



Atlas Essentials

**Essential Study Guides
for Successful Language Learning**

from
Atlas Language School

Volume 1

-

Keeping a Vocabulary Notebook

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Atlas Essentials Vol. I
Keeping a Vocabulary Notebook

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Introduction

Welcome to *Keeping a Vocabulary Notebook*, the first in our new series: **Atlas Essentials: Essential Study Guides for Successful Language Learning**, from Atlas Language School in Dublin. These FREE downloadable study guides, will help you to make the most of the time you spend learning English. Our aim is to help you to help yourself, to take control of your studies, to use your time inside and outside class, to develop your skills and, ultimately to become the English speaker that you want to be.

These practical guides, written by experienced language teachers, are full of techniques and tips for how to improve your language learning.

In *Keeping a Vocabulary Notebook*, we discuss some reasons why vocabulary notebooks are necessary, how to notice and record vocabulary, how to organize your notebooks, and finally, how best to use them for revision – how to remember and reuse the vocabulary you learn.

So, why not get going on section one? We're sure you'll find it helpful.

Section 1: Vocabulary notebooks – Part 1

Many of you find English vocabulary difficult. To be honest, so do many teachers! There are SO many words and expressions in English. Sometimes it is difficult to know WHAT to record or even HOW to record them.

To make matters worse, English vocabulary doesn't have simple rules like so many grammar items you learn in class.

English has thousands of **words** and **word combinations**, such as collocations, idioms and expressions. You can say a little with grammar, but you can say a lot more with words!



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In this booklet we're going to look at **Vocabulary Notebooks**. You will learn how to record words in your notebook and we will also show you ways to use excellent **free** online Dictionaries!

Rule No 1: Words, like people, need company

You must not see words as individuals. You must pay attention to **combinations of words**, i.e., collocations. There are several types of collocation:

- a) **Verb + noun**: e.g. make a noise, have a party, take a tablet
- b) **Adjective + noun**: e.g., strong accent, bright colour, heavy rain
- c) **Verb + adverb** e.g. work hard, smiled softly
- d) **Verb + preposition** (including *phrasal verbs*) e.g. talk about, burst into tears, filled with horror
- e) **Fixed or semi-fixed expression** e.g. It seems to me that, It's worth seeing/going to, sick and tired.

WHY are collocations so important? HOW will they improve my English?

1) Well, firstly, your speaking will improve e.g.

"I forgot my passport and ~~lost~~ the plane" (miss the plane)

missed ✓

"I'm sorry I'm late teacher. I hope I didn't ~~lose~~ anything" (miss class)

miss ✓

(You can **lose** your pen or book but we say **miss** a class/lesson/lecture.)

2) Secondly, learning collocations will also improve your writing e.g.

“Many people **make** crimes every day. We need to **conclude** our crime problem soon”

We should say: **commit** crimes/ **solve** our crime problem.

Learning collocations will really help you to improve. Try it!

HOW should I record and learn words?

Most importantly, **NEVER** record a single word (e.g. “rest”). Write the other words that go with that word, i.e., its collocations: **take a rest**. Remember, words keep company. Is that Ok? Good!

Some ideas for recording and using vocabulary:

Here are a couple of sample vocabulary notebooks.

Make/have: Verb-noun collocations

make → a mistake
money
a phone call
a decision

have → a good time/fun
lunch/a meal/breakfast
a cold/a broken leg
a party

e.g.: Anyone can make a mistake
My aim in life is to make money
I need to make a quick phone call.
I can't make a decision just yet.

e.g.: we had a great time in Howth
I usually have breakfast at about 7am
Sarah's got a cold/broken leg
We're having a party on Saturday

Sample page from a student's notebook (Intermediate level).

Make

Verb-noun collocations

make → **dinner/a cake/lunch**
money
a mistake

I usually make dinner in the evenings

Sella doesn't make much money.

I made a mistake in my homework

Sample page taken from a Pre-intermediate student's notebook

What's next?

Now, it's up to you. Look out for different types of collocation and record them in your notebook using some of the ideas above. You can find collocations anywhere – in class, in the street, at work, in a TV series, at the supermarket, so keep your eyes open!

