



Easy Corpus Activities

Introduction

Online corpora has been around for about 20 years and, even though it is an extremely useful source of linguistic information, it is rarely used in lessons. No doubt, one of the reasons for this is the fact that it takes quite a bit of learning and practice to get to the point where one can make effective use of a corpus website. Most teachers already feel that they are overworked and, since prep time is rarely paid for, it's perhaps reasonable to expect that few teachers would bother to spend the time necessary to master a corpus search tool that seems quite complicated at first glance. Yet, one needs only to master one simple corpus function to produce a wealth of essential information about word usage. That function is a search for word usage based on frequency.

Teachers who are already using corpora realize what an important tool it is to provide students with essential information about grammar and vocabulary. If one is teaching students a new word, for instance, it's vital that students learn how that word is used. Consider the word *rapid*. A teacher can easily explain the meaning but how are students to know when to use the word. Does one say that his/her car is rapid? Can we have a rapid lesson? Is there such a thing as a rapid talker? How about rapid food? A simple corpus search for the most common nouns following *rapid* immediately clarifies how we use this adjective.

1	GROWTH	1023
2	CHANGE	414
3	EXPANSION	247
4	INCREASE	241
5	SUCCESSION	229
6	RATE	222
7	PACE	211
8	DEVELOPMENT	195
9	RESPONSE	188
10	TRANSIT	180
11	RISE	179
12	POPULATION	169
13	PROGRESS	126
14	DECLINE	119
15	DEPLOYMENT	98
16	REACTION	80
17	ADVANCE	71
18	INDUSTRIALIZATION	69
19	EVOLUTION	56
20	RECOVERY	56

And once has a list of collocates, conclusions can be drawn to further clarify the usage of a word. Notice, for example, that *rapid* tends to be used to describe growth (*increase, expansion, development, growth, progress, evolution, industrialization*). Not only does this give valuable information about the usage of the word, it also further clarifies its meaning. And it also clarifies the meaning of some of its partners, e.g., *evolution*.

In addition to providing crucial information about word usage, corpus searchers can also clarify word form. For any words that are frequently changed by adding affixes (prefixes and suffixes), a quick (not rapid) and easy search can reveal the most common variants of that word.

1	ARRANGED	9085
2	ARRANGEMENT	7997
3	ARRANGING	2086
4	REARRANGE	639
5	REARRANGED	616
6	ARRANGES	530
7	REARRANGING	481
8	ARRANGER	220
9	PREARRANGED	215
10	REARRANGEMENT	174

And frequency searches are not just limited to collocations and word variants. One can also use such a search to find the most frequent uses of words used in grammatical structures. Consider the list below of the most frequent verbs used in the present perfect. Once the students have been taught the form and function of the present perfect, wouldn't it be useful if they had some awareness of the most common ways it is used? The list below would encourage learners to form constructions like "I have been to Paris" rather than "I have travelled to Paris" or "I've done my homework" rather than "I've completed my homework". Of course, virtually any verb is possible in the present perfect but knowing the list of the most frequent means that students would be most likely to use constructions most used by native speakers and those would be the first sentences of each pair mentioned above.

1	BEEN	435442
2	HAD	36341
3	BECOME	32838
4	MADE	28836
5	DONE	27345
6	COME	22984
7	TAKEN	18643
8	SAID	18618
9	SEEN	17978
10	GONE	17589

Instructions for using the BYU Corpus

Searching the BYU corpus

CORPUS OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ENGLISH

Help / information / co

DISPLAY ?
☒ LIST ☐ CHART ☐ KWIC ☐ COMPARE

SEARCH STRING ?
 WORD(S) ?
 COLLOCATES 1 0 ?
 POS LIST ?
 ?

SECTIONS ☐ SHOW ?
 1
 2

SORTING AND LIMITS ?
 SORTING ?
 MINIMUM ?

