linear regression analysis.		alcohol consumption	10
	The incidence of pancreatitis discharges correlated with the alcohol consumption in Finland ($r=0.78$, $p=0.0001$).		alcohol consumption	10
	In Finland alcohol consumption has shown an increase the 1990s, which is in contrast with other European countries.		alcohol consumption	14
	As with oropharyngeal cancers, alcohol consumption in combination with tobacco smoking increases the risk substantially [8].		alcohol consumption	10
	Between 1970/789 alcohol consumption increased during 1970/774 and 1984/789, but was relatively stable during 1975/783 (Fig 1).		alcohol consumption	9
	The alcohol consumption in Finland correlated significantly with the incidence of liver cirrhosis discharges ($r=0.65$, $p=0.002$).		alcohol consumption	8
	I do not wish to enter into the rights and wrongs of meat consumption versus vegetarianism or alcohol consumption versus abstinence.		alcohol consumption	8

Searching for *alcohol* in Learning Collocations

used as a noun

advertising + noun	advertising campaign	160	television advertising	31
	advertising agency	108	cigarette advertising	27
	tobacco advertising	94	advertising expenditure	20
	advertising revenue	79	advertising space	19
	advertising industry	35	advertising business	19
adjective + advertising	free advertising	12	current advertising	7
	political advertising	9	false advertising	6
	local advertising	9	major advertising campaign	5
	national advertising	8	heavy advertising	5
	new advertising campaign	7	direct advertising	5
noun + of + advertising	form of advertising	14	power of advertising	5
	effects of advertising	6	use of advertising	5
	role of advertising	6	amount of advertising	4
	medium of advertising	5	sort of advertising	4
	advertising of tobacco	5	kind of advertising	4

Searching for *advertising* in Learning Collocations

family words: *banned banning bans*

used as a noun

adjective + ban	total ban	73	verb:
	complete ban	33	forbid prohibit interdict proscribe veto disallow censor outlaw criminalize criminalise banish expel ostracize ostracise shun blackball
	three-match ban	16	noun:
	immediate ban	15	prohibition proscription decree edict fiat order rescript banning forbidding BAN baccalaureate
	international ban	14	

Synonyms of *ban* in Learning Collocations

7.3 Preparing for essay-writing

Knowing collocations of a term that is central to what students are writing about can help them express ideas fluently and accurately. Teachers often recommend collecting a few topic-specific collocations and expressions before starting writing. The Learning Collocations described in the previous section can help.

As an example, we use an essay entitled “Alcohol advertising: Should it be banned?” The first step is to identify keywords for the topic: *alcohol*, *advertising*, and *ban* are obvious candidates. Next the learner seeks collocations that are germane to the topic. This can stimulate a brainstorming process, because students might encounter new and inspiring ideas. Thus it is a good idea to collect several collocations, even though many might not end up in the text. Here are four sample collocations for each keyword:

<i>alcohol</i>	<i>advertising</i>	<i>ban</i>
alcohol consumption	effects/power/impact of advertising	ban on tobacco advertising
amount of alcohol	advertising	advertising ban
excess alcohol	heavy advertising	legislation to ban
addicted to alcohol	funded by advertising	supported the ban

It is not always possible to find exactly matched collocations. However, words can sometimes be substituted or added to relate a collocation to the topic. In the Table, *ban on tobacco advertising* can be changed to *ban on alcohol advertising*, *heavy advertising* to *heavy alcohol advertising*, and *legislation to ban* to *legislation to ban alcohol advertising*.





















Sample sentences can be a fruitful source of useful expressions. In the upper image, *correlations between alcohol consumption and incidences* is a good example. From this expression, plausible sentences like “There is a positive correlation between advertising familiarity and alcohol consumption” can be constructed. Likewise, some collocations in the above Table can be further extended, such as *a fair amount of alcohol*, *driving with excess alcohol*, and *become addicted to alcohol*.

Collecting and using semantically similar collocations is an effective way to avoid repetition and increase lexical variety, like this:

This following section focuses on the effects of alcohol advertising on increasing drinking behaviors. The power of alcohol portrayal on The impact of liquor advertisements on

Here, the repeated use of synonyms *effects*, *power*, and *impact* also helps to increase the cohesion of the writing.