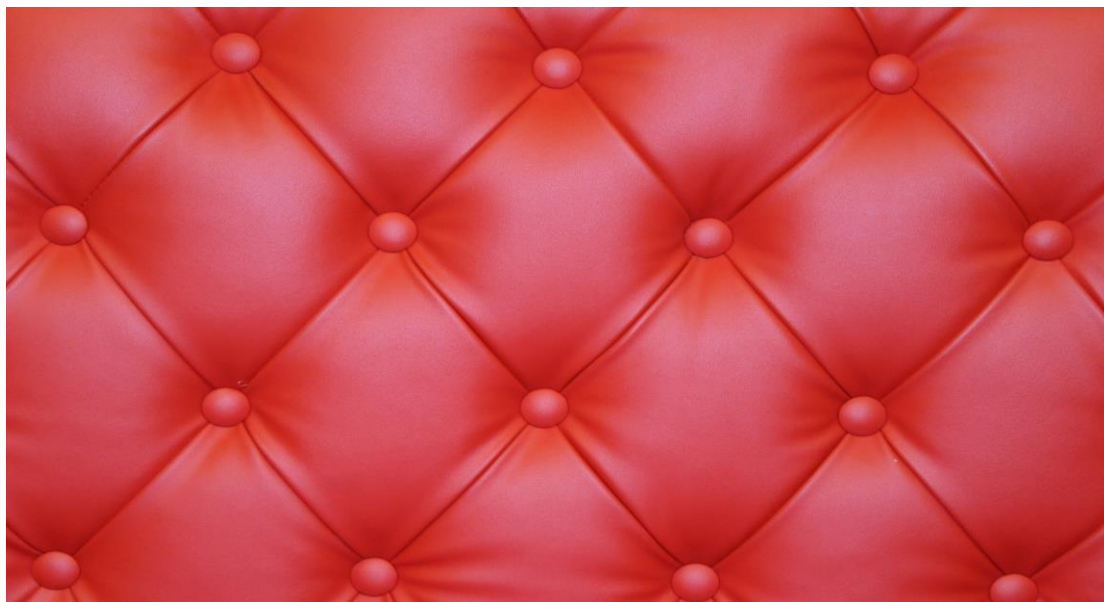
Vocabulary Notebooks – Part 2



In the last section we discussed some ways of recording collocations in your vocabulary notebook and asked you to give them a go. We made the point that words like the company of other words; that words like to hang out together. We looked at how words combine. In this section we'll be focusing on patterns.

Rule No 2: Words follow patterns

As we have seen, collocation refers to the way words combine (*heavy traffic, miss a plane, take a rest*). However, we also need to pay attention to the **grammatical patterns** of words.



For example, verbs of perception, such as *hear, notice, and see* often have the pattern:

“to *hear/notice/see* somebody (sby) *doing* something (sth)”

e.g. *I heard my neighbour making dinner last night.*

When you look up the word “*hear*” in a good online Dictionary, such as *Longman Dictionaries Online* <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>, you will often see examples of **HOW** that word is used:

- *Jenny could **hear** them **arguing** last night.*
- *Did you **notice** him **leaving** the Party last night?*
- *I **heard** someone **screaming** outside.*

Using an Online Dictionary to find patterns

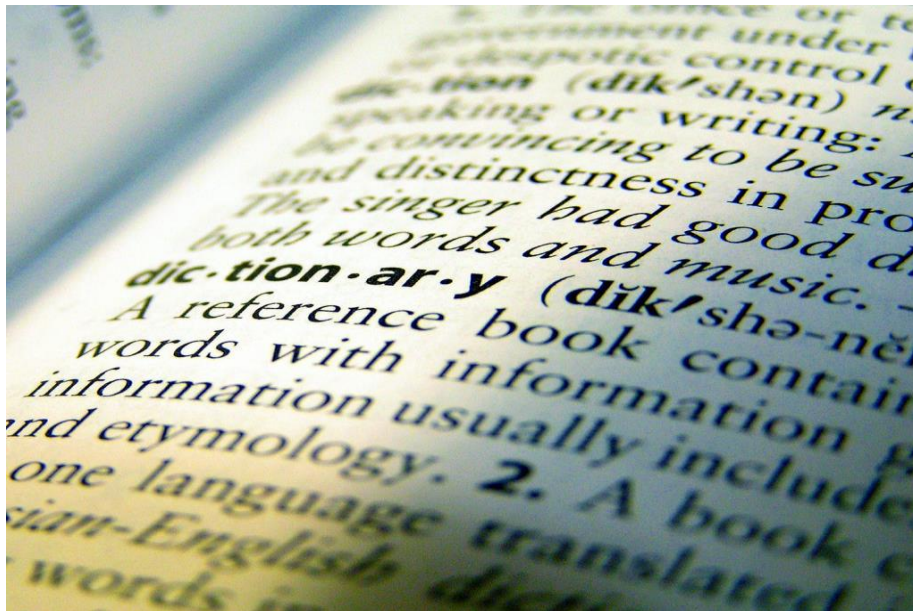


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To make the most of a dictionary, there are two basic things you should do when you look up a word:

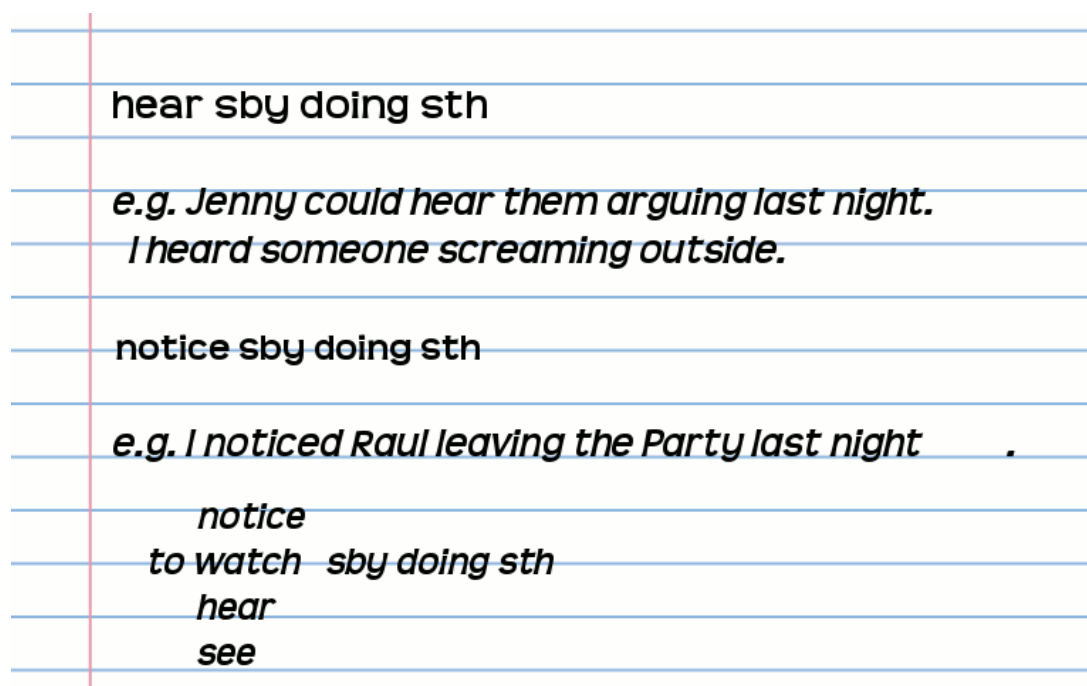
1. Write down the basic **pattern** the word takes, e.g. for “hear: **to hear sby doing sth**”.
2. Then you need to write **FULL examples** in your vocabulary notebook. It’s best to write a **personal** example as well, so you can **remember** it better, e.g. “*I heard Miguel laughing at The Simpsons on TV.*”

So try not to just copy the examples from the dictionary. Follow the pattern carefully, but make your **own** sentences, about **your** life, **your** thoughts and **your** feelings.

Remember: **examples are as important as definitions.** When you write a **FULL** sentence, you learn and practise using the prepositions and objects that are used with the words.

For example: *He was laughing **at** the Simpsons **on** TV.*

Here's a sample page from a student's vocabulary notebook:



As we can see above:

- the meaning or use of a word (e.g. hear) can often determine the pattern it will follow:

*“**hear** sby doing sth”*

- other verbs with similar or related meanings and uses often follow the same pattern:

*“**notice/hear/watch/see** sby doing sth”*

In conclusion, learning a word means you should learn the **pattern** it takes. Then, you should learn **how to use** that pattern. This will really improve your written and spoken English, and it will help you with reading and listening, too. You'll be paying attention to patterns (and, of course, collocations), rather than lonely little words that can't do much on their own.

I know this sounds crazy, but words have grammar!

So get going and let's hope you see or hear somebody doing something interesting very soon!

Section 2: How to Organize your Notebook



In the notebooks we use in class, we often write new words in alphabetical order, sometimes with a translation of that word into our first language, or maybe with an explanation in English.

However, your **Vocabulary Notebook** should be organized more effectively. One way of doing this is by recording vocabulary – collocations and patterns etc. – by **TOPIC**. You can have separate sections for topics such as ‘Food’, ‘Work’, ‘Health’, ‘Money’, ‘Films’ and ‘Appearance’. This means that words and phrases that are used together in real life are kept together in the notebook.

What Topics might the following photographs be filed under?