SEE CONTEXT: CLICK ON WORD OR SELECT

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	GOOD
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	BAD
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	GREAT
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	WHOLE
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	BETTER
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	NEW
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	VERY
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	BASIC
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	BRIGHT
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	BIG
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	CLEAR
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	GENERAL
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	ORIGINAL

1. Go to <http://corpus.byu.edu/> and choose either the British or American corpus.
2. Login with your username and password (top right).
3. Under SEARCH STRING type your keyword in the WORD(S) box
4. Next to COLLOCATES, set the number for the number of spaces before or after the keyword where you want the collocations to be*.
4. In the POS LIST box, choose the Part Of Speech that you are looking for. In the example above, it's set at adj.ALL, which will produce all adjectives.
5. Hit the SEARCH button to get your word collocates.

* Note that if you are looking for combinations such as nouns after verbs, you will probably want to set the space after at 2 or more to allow for articles and other words that may come in between a verb and noun, e.g, take a shower, take the bus, etc.

Transferring search results

1. Highlight the part of the table that you want to copy.

DISPLAY				
<input checked="" type="radio"/> LIST <input type="radio"/> CHART <input type="radio"/> KWIC <input type="radio"/> COMPARE				
SEARCH STRING				
WORD(S) <input type="text" value="idea"/>				
COLLOCATES <input]"="" type="text" value="[*"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="0"/>				
POS LIST <input type="text" value="adj.ALL"/>				
<input type="button" value="RANDOM"/> <input type="button" value="SEARCH"/> <input type="button" value="RESET"/>				
SECTIONS <input type="checkbox"/> SHOW				
<div>1 IGNORE</div> <div>SPOKEN FICTION MAGAZINE NEWSPAPER ACADEMIC</div>				
<div>2 IGNORE</div> <div>SPOKEN FICTION MAGAZINE NEWSPAPER ACADEMIC</div>				
SORTING AND LIMITS				
SORTING <input type="text" value="FREQUENCY"/>				
MINIMUM <input type="text" value="FREQUENCY"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>				
CLICK TO SEE OPTIONS				
SEE CONTEXT: CLICK ON WORD OR SELECT WORDS + [CONTEXT] [HELP...]				
		CONTEXT	FREQ	
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	GOOD	6860	
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	BAD	1555	
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	GREAT	1306	
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	WHOLE	1252	
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	BETTER	688	
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	NEW	647	
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	VERY	596	
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	BASIC	294	
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	BRIGHT	261	
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	BIG	259	
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	CLEAR	248	
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	GENERAL	229	
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	ORIGINAL	215	
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	BEST	198	
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	MAIN	190	

2. Copy and paste it into a word document.











1	<input type="checkbox"/>	GOOD	6860	
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	BAD	1555	
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	GREAT	1306	
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	WHOLE	1252	
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	BETTER	688	
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	NEW	647	
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	VERY	596	
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	BASIC	294	
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	BRIGHT	261	
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	BIG	259	
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	CLEAR	248	
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	GENERAL	229	



3. Select the column with the little boxes and delete it.

1	<u>GOOD</u>	<u>6860</u>	
2	<u>BAD</u>	<u>1555</u>	
3	<u>GREAT</u>	<u>1306</u>	
4	<u>WHOLE</u>	<u>1252</u>	
5	<u>BETTER</u>	<u>688</u>	
6	<u>NEW</u>	<u>647</u>	
7	<u>VERY</u>	<u>596</u>	
8	<u>BASIC</u>	<u>294</u>	
9	<u>BRIGHT</u>	<u>261</u>	
10	<u>BIG</u>	<u>259</u>	
11	<u>CLEAR</u>	<u>248</u>	
12	<u>GENERAL</u>	<u>229</u>	

4. Delete the rows containing words you don't want and adjust the ranking numbers.

1	GOOD	6860	
2	BAD	1555	
3	GREAT	1306	
4	WHOLE	1252	
5	BETTER	688	
6	NEW	647	
7	VERY	596	
8	BASIC	294	
9	BRIGHT	261	
10	BIG	259	



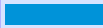
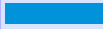








If you like you can highlight the whole table and perform the following functions:

- Change grid to black
- Eliminate shading in columns to the right
- Remove the underlining from the words
- Change the font to black
- Set the row height to exactly .5 cm
- Set the column widths
- Remove either or both of the columns on the right












How to avoid repetition of words

Notice that the list below contains *idea* and *ideas* as well as *color* and *colors*. There is a way to combine both forms of words into one. Follow the instructions below.