Another way of reducing repetition is to explore synonyms and their collocations. For example, the synonyms *forbid* and *prohibit* for the word *ban* are shown in the bottom image.

used as an adjective				
related + noun	 related activity	53	 related papers	29
	 related species	39	 related subjects	28
	 related issues	39	 related areas	26
	 related problems	32	 related fields	20
	 related matters	29	 related development	19
	>>> more			
adverb + related	 closely related	93	 broadly related	3
	 semantically related	13	 environmentally related	3
	 distantly related	6	 antigenically related	3
	 less related	4	 contextually related	2
	 newly related	4	 causally related	2
>>> more				

Search for *related* in Learning Collocations

verb + opinion	express an opinion	18	changed his opinion	6
	have an opinion	8	voice an opinion	6
	have an opinion	8	asked his opinion	6
	having the required reasonable opinion	3	influencing public opinion	5
	have opinions	3	venture an opinion	4
	have strong opinions	3	>>> more	
	have an opinion on	2		
	had an opinion	2		
	had this opinion of	1		
	had an opinion on	1		
	have your opinion regarding	1		
	have different opinions	1		
	had the highest opinion of	1		
	had pacifist opinion found	1		
	have the opposite opinion	1		
	<p>■ But that would be a plausible prediction only for members of a constant and self-conscious majority of opinion, and if such a majority existed so would a self-conscious minority that would have the opposite opinion.</p>			
	have firm opinions	1		

Search for *opinion* in Learning Collocations

adjective + profit	net profit	259	good profit	19
	pre-tax profit	70	healthy profit	16
	gross profit	22	quick profit	13
	small profit	22	potential profit	11
	private profit	20	maximum profit	11
>>> more				

Search for *profit* in Learning Collocations

7.4 Choosing the appropriate word

Do the phrases “learn knowledge” and “big rain” sound odd to you? Many students have difficulty in finding the right words to express their ideas, because they lack collocation knowledge or are unduly influenced by their mother tongue. (Both these phrases are natural in Chinese). As a result, they tend to formulate inappropriate word combinations, or overuse general modifiers such as *more*, *very*, *bad*, *good*, etc. This is particularly noticeable in verb + noun, adverb + verb, and adjective + noun combinations, as in the following sentences, where infelicitous phrases appear in bold:

*Alcohol advertising is **actively related** to alcohol consumption, and the consumption can lead to fatalities.*

*Some people argue that the alcohol product advertising should be banned and others **keep the opinion** against it.*

*While many alcohol companies are enjoying **lucrative profits**, their alcohol advertising activities are being challenged by the general public and researchers.*

In the first example, the student has used the adverb *actively* in an attempt to emphasize the strong correlation between *alcohol advertising* and *consumption*. In the second, *keep* is not an appropriate verb to associate with the noun *opinion*. The last example, *lucrative profits*, is a bizarre combination: *lucrative* is commonly used with *business*, *market*, *career*, etc., but not with *profit*.

The Learning Collocations resource is an excellent source of plausible word combinations. It is fairly easy to locate appropriate verbs or adjectives for a particular noun, or appropriate adverbs for a particular verb. Here are some collocates of *related*, *opinion*, and *profit*, retrieved from Learning Collocations:

<i>related</i>	<i>opinion</i>	<i>profit</i>
closely related	express an opinion	substantial profit
highly related	have an opinion	increased profit
clearly related	voice an opinion	considerable profit

In the first example sentence above, *closely*, *highly*, and *clearly* are all far more appropriate than *actively*. In the second, *express*, *have* and *voice* all seem to fit the context. In fact, this sentence can be further improved by including *have an opposite opinion*; a student can find this by examining the extensions of *have an opinion* shown in the middle image. In the third example sentence, *lucrative* can be replaced with *substantial*, *increased*, or *considerable* to express the intended idea.

used as an adjective				
harmful + noun	harmful effects	52	harmful emissions	10
	harmful consequences	13	harmful bacteria	9
	harmful rays	12	harmful chemicals	4
	harmful substances	12	harmful wastes	4
	harmful side-effects	11	harmful beings	4
>>> more				
adverb + harmful	potentially harmful	45	possibly harmful	6
	less harmful	10	socially harmful	3
	positively harmful	7	allegedly harmful	2
	environmentally harmful	7	extremely harmful	2
	particularly harmful	6	necessarily harmful	2
>>> more				
harmful + preposition + noun	harmful to the environment	11	harmful to society	3
	harmful to health	7	harmful to women	2
	harmful to the interests	4	harmful to people	2
	harmful to children	3	harmful to the vine	2
	harmful to others	3	harmful to humans	2
>>> more				

Search for *harmful* in Learning Collocations

adverb + lead	eventually lead to	39	probably lead to	14
	inevitably lead to	31	simply lead to	13
	well lead to	30	necessarily lead to	9
	ultimately lead to	24	usually lead to	7
	easily lead to	21	undoubtedly lead to	6
	>>> more			