Image taken by @thornburyscott, from ELTpics collection and shared under a Creative Commons 3.0 licence



Image taken by @YTatLE, from ELTpics collection and shared under a Creative Commons 3.0 licence

For example, in the Films section, an Intermediate student wrote the following:

Films	
shoot	<i>Talking about films</i>
edit	
play a film	<i>The Beach was <u>filmed</u> on location in...</i>
star in	<i>It is <u>set in</u> Thailand/the 1960s</i>
review	<i>Michael Keaton was <u>nominated for best Actor in</u> Birdman</i>
	<i>I'll never forget the scene where Bruce Willis...</i>
	<i>The <u>special effects</u> in the Matrix were amazing</i>
<u>Describing a film</u>	
	<i>It's a <u>gripping thriller</u>. It really moved me.</i>
	<i>It's a <u>hilarious romantic comedy</u>. I couldn't stop laughing</i>
	<i>The <u>plot</u> was a bit confusing. I couldn't follow it.</i>
	<i>I heard it's a <u>fantastic film</u>, the critics gave it <u>rave reviews</u></i>
	<i>It's an <u>action-packed war film</u>. Tom Hanks <u>plays the lead character/role</u></i>

Language taken from **English Vocabulary Organiser: Film and cinema pp 94-95**

As you might have noticed, there are no strict rules about how you should record vocabulary. You have to find the way, or ways, that work for you. However, one important rule is **NEVER** write single words. Also, write **complete** and **personalized** examples – write examples that relate to **you** and **your** life, **your** thoughts, **your** memories etc.

Apart from topics, you can also organize pages according to:

a) **SITUATIONS** (in a hotel, in a restaurant)

In a Restuarant

Customer requests

-Could you tell me....

....what this means?	Light	meal
...if you have any/some...?	substantial	
-I'll have the....for starters and the...	slap-up	
...for the main course, please	gourmet ,	

-Can I have my steak...

..rare/medium/well done

-The fish was delicious, thank you

Eating and drinking

have a quick snack.

I could really do with a refreshing drink.

-I'm dying of hunger!

I have a healthy appetite,

I had a hearty breakfast only three hours ago!

Crisps will only spoil your appetite.

The set menu is reasonably priced. Let's go in.

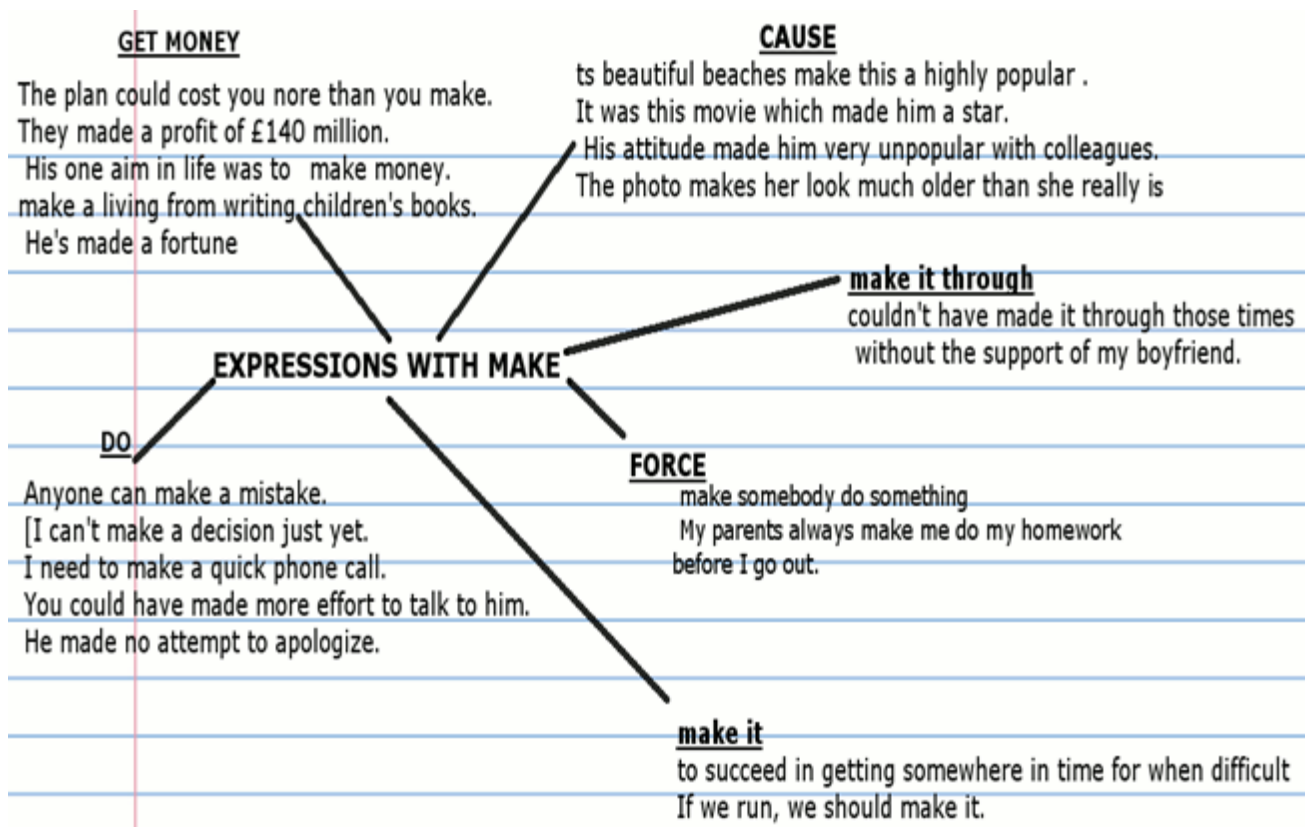
I love home-cooked food,

international food/cuisine,

I had a Chinese/ Mexican/French meal in a restaurant

I love Chinese/Mexican/French food/cooking/

b) **KEYWORDS** (Expressions with *like*, *time*, *make*)



c) Differences between two **CONFUSABLE WORDS**:

- confusing words**
- Advise is a verb, and advice is a noun:**
- She gave me some good advice.
 - She advised me to get some rest.
- earn/win**
- win a race/a game/an election etc
Who do you think will win the next election?
- win at sth**
I never win at cards.
win something for somebody
the man who helped win the Cup for Arsenal
- Earn**
You don't earn much money being a nurse.
He did all sorts of jobs to earn a living.

d) Common **Grammar** structures or patterns (for example, present perfect expressions)

Present perfect expressions:

Have you ever been to the States?

Have you ever seen that film, 21 Grammes?

Have you finished?

Have you had enough food?

Have you talked to him about it?

Where have you been?

What have you been doing?

How long have you been doing that?

How long have you been studying English?

How long have you been here?

I haven't done it yet.

They haven't decided yet.

I haven't seen him recently.

We haven't been out for ages.

He hasn't finished yet.

She hasn't ever done it before.

(Thanks to Hugh Dellar & Andrew Walkley for these examples)

Whichever way you decide to organize your notebook the following layout might help to keep everything in order:

Word	Meaning	My example	Translation
<i>put up with sby/sth</i>	<i>to accept someone or something unpleasant in a patient way</i>	<i>i had to put up with john's bad behaviour</i>	<i>Ho dovuto fare i conti con il cattivo comportamento di John</i>
<i>Tolerance of/towards sth/sby</i>	<i>allowing someone to do sth that you din't like</i>	<i>We need to show greater tolerance of minorities</i>	<i>Dobbiamo mostrare maggiore tolleranza delle minoranze</i>

When you record vocabulary you should follow these guidelines:

- **Less is more:** It's better to focus on fewer words but give full information about them, including collocations, grammatical patterns and possibly example sentences. There is no need to record every single new word.
- **Words need space:** Some space should be left after each entry so you can return to it and add other similar examples.
- Start a **new topic** on a **different** page: This way you can add new language to each section as you use your notebook. For example, if your current topic in class is Food and a piece of vocabulary related to Films is used, record that word in the Films section.
- Don't forget to ask your teacher about the Topics she/he will be doing in class the following week.

Now, it's up to you to try out some of these ideas, and perhaps some of your own too. And if you're having any difficulties, feel free to ask for advice. Hopefully, we can help.

Leave a comment on the Atlas Blog and we'll do our best to deal with any questions or suggestions you send our way.

<http://www.atlaslanguageschool.com/Atlas-blog/>

Section 3: How to Revise Vocabulary

In this section we will show you a few techniques to help you revise and remember the vocabulary in your notebooks.

Many students have problems trying to remember vocabulary. For example, you study something in class, or write a great expression in your notebook, and then, when you try to remember it, it's gone! Irritating, isn't it?

Below are two principles to remember when revising vocabulary:

1. Spacing:

When you learn vocabulary, you should return to it after 2 days, then 5 days, then after 2 weeks, then 4 weeks etc. Keep coming back! Try to **increase the interval** between each revision. If you do this, it will help vocabulary go from your **short-term** memory to your **long-term** memory. Use your brain!

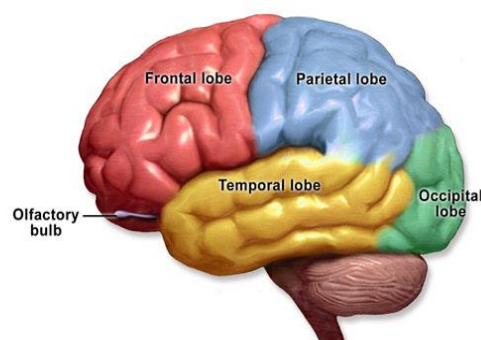


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2. Repetition:

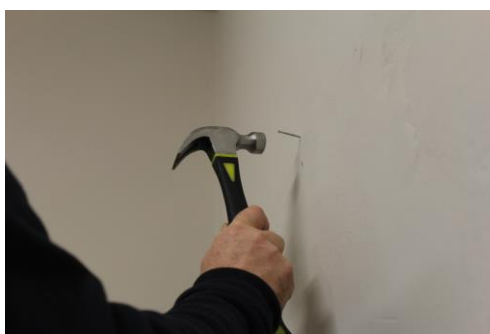
Research says you need to meet expressions and collocations again and again before you they are remembered. So the more you meet a collocation or expression, the more you have to use it and the more it will become part of your language.