1	IDEA	169	
2	COLORS	97	
3	MAN	87	
4	CAREER	84	
5	LIGHT	81	
6	COLOR	60	
7	MIND	60	
8	JOB	52	
9	PEOPLE	48	
10	SMILE	48	
11	RED	47	
12	IDEAS	42	

On the left side of the screen, you will see “Click to see options” at the bottom. Click on it and where it says “GROUP BY WORDS”, change “WORDS” to “LEMMAS” using the drop down menu. Then hit the SEARCH button again. You will get a list like the one below. If you want to remove the brackets, use the *Find and Replace* feature of your program (replace [with nothing).

1	[IDEA]	211	
2	[COLOR]	161	
3	[MAN]	114	
4	[LIGHT]	92	
5	[CAREER]	91	
6	[MIND]	86	
7	[RED]	62	
8	[STAR]	57	
9	[JOB]	53	
10	[SCIENTIST]	50	
11	[SMILE]	50	
12	[PEOPLE]	48	

How to search using different forms of a verb

BYU-BNC: BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS *

[Help / information / c](#)

DISPLAY ?

☒ LIST ☐ CHART ☐ KWIC ☐ COMPARE

SEARCH STRING ?

WORD(S) ?

COLLOCATES 0 ▾ 1 ▾ ?

POS LIST ?

[RANDOM](#) [SEARCH](#) [RESET](#) ?

SECTIONS ☐ SHOW ?

1 **IGNORE** 2 **IGNORE**

SPOKEN
FICTION
MAGAZINE
NEWSPAPER
NON-ACAD

SORTING AND LIMITS

SEE CONTEXT: CLICK ON WORD OR SELECT

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	MADE
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	USED
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	GIVEN
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	TAKEN
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	SEEN
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	FOUND
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	DONE
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	HELD
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	GOT
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	CALLED

There are two ways to search for different forms of a verb. In the example above, the top verbs in the passive were found using the verb *be* in all its forms before a past participle (verb.EN). Simply putting square brackets around a word in the WORD(S) box will search with all forms of that word, e.g., *is/am/are/were/was/being*.

The other way will get you only specific forms rather than all of them. The way to do that is just to include the word forms you want in the WORD(S) box and separate them with an oblique slash. See the example below that was used with *have* to search for present perfect verbs. This method avoided a search for *having*, for example.

BYU-BNC: BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS *

[Help / information / c](#)

DISPLAY ?

☒ LIST ☐ CHART ☐ KWIC ☐ COMPARE

SEARCH STRING ?

WORD(S) ?

COLLOCATES 0 ▾ 1 ▾ ?

POS LIST ?

[RANDOM](#) [SEARCH](#) [RESET](#) ?

SEE CONTEXT: CLICK ON WORD OR SELECT

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	BEEN
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	HAD
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	MADE
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	DONE
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	BECOME

The easy way to transfer search results

CORPUS OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ENGLISH

Help / information / co

DISPLAY ?

☒ LIST ☐ CHART ☐ KWIC ☐ COMPARE

SEARCH STRING ?

WORD(S) ?

COLLOCATES 1 0 ?

POS LIST ?

RANDOM ?

SECTIONS ☐ SHOW ?

1 **IGNORE** 2 **IGNORE**

SPOKEN
FICTION
MAGAZINE
NEWSPAPER
ACADEMIC

SORTING AND LIMITS ?

SORTING ?

MINIMUM ?

SEE CONTEXT: CLICK ON WORD OR SELECT

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	GOOD
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	BAD
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	GREAT
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	WHOLE
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	BETTER
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	NEW
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	VERY
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	BASIC
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	BRIGHT
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	BIG
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	CLEAR
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	GENERAL

You can just use the old-fashioned way of using a pen or pencil and writing down the words, rankings and frequency numbers that you want (see below).

	adjectives with idea
	1. good
	2. bad
	3. great
	4. better
	5. new
	6. basic
	7. bright
	8. big
	9. clear
	10. general

Finding word forms

The screenshot shows the COCA search interface. The search string is `*arrang*`. The results are displayed in a table with 12 rows, each showing a word form of 'arrange'.