Search for *lead* in Learning Collocations

exposed + preposition + noun	exposed to the sun	10	exposed to the elements	5
	exposed to the air	8	exposed to blood	4
	exposed to the risk of	7	exposed to the light	3
	exposed to radiation	6	exposed at low tide	3
	exposed to risks to	5	exposed to high concentrations of	3
>>> more				
adverb + exposed	fully exposed	14	increasingly exposed	3
	regularly exposed to	5	naturally exposed to	3
	completely exposed	4	briefly exposed to	3
	constantly exposed to	4	sub-aerially exposed	2
	totally exposed	3	continually exposed to	2
>>> more				

Search for *exposed* in Learning Collocations

7.5 Hedging and boosting

Adding adverbs to qualify statements is a common rhetorical device, particularly in academic writing. But students often have trouble hedging or boosting statements appropriately and precisely. As a result, they overuse general adverbs such as *very*, *more*, and *much* to weaken or strengthen their claim, and sometimes invalidate statements by choosing highly specific qualifiers. Consider these:

*Alcohol is **very harmful** to their physical and psychological health.*

*It is a common sense that the more ads we are exposed to, the more likely we are to be seduced to drink and may drink excessively, which **inevitably leads to** disasters while driving.*

*Smart (1988) however had reviewed many other research and admitted that the link between the advertising and consumption was weak and awaiting more comprehensive research, while at the same time confirmed that alcohol drinkers **were definitely exposed to** alcohol advertising and their consuming behaviors were in fact continuing to increase.*

The *very* in the first example is probably the most common adverb used by novice writers to add extra strength to a statement. Students commonly rely on such adverbs to help voice opinions because of their restricted vocabulary knowledge. These adverbs are weak and ambiguous, and should be avoided in academic writing. In the second and third examples, the adverbs *inevitably* and *definitely* are used to express a high degree of certainty. However, these qualifiers are too extreme. Excessive drinking does not *necessarily* lead to driving disasters, and not all alcohol drinkers are influenced by liquor advertisements.

The Learning Collocations resource can help writers find appropriate hedges and boosters. Here are some examples that are commonly associated with *harmful*, *lead to* and *exposed to*, expressing various degrees of certainty:

<i>harmful</i>	<i>lead to</i>	<i>exposed to</i>
potentially harmful	probably lead to	regularly exposed to
possibly harmful	easily lead to	constantly exposed to
apparently harmful	usually lead to	increasingly exposed to
particularly harmful	ultimately lead to	naturally exposed to
extremely harmful	inevitably lead to	continually exposed to

adverb + reduce	significantly reduce	34	thereby reduce	16
	considerably reduce	21	gradually reduce	11
	greatly reduce	20	actually reduce	10
	further reduce	18	well reduce	9
	substantially reduce	17	drastically reduce	9

>>> more

Search for *reduce* in Learning Collocations

adjective + behaviour	linguistic behaviour	37	disruptive behaviour	31
	anti-social behaviour	37	strange behaviour	30
	individual behaviour	34	acceptable behaviour	29
	undesirable behaviour	34	chaotic behaviour	27
	unacceptable behaviour	34	deviant behaviour	26

>>> more

Search for *behaviour* in Learning Collocations

verb + problem	solve the problem	123	have the problem of	21
	tackle the problem of	37	face the problem of	20
	overcome this problem	35	causing the problem	16
	resolve the problem	33	see the problem	14
	address the problem of	27	cure the problem	14

>>> more

Search for *problem* in Learning Collocations

adjective + effect	immediate effect	153	significant effect	115
	adverse effect	136	cumulative effect	114
	overall effect	135	direct effect	110
	good effect	123	desired effect	105
	profound effect	121	dramatic effect	100

>>> more

Search for *effect* in Learning Collocations

adjective + drinking	heavy drinking	32	underage drinking	7
	excessive drinking	20	under-age drinking	6
	moderate drinking	9	late-night drinking	5
	clean drinking water	8	responsible drinking attitudes	4
	sensible drinking	7	serious drinking	4

>>> more

Search for *drinking* in Learning Collocations

adjective + drinker	heavy drinker	11	lone drinker	2
	great drinker	4	bearded drinker	1
	moderate drinker	2	individualistic drinker	1
	notorious drinker	2	Big drinker	1
	fellow drinker	2	messy drinker	1

Search for *drinker* in Learning Collocations

7.6 Improving formality

Formality and precision are both important features of academic writing. However, students often overuse colloquial language, and their writing comes out as too informal and lacking in precision. Here are three different ways this can occur.