However, simply looking back at your vocabulary is not enough; you need to **DO SOMETHING** with your collocations, phrases, expressions etc. You need to **USE** them:



(New vocabulary lying on a table)



(A Student doing something with his new vocabulary!)

Every time you re-visit a page of your notebook, try **testing** yourself, or else you will simply forget all that stuff you took the time to record and organize and go back to. **USE IT OR LOSE IT!**

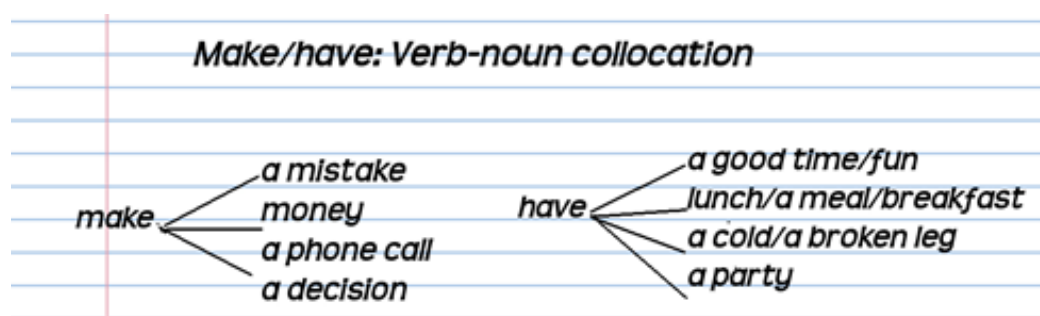
Some ideas

Here are some activities that should help you to remember vocabulary (and stop you forgetting it!).

1. Personalization:

If you relate vocabulary to your own life, your experiences, plans, or desires, it will stay in your memory **longer**.


Sample notebook page:



Personalized story by a student:

My crazy night in Dublin

Last night I went to the pub and made a mistake. I bought two drinks. Then I made a quick decision. I ordered and drank them quickly. However, because I made no money, i was broke. I had to make a phone call to my amazing girlfriend Ciara. She had a party so I went to the party with Inho and Ahmed. We had fun and had a good time. We had a meal and had more drinks. But today I'm really sorry because I have a cold and have a broken leg. What a night.



This Time it's Personal!

Now, it's time for you to try personalization. Choose some new expressions that you're added to your notebook this week and make up a little story with them, or just use them to write some sentences about your life – if possible the life you are experiencing in an English-speaking country.

2. Mental Associations:

The more associations you make, the easier it will be to remember expressions. For example, try to associate a collocation with a **visual mental image** (it could be a person, a film, a picture at home or a place you love).

IN A RESTAURANT




Customer requests

- Could you tell me....
- ...what this means?
- ...if you have any/some...?
- I'll have the....for starters and the...
- ...for the main course, please
- Can I have my steak...
- ..rare/medium/well done
- The fish was delicious, thank you

Eating and drinking

- have a quick snack.
- I could really do with a refreshing drink.
- I'm dying of hunger!
- I have a healthy appetite,
- I had a hearty breakfast only three hours ago!
- Crisps will only spoil your appetite.
- The set menu is reasonably priced. Let's go in.
- I love home-cooked food,
- international food/cuisine,
- I had a Chinese/ Mexican/French meal in a restaurant
- I love Chinese/Mexican/French food/cooking/

Light
substantial meal
slap-up
gourmet,



3. Emotion:

There are strong links between memory and emotion. If something makes you happy or sad, you remember it more. For example, how does the word or expression make you feel?

EMOTIONS **Unit 6 Speakout: intermediate**

-ING	-ED
<p><i>Making the same mistakes can be annoying</i> 😡</p> <p><i>I find history really boring</i> 😞</p> <p><i>The terrorist attack in Paris was frightening</i> 😱</p> <p><i>I find waiting in queues frustrating</i> 😡</p> <p><i>I find that studying English can be exhausting</i> 😞</p> <p><i>Seeing Beyonce live was really exciting</i> 😎</p> <p><i>I find Egypt a fascinating city</i> 😎</p>	<p><i>I get annoyed when Ze keeps talking</i> 😡</p> <p><i>Sometimes I get bored with homework</i> 😞</p> <p><i>My sister is frightened of bees</i> 😱</p> <p><i>I get frustrated when I can't understand English</i> 😡</p> <p><i>When I work late, I often get easily exhausted</i> 😞</p> <p><i>I get excited when I go on school trips</i> 😎</p> <p><i>My brother Ze is fascinated with/by Astrology</i> 😎</p>