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	ARRANGED
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	ARRANGEMENTS
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	ARRANGEMENT
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	ARRANGE
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	ARRANGING
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	REARRANGE
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	REARRANGED
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	ARRANGES
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	REARRANGING
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	ARRANGER
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	PREARRANGED
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	REARRANGEMENT

It is really easy to find variations of a root word. Just type in the root and use an asterisk before it for prefixed forms of the word and/or an asterisk after it for suffixed forms. (Note that sometimes you'll need to drop a letter, like the "e" at the end of *arrange*). Then just hit SEARCH.

Finding words used in grammatical structures

Verbs used in the present continuous

Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) Search Interface

URL: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/x.asp?r1=&w=1024&h=600>

DISPLAY: ☒ LIST ☐ CHART ☐ KWIC ☐ COMPARE

SEARCH STRING:

COLLOCATES:

POS LIST:

SECTIONS: ☐ SHOW

SORTING AND LIMITS:

1	2	CONTEXT
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	GOING
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	BEING
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	DOING
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	TRYING
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	GETTING
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	LOOKING
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	COMING
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	WORKING
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	SAYING
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	TAKING
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	MAKING
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	TALKING
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	BECOMING

To find the most common words used in grammatical structures, you need to create the structure using the search string boxes. In the example above, variations of the auxiliary verb *be* were typed in the WORD(S) box (note that *am|is* will search for both *am* and *is*). Then the continuous verb form (verb.ING) was entered in the POS box and the space afterward was set at 1.

For ways to set up searches for other grammatical structures, see page 12.

Find examples of the most common parts of speech

Most common nouns used to talk about sports

CORPUS OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ENGLISH

Help / information / co

DISPLAY ?

☒ LIST ☐ CHART ☐ KWIC ☐ COMPARE

SEARCH STRING ?

WORD(S) [nn*] ?

COLLOCATES ?

POS LIST noun.ALL ?

RANDOM **SEARCH** **RESET** ?

SECTIONS ☐ SHOW ?

1 MAG:News/Opin
MAG:Financial
MAG:Sci/Tech
MAG:Soc/Arts
MAG:Religion
MAG:Sports
MAG:Entertain

2 **IGNORE**

SPOKEN
FICTION
MAGAZINE
NEWSPAPER
ACADEMIC

SORTING AND LIMITS ?

SORTING FREQUENCY ?

MINIMUM FREQUENCY ? ☐ 10

CLICK TO SEE OPTIONS

SEE CONTEXT: CLICK ON WORD OR SELECT

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	TIME
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	YEARS
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	WAY
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	YEAR
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	WATER
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	DAY
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	GAME
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARK
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	PEOPLE
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	TEAM
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	SEASON
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	FEET
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	WORLD

This is a really easy search. Simply choose your part of speech using the drop-down list in the POS LIST box. Then hit search. Note that you can also narrow down your search to specific topic areas with the boxes below the SEARCH STRING section. In the example above, the source was set to sports magazines (MAG: Sports). Simply scroll down the sources in the box and select the one you want by clicking on it. When you hit search the most common words will appear.

Search set up

Present Continuous

WORD(S)	are is am		
COLLOCATES		0	1
POS LIST	verb.ING		

Present Perfect

WORD(S)	have has		
COLLOCATES		0	1
POS LIST	verb.EN		

Present Perfect Continuous

WORD(S)	have has been		
COLLOCATES		0	2
POS LIST	verb.ING		

Past Continuous

WORD(S)	was were		
COLLOCATES		0	1
POS LIST	verb.ING		

Past Perfect

WORD(S)	had		
COLLOCATES		0	1
POS LIST	verb.EN		

Past Perfect Continuous

WORD(S)	had been		
COLLOCATES		0	2
POS LIST	verb.ING		

Future Continuous

WORD(S)	will be		
COLLOCATES		0	2
POS LIST	verb.ING		

Future Perfect

WORD(S)	will have		
COLLOCATES		0	2
POS LIST	verb.EN		

Future Perfect Continuous

WORD(S)	will have been		
COLLOCATES		0	3
POS LIST	verb.ING		

Will + base

WORD(S)	will		
COLLOCATES		0	1
POS LIST	verb.INF		

Modal + base

WORD(S)	should		
COLLOCATES		0	1
POS LIST	verb.INF		

Modal + have + past part.

