

Info Sheet: English Collocations

Collocations are words that naturally go together — like good dance partners. English speakers don't "make a photo" or "do a mistake"; we say **take** a photo and **make** a mistake. Learning collocations makes your English sound natural, not translated.

1. MAKE or DO? The Classic Problem

MAKE (creating, producing) DO (performing, activities)

make a decision	do homework
make a mistake	do the shopping
make a cake	do the dishes
make money	do your best
make friends	do business (with someone)
make progress	do exercise
make a phone call	do a favor
make an appointment	do the laundry



*Tip: **make** focuses on the result; **do** focuses on the activity itself.*

2. TAKE, HAVE, GIVE, GET

Verb

Common partners

take	a break, a photo, a taxi, a seat, time, a look, a test
have	a shower, a coffee, lunch, a conversation, fun, a rest
give	advice, a speech, an opinion, a hug, directions, permission
get	lost, married, angry, better, dark, wet, a job

3. Adjective + Noun Partners

Strong collocation

Weak (avoid)

heavy rain / traffic	strong rain
strong coffee / opinion	powerful coffee
fast food / car	quick food
a close friend	a near friend
a golden opportunity	a gold chance

4. Catch, Break, Save, Pay

Collocation

Example

catch a cold / a bus / someone's eye	I caught a terrible cold in January.
break a promise / the rules / the ice	He broke his promise again.
save time / money / a seat	The shortcut saves us ten minutes.

Collocation

Example

pay attention / a visit / a compliment Pay attention to the road signs.

Why Collocations Matter

Choosing the wrong partner doesn't usually break communication — but it makes your English sound *foreign*. And collocations are one of the fastest ways to **sound more advanced**, because they're what native speakers notice first.

Exercise: Collocations

Part A — Make or Do?

Complete each sentence with **make** or **do** in the correct form.

1. I need to _____ an appointment with the hairdresser.
2. She _____ a huge mistake on the invoice.
3. We always _____ the shopping on Saturdays.
4. He's _____ excellent progress in English.
5. Can you _____ me a favor and post this letter?
6. I don't _____ business with people I don't trust.
7. Don't disturb her — she's _____ her homework.
8. It took me years to _____ real friends in this town.

Part B — Choose the Correct Partner

Circle the correct word.

1. We were stuck in **heavy** / **strong** traffic for an hour.
2. Let me **take** / **make** a photo of the family.
3. I always drink **strong** / **heavy** coffee in the morning.
4. Could you **give** / **make** me some advice about hotels?
5. She caught **a cold** / **a cough fever** from her nephew.
6. Let's **take** / **do** a break — I'm exhausted.
7. He never **breaks** / **cancels** a promise.
8. Have a seat — I'll **do** / **make** us a coffee.

Part C — Complete the Dialogue

Fill each gap with a verb from the box (use each once).

take · catch · pay · have · give · make

Sam: I can't concentrate anymore. Shall we (1) ____ a break? **Ana:** Good idea. Let's (2) ____ a coffee in the garden. **Sam:** Can I (3) ____ you some advice first? You should (4) ____ attention to your posture — you've been at that desk for hours. **Ana:** You're right. And honestly, if you (5) ____ this much effort with everyone, you should be a coach! **Sam:** Ha! Careful, or you'll (6) ____ a cold out there — take my jacket.

Part D — Speaking Challenge

Answer at least three of these questions with complete sentences:

1. What do you usually do to save time on busy mornings?
 2. Have you ever broken a promise? What happened?
 3. Who gives you the best advice?
 4. When did you last take a taxi?
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