COLLOCATIONS ADJ-NOUN

frustrating

- novel/film
- person
- situation

embarrassing

- conversation
- performance
- situation

exciting

- opportunity
- film

shocking

- news
- weather

fascinating

- story/news/place

frightening

- thunder storm

satisfying

-

annoying

- sound
- habit

exhausting

-

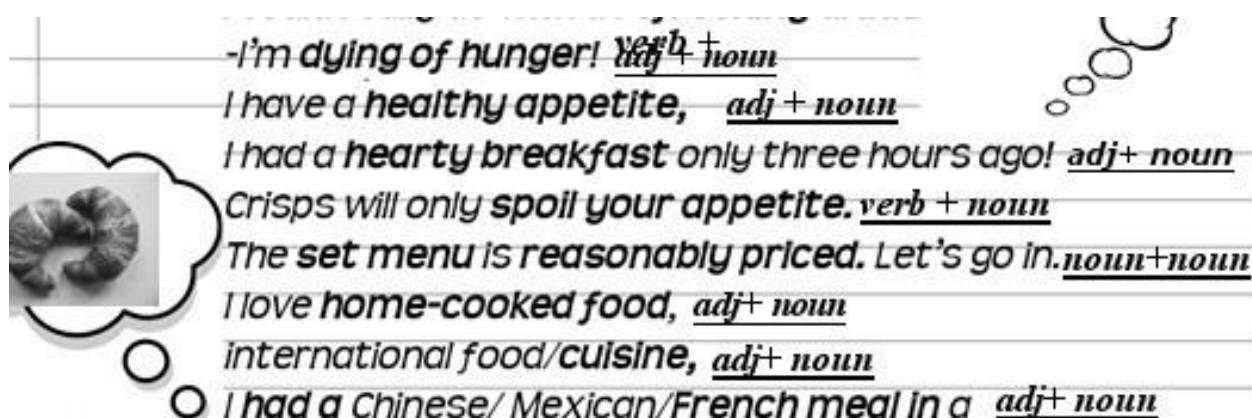
PHRASAL VERBS/IDIOMS-feelings (From Collins Phrasal verbs unit 10)

NEGATIVE	POSITIVE
<p><i>I'm fed up with this film</i></p> <p><i>i feel so bad about letting down my friends</i></p> <p><i>I'm feeling a bit down about my exams</i></p> <p><i>The loud music was starting to get to Maria</i></p> <p><i>Raj is feeling a bit out of sorts today.</i></p>	<p><i>I'm really looking forward to my holidays</i></p> <p><i>I bought a book to cheer myself up</i></p> <p><i>I'm hoping for a nice present at Christmas</i></p> <p><i>Lee is over the moon about his new job</i></p>

4. Decision-making:

The more decisions you make about an expression, the better you will remember it. Below are a few tips on how to **DO THINGS** with your vocabulary.

- Match a collocation with something that **rhymes** with it. For example, to English speakers, “dying of hunger” sounds like “die younger”. What does it sound like in your language? It doesn’t have to make sense; it can be silly!
- You could decide what **part of the speech** or what **type** of collocation they are (verb-noun/adverb-verb collocation etc.)



-I'm **dying of hunger!** verb + noun

I have a **healthy appetite,** adj + noun

I had a **hearty breakfast** only three hours ago! adj + noun

Crisps will only **spoil your appetite.** verb + noun

The **set menu** is reasonably priced. Let's go in. noun + noun

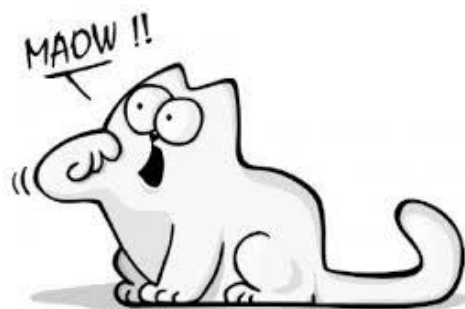
I love **home-cooked food,** adj + noun

international food/**cuisine,** adj + noun

I had a **Chinese/Mexican/French meal** in a adj + noun

(Note: A thought bubble on the left contains a picture of crisps.)

- Try to use the expression in a **complete sentence** (*I'm dying of hunger at the moment*). Then think of **where** you would say it or **who** you would say it to.



(I'm dying of hunger.)

- Number or rate the expressions from 1 (favourite / most useful) to 5 (least favourite/useful). Then compare your list with a friend or classmate.