WORD(S)	should have		
COLLOCATES		0	2
POS LIST	verb.EN		

Going to + base

WORD(S)	going to		
COLLOCATES		0	2
POS LIST	verb.INF		

Passives

WORD(S)	[be]		
COLLOCATES		0	1
POS LIST	verb.EN		

Wish + past

WORD(S)	[wish]		
COLLOCATES		0	4
POS LIST	verb.ED		

Wish + had + past participle

WORD(S)	[wish] had		
COLLOCATES		0	4
POS LIST	verb.ED		

Verb + infinitive

WORD(S)	[expect] to		
COLLOCATES		0	2
POS LIST	verb.INF		

Verb + gerund

WORD(S)	[imagine]		
COLLOCATES		0	1
POS LIST	verb.ING		

Verb + Noun collocation

WORD(S)	[take]		
COLLOCATES		0	3
POS LIST	noun.ALL		

Noun + Noun collocation

WORD(S)	business		
COLLOCATES		0	1
POS LIST	noun.ALL		

Noun + Noun collocation

WORD(S)	plan		
COLLOCATES		1	0
POS LIST	noun.ALL		

Adjective + Noun collocation

WORD(S)	[wonderful]		
COLLOCATES		0	1
POS LIST	noun.ALL		

Adjective + Noun collocation

WORD(S)	business		
COLLOCATES		1	0
POS LIST	adj.ALL		

Verb + Adverb collocation

WORD(S)	[walk]		
COLLOCATES		0	1
POS LIST	adv.ALL		

Prefixes

WORD(S)	*arrange		
COLLOCATES			
POS LIST			

Suffixes

WORD(S)	arrange*		
COLLOCATES			
POS LIST			

Part of Speech

WORD(S)	[nn*]		
COLLOCATES			
POS LIST	noun.ALL		

Classroom Activities

Awareness-raising Activities

1. Rank the Top Ten

This is a great activity to get students to really think about the top 10 words, either in collocations or in grammatical structures, and why they might be so common. It's a simple activity but, after doing it, students will be likely to remember most or all of the words on the list.

Give students a list of 10 most frequent words in no particular order. Explain meanings of words if needed. Students work in pairs or small groups to try to rank the words in order of frequency. Encourage them to discuss why they think words might have a particular ranking. After students have finished their rankings, elicit some of their ideas and get them to explain why they think those words are so common. Then tell them the top ten in order and they can award themselves one point for each one that's in the correct position. Find out who got the highest score.

Top 10 verbs used in present perfect

(see activity 5 for answers)

BECOME
BEEN
COME
DONE
GONE
HAD
MADE
SAID
SEEN
TAKEN

2. Word Line

This activity is just a variation of the previous one but, with this one, students have to take a word each and physically arrange themselves in a line based on how frequent they think their word is. Because of the physical aspect of it, it's a good activity to use as a warmer.

Based on the number of students in the class, prepare a list of the most frequent words of that number. Write each word on a piece of paper and give those papers to the students. Ask if there are words they don't know and explain them. Then ask students to stand up and try to arrange themselves in a line according to how frequent they think their words are, the most frequent at one end and the least frequent at the other. Encourage them to discuss reasons for their rankings of the words. When they have finally decided on the order, get them to call out their words, starting at the most frequent end. Write their words on the board in their order and when you are finished, write the actual order on the board and compare to see how many they guessed correctly. If you want to add a competitive aspect to – and one that might liven up the activity – before you have them arrange themselves, tell the students that they will get a point if they position themselves in the correct place, or alternatively, assign each student 10 points (or 5, if it works better) and have

them subtract a point for each place they were off. So, for example, if the student with *used* *positioned* him/herself fifth, he or she would lose 3 points and end up with 7 out of 10.