1. Using generic quantifiers

- Due to this, the consumption of alcohol product has reduced **a lot**.*
- If alcohol advertising was banned then this **sort of** behavior would decrease.*

2. Overusing general words

- Drinking alcohol will hurt health and **make** public health problems.*
- The majority of binge drinkers do not think they are problem drinkers so they could have **bad** effect on their classmates.*

3. Failing to employ topic-specific collocations

- Drinking too much alcohol** can change our behaviors.*
- Banning alcohol advertising makes **people who love alcohol very much** decrease.*

Students can consult the Learning Collocations resource to find precise expressions that help them avoid colloquial usage. The suggestions in the Table below relate to the example sentences above.

For sentence 1a, the Table suggests replacing *a lot* by a more expressive word: *significantly*, *considerably*, or *greatly*. Likewise, *sort of* in 1b could be replaced by *undesirable*, *unacceptable*, or *deviant*. For 2a, the verbs *cause*, *raise* and *pose* are commonly associated with the noun *problem*. In 2b, substituting *serious*, *damaging* or *disastrous* for *bad* adds strength. The cumbersome expressions in 3a and 3b can be replaced by topic-related collocations, *heavy* (or *excessive*, or *serious*) *drinking* instead of *drinking too much alcohol*, and *heavy* (or *regular*, or *habitual*) *drinker* for *people who love alcohol very much*.

1a. <i>reduce a lot</i>	2a. <i>make public health problems</i>	3a. <i>drinking too much alcohol</i>
significantly reduce considerably reduce greatly reduce	cause the problem raise the problem pose the problem	heavy drinking excessive drinking serious drinking
1b. <i>sort of behavior</i>	2b. <i>have bad effect on</i>	3b. <i>people who love alcohol very much</i>
undesirable behavior unacceptable behavior deviant behavior	have serious effect on have damaging effect on have disastrous effect on	heavy drinker regular drinker habitual drinker

adjective + benefit	weekly benefit	13	outstanding benefit	11
	considerable benefit	13	general benefit	11
	net benefit	11	practical benefit	10
	obvious benefit	11	extra benefit	10
	clinical benefit	11	economic benefit	10
<<< less		>>> more		

benefit + noun	benefit patients	8	getting housing benefit	3
	benefit the company	8	benefit payments	3
	benefit the community	8	benefit the public	3
	benefit others	7	benefit the host	3
	benefit the environment	5	benefit consumers	3
<<< less		>>> more		

Search for *benefit* in Learning Collocations

used as a noun		Synonyms	
adjective + link	direct link	113	causal link
	missing link	38	possible link
	weak link	30	close link
	vital link	30	strong link
	important link	29	clear link
<<< less		>>> more	

Synonyms of *link* in Learning Collocations

have impact

in standard English (BNC)

go

have an impact on	70	have little impact	6
had little impact on	25	having an impact	6
had an impact on	25	had an enormous impact on	5
have little impact on	21	have an adverse impact on	4
have an impact	16	have considerable impact on	4
has an impact on	12	have an important impact on	3
had little impact	9	had the greatest impact on	3
had an impact	8	have an immediate impact on	3
having an impact on	7	had considerable impact on	3
have an impact upon	7	has little impact on	2

<<< less

>>> more

Search for *have impact* in Learning Collocations

7.7 Increasing text variation

A common problem in student writing is repetition, repetition, repetition. Unless deliberately used for dramatic effect, repetitive writing is boring writing. Here we illustrate how Learning Collocations can be used to enliven the examples below, taken from a student essay.

1. *Ackoff and Emshoff (1975) confirmed that the increase of advertising activity on the alcohol brand **was positively linked with** the sales, hence the increasing consumption of the product. Smart (1988) however admitted that the **link between** the advertising and consumption was weak and awaiting more comprehensive research. Saffer (1997) focused on alcohol consumption and motor vehicle fatalities and revealed positive **link between** the two.*
2. *Some people will argue that some alcohol products also **have some benefits** such as the use for medicine. However, everything has both sides, it is up to how people use. Even though some alcohol products **have some benefits**, the drawbacks of alcohol products overweight the **benefits**. Therefore, the alcohol product advertising should be banned.*
3. *In the long run, it has more advantages to ban alcoholic product advertising on the whole in terms of the healthier and sustainable development of the country, although it may **have big impact on** the sales of alcohol companies as frequently argued as their evidence by the opponents. For example, ... It is unwise to invest even one dollar on alcohol advertisements, which **have bad impact on** people's health.*

First, deploy synonyms to avoid overusing the same word. For example 1, the Synonyms button in Learning Collocations shows that *associate* and *relate* are synonyms of the word *link*. Further checking the collocations of these two words, and their noun forms (*association* and *relation*), yields useful phrases: *associate with* or *association between* and *relate to* or *relation between*. These are plausible alternatives for *link with* and *link between*.