<i>Eating and drinking</i>	favourite = 1 least = 5
1 <i>have a quick snack.</i>	
1 <i>I could really do with a refreshing drink.</i>	
3 <i>-I'm dying of hunger!</i>	
1 <i>I have a healthy appetite,</i>	
1 <i>I had a hearty breakfast only three hours ago!</i>	
1 <i>Crisps will only spoil your appetite.</i>	
2 <i>The set menu is reasonably priced. Let's go in.</i>	
<i>I love home-cooked food,</i>	
5 <i>international food/cuisine,</i>	
1 <i>I had a Chinese/ Mexican/French meal in a restaurant</i>	
1 <i>I love Chinese/Mexican/French food/cooking/</i>	

- You could also categorize the expression on your page according to **where** you would say it – at the bank, out with friends, etc. or **who** you would say it to or **who** you might say it about – your brother, a great artist, etc.

Personality collocations

Have selfish streak (*my brother*)
 Razor-Sharp mind (*my friend Tolio*)
 Vivid imagination (*Adele singer*)
 Brutally honest about sth (*when i'm angry*)
 Make a snap decision (*when i'm in a rush*)
 Keep your temper (*in class!*)
 Lose your temper (*playing football-Thiago*)
 Good company (*my best friend Roisin*)
 Highly intelligent (*Einstein of course*)


- Test your memory. Close the page. Can you write the expressions **from memory**?


In a Restuarant


Customer requests
 -Could you tell me...
 ...what this means?
 ...if you have any/some...?
 -I'll have the...for starters and the...
 ...for the main course, please
 -Can I have my steak...
 ...rare/medium/well done
 -The fish was delicious, thank you


Light	meal
slap-up	
gourmet,	


Eating and drinking
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 The set menu is reasonably priced. Let's go in.
 I love home-cooked food,
 international food/cuisine,
 I had a Chinese/Mexican/French meal in a restaurant
 I love Chinese/Mexican/French food/cooking/











- Make yourself a gap-fill with the expressions. After a few days, return to them. Can you remember the missing word?

TEST to do

I think I'll have a q_____ snack

I could really do with a
r_____ drink


I'm _____ of hunger

Cira has a h_____ appetite

I love a h_____ breakfast

sometimes

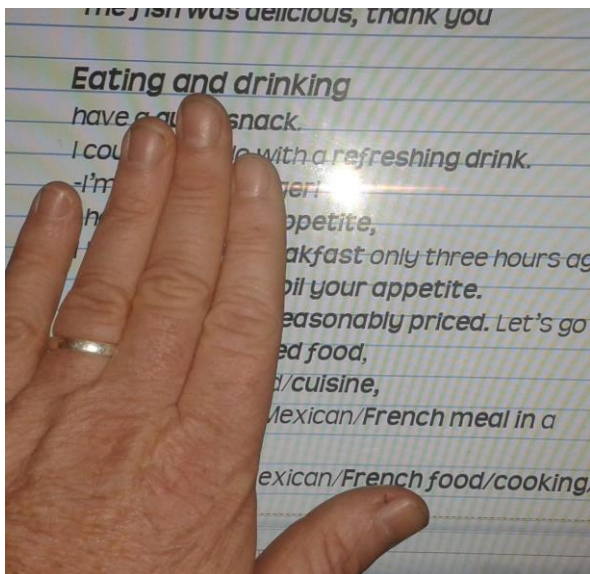
Too much chocolate can s _____
your appetite



- **Write questions** with the expressions. You could then ask a friend these questions. Do they know the collocation? Can they answer the question?


What do you have for a quick snack?
What drink do you find refreshing?
Are you dying of hunger now?
Do you have a healthy or bad appetite?
What kinds of food spoil your appetite?
When do you like to have a hearty breakfast?

- Put your finger or hand over one side of the page, or sentence. Can you complete the sentence?



- Translate sentences or expressions into your own first-language. Then, after three days, return to your translation. Can you retranslate the sentence back into English again?

Have a quick snack	Prenez une collation rapide	<i>have a quick snack</i>
i really need a refreshing snack	i vraiment besoin d'une collation rafraîchissante	<i>i really need</i>
i'm dying of hunger	Je meurs de faim	<i>dying of</i>
i have a healthy appetite	i ai un appétit sain	
chips spoil your appetite	puces gâcher votre appétit	
i love home cooked meals	i aime plats cuisinés maison	



- **Personal Practice:** read a sentence **aloud** and **repeat** it to yourself. Don't say it silently. Think of **who** you would say it to, or **/where/why/when** you would say it. What **emotions** and **images** do you associate with it?
- Finally, sit in a quiet place and **ask another student** or friend to **test you** on the expressions or collocations in your notebook.

And, after all that, just get out there and use your English – as much as possible, in as many different situations as possible. And enjoy yourself – making new friends, getting on at college or work, and, of course, keep learning, keep revising, and keep it **personal**.

Good luck!



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Volume 1
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