Top verbs used in passive

1	MADE	26265	11	SAID	7795
2	USED	21541	12	SET	6836
3	GIVEN	15133	13	BEEN	6602
4	TAKEN	13724	14	CONSIDERED	6477
5	SEEN	13170	15	KNOWN	6413
6	FOUND	11827	16	REQUIRED	6340
7	DONE	10556	17	BASED	6323
8	HELD	8390	18	TOLD	6052
9	CALLED	8079	19	SHOWN	5835
10	EXPECTED	8065	20	PUT	5816

3. Guess the Frequency

This is a good activity to raise students' awareness of the just how frequent the words on a most frequent list are and it's particularly useful when the use of a word or two is far more common than the others on the list.

To set this up, get a list of the top 10 most frequent words with the frequency numbers. Write the words on the board in random or alphabetical order. Explain meanings as required. Then write the ranks and frequency numbers on the board in order. In pairs or small groups, students discuss where they think each word is on the frequency list. You can tell them that they will get one point for each one in the correct position. When all students have finished, ask each student to read their list, without telling them the answers. Then list the words on the board next to their ranking and frequency. Ask students to tell you how many they got correct. Then ask the students why they think certain words were so frequent. On the list below, for example, *been* is so common because it is often used in the passive.

Top ten verbs used in present perfect

1	435442
2	36341
3	32838
4	28836
5	27345
6	22984
7	18643
8	18618
9	17978
10	17589

Answers

1. BEEN 2. HAD 3. BECOME 4. MADE 5. DONE 6. COME 7. TAKEN 8. SAID 9. SEEN 10. GONE

4. Choose the Top Ten

This is a good activity to get students familiar with the most common collocates of a particular word or the most common words used in a grammatical structure. The task they have to do is quite simple. They will be given a list of 20 words and they will have to try to pick out the top 10.

Prepare a list of top 20 most frequent words. Arrange the words in random or alphabetical order and then give that list to students. Explain meanings of words if needed. Students work in pairs or small groups to pick out the top 10 from that list (correct order not required). When they have finished doing this, elicit some of their ideas – particularly for the very top of the list. Ask them to explain why they chose some of the words. Then tell them the top ten and students get one point for every word they correctly chosen for that list. Find out who got the most correct.

Past tense verbs after *wish*

BELIEVED
CAME
CONTINUED
DID
FELT
FOUND
GOT
HAD
HAPPENED
KNEW
LIVED
LOOKED
MADE
SAID
SAW
THOUGHT
UNDERSTOOD
WANTED
WAS
WERE

Answers

1	HAD	2936
2	WERE	1447
3	WAS	1163
4	DID	460
5	KNEW	397
6	SAID	44
7	CAME	31
8	MADE	29
9	UNDERSTOOD	22
10	LIVED	20
11	GOT	19
12	CONTINUED	18
13	HAPPENED	18
14	LOOKED	17
15	FELT	17
16	THOUGHT	16
17	WANTED	11
18	BELIEVED	10
19	SAW	10
20	FOUND	9

5. Guess All the Words

This is a simple guessing game that's designed just to get students familiar with the most common collocates of a certain keyword or the most common words used in particular grammatical structures. The mechanics are simple in that it just requires each student to give their partner clues as to what some of the words on the list are – without saying the actual word.

To set the activity up, get a list of the top 20 most frequent words, make one copy for each pair of students and then split each list in two. Put students in pairs (you can have a group of three where two students will work together). Each student in a pair is given a different half of the original list.



Each student, in turn, gives the other student(s) clues to any word on their list but they cannot say the actual word. Their partner tries to guess the word. Once that has been done, the student crosses off the word on their list and the other student in the pair takes a turn doing the same thing. If it proves impossible to guess, the student with the word can just say “pass” and play would move on to the next word. You can make this competitive by making it a race to see which pair/group finishes first. Another alternative is to give the students a certain amount of time and challenge them to guess as many as they can within that time. When the time is up, find out how many each pair guessed.

Get + adjectives (top half)

1	READY	6072
2	INVOLVED	3715
3	WORSE	3377
4	SICK	2999
5	LOST	2826
6	OLDER	2600
7	TIRED	2047
8	PREGNANT	1961
9	HURT	1927
10	GOOD	1881

6: Guess All the Words Circle

This activity is similar to the one above except that you can use one complete list instead of cutting it in two.