Second, consider using other members of the same word family (e.g., verb, noun, adjective and adverb). The word *benefit* is frequently overused in student writing, particularly its noun form — as in the phrase *have benefits*. Searching for *benefit* in Learning Collocations generates the family word *beneficial*, and also verb usages such as *benefit consumers*, *benefit greatly from*, *able to benefit from*, and *benefit from the use of*.

Third, *have + adjective + impact on* occurs several times in the example essay in conjunction with weak adjectives like *big*, *bad*, *small*, and *great*. Searching for phrases by putting multiple words in the query box — in this case *have impact* — provides an effective way of finding alternatives, such as *enormous*, *considerable*, *significant*, *little*, *adverse*, and *minimal*. Other verbs associated with *impact on* include *assess*, *examine*, *consider*, *minimize*, *reduce*, and *measure*.

Fragment	Frequency	
alcohol	16,000,000	- alcohol + Singular Noun (3,200,000) + alcohol abuse (500,000) + alcohol use (430,000) + alcohol consumption (380,000) + alcohol content (140,000) + alcohol rehab (140,000) + alcohol addiction (130,000) + alcohol intake (120,000)

Search for *alcohol* in Web Phrases

Fragment	Frequency	
advantage	26,000,000	- Verb + advantage (9,800,000) + take advantage (6,300,000) + taking advantage (1,200,000) + Take advantage (1,100,000) + took advantage (540,000) + taken advantage (350,000) + added advantage (140,000) + Taking advantage (130,000)

Search for *advantage* in Web Phrases

Fragment	Frequency	
begin	37,000,000	
begin to	7,200,000	- begin to + Verb (3,900,000) + begin to see (230,000) + begin to understand (200,000) + begin to feel (140,000) + begin to be (120,000)

Search for *begin to* in Web Phrases

Fragment	Frequency	
has	1,000,000,000	
has negative	64,000	
has negative influence	300	+ has no influence (40,000) + has an influence (26,000) + has little influence (10,000) + has more influence (8,000) + has some influence (7,100) + has significant influence (6,600) + has great influence (6,100)

Search for *has * influence* in Web Phrases

Fragment	Frequency	
exposure	19,000,000	+ exposure + To (6,000,000) + exposure + Preposition (2,500,000) + exposure + Singular Noun (1,100,000) + exposure + Coordinating Conjunction (920,000)

Search for *exposure* in Web Phrases

7.8 Checking grammar

Should I use a determiner? And which one: *a*, *an*, or *the*? Is *famous for* or *famous with* correct? Does the word *research* have a plural form? The Web Phrases collection can be used to solve grammatical problems such as these. We will examine the five examples in the Table below: singular vs. plural form, appropriate determiners, verbs followed by the word *to*, adjectives vs. adverbs, and appropriate prepositions.

1. Singular vs. plural	Eemund (2012) has found the association between alcohol intakes and asthma.
2. Determiners	Alcohol companies take an advantage of the opportunity to promote their products on TV.
3. Verb + to	This situation may make young people begin to drinking alcohol.
4. Adjective vs. adverb	Alcohol products has negatively influence on the social harmony.
5. Prepositions	A study has found that exposure on alcohol advertising encourages people to drink.

- Consulting Web Phrases for phrases that follow the word *alcohol* shows that the overwhelming majority of nouns are singular: *alcohol abuse*, *alcohol use*, *alcohol consumption*, *alcohol rehab* and ***alcohol intake***.
- Language learners find it hard to use determiners correctly, because there are many exceptions to the general rules. For example, we say *have an advantage*, but not *take an advantage*. In a search for phrases preceding *advantage*, ***take advantage*** (without a determiner) tops the list.
- The word *to* can be used either as a preposition or as an infinitive marker (used with a verb's base form to indicate that it is in the infinitive). Determining its true function can be difficult, particularly when it follows a verb – for example, in *contribute to* and *expose to* it is a preposition. Checking Web Phrases for phrases following **verb + to** helps distinguish them. Here, *begin to* should be followed by a base form verb: ***begin to drink***.
- Students often confuse a word's adjectival and adverbial forms. Using "wild-card" search in Web Phrases, *has * influence* generates many ***adjective + influence*** phrases, including ***negative influence***.
- Web Phrases makes it easy to find the most commonly used preposition for a particular word. Here, the most common preposition following *exposure* is ***to: exposure to***.