To set it up, get a list of the top 20 most frequent words and make a copy for each group of students (group size should be 3 – 6). Then tell students that one student in each group will start with the list and give clues to the others about one word on the list, without saying the word. Once the word has been guessed, that student should cross the word off on the list and hand the list to the next student. Stress that words to give clues for must be chosen randomly, not in order as students will just memorize the next word on the list before handing the paper over. Explain that the groups will be racing to see who finishes first and that if a word can't be guessed, they can skip it for the time being and pass the paper to the next student. As groups finish, keep track of the first two or three and announce them as the winners.

Adjectives after get

1	READY	6072	8	PREGNANT	1961	15	REAL	1221
2	INVOLVED	3715	9	HURT	1927	16	DRUNK	1189
3	WORSE	3377	10	GOOD	1881	17	OLD	1187
4	SICK	2999	11	STUCK	1629	18	BIGGER	1150
5	LOST	2826	12	MAD	1457	19	RICH	1127
6	OLDER	2600	13	BETTER	1437	20	KILLED	982
7	TIRED	2047	14	ANGRY	1403			

Meaning-based Activities

7. Guess the Word

This is a good activity to get students to focus on the meanings of the top 10 words used in a certain collocation or the meanings of the top 10 words used in a particular grammar structure. See below for such as sample.

To begin, get a list of the top 10 most frequent words but don't show it to students. Put students in pairs or small groups and tell them to write down the numbers from one to ten. Then give students a definition of the first word on the list. They guess what it could be and write it next to the number 1. Then continue doing the same for the rest of the list. Remind them to think about frequency, i.e., *book* will be more frequent than *magazine* for things that people read. When you are finished the list, elicit some of the answers for each one and then give students the actual answers. They can award themselves one point for each one they guessed correctly.

Verbs used in the present continuous

#	VERB	Freq.	Clues to give students
1	GOING	86591	to move from one place to another and also for future plans
2	BEING	37106	very common verb that means to exist
3	DOING	17630	very common verb that is used for tasks
4	TRYING	16425	to make an attempt
5	GETTING	13417	literal meaning is to receive
6	COMING	11899	to move to where you are
7	LOOKING	11765	to search for something
8	WORKING	10969	when you do a job
9	SAYING	10038	verb used to describe talking
10	TAKING	9393	literal meaning is to remove something

8. Top Ten Gap Fill

This is a good activity for getting students to contextualize either the collocations on a top 10 list or the top 10 words used in a grammatical structure. There is extensive focus on meaning as students will be writing sentences containing the target language and then they will be working with sentences written by others to try to guess which of the target words belong in the gaps.

To begin, give students a list of 10 most frequent words in order. Explain meanings, where necessary. Put students in pairs or small groups and give them a sheet of paper. They work together to write a sentence contextualizing each of the words but have them leave the actual word out as they will be creating gap fills for other students. Make sure they write the sentences in random order and monitor to make sure they are contextualizing the word correctly and that their sentences are fairly accurate. When they are finished, have them write their names on their papers and then collect the papers and number them. Then each pair/group comes up and takes one paper and tries to guess what each of the missing words are. They should write their answers on another sheet of paper. When they are finished, they check their answers with the



students who wrote the sentences. They can award themselves one point for each correctly guessed word. Then they can take another sheet and do it again. When you end the activity, find out who guessed the most words correctly.

Verbs used after *should*

1	KNOW	119
2	COME	55
3	GO	55
4	TAKE	52
5	SEE	51
6	TELL	38
7	BELIEVE	35
8	GET	35
9	FIND	33
10	MAKE	32

Sample gap fills:

I think it's important information and that's why you should _____ it.
You should _____ to my party next week.
You should _____ to the doctor if you are ill.
You should _____ vitamins if you want to be healthy.
I know of a great film that you should _____.
You should always _____ the truth.
If someone tells you the truth, you should _____ them.
He should _____ a haircut.
I should _____ a new job.
You should _____ an appointment to see a doctor.

9. Find the Imposters

This activity has students trying to pick out words that don't belong on a top 10 list. It's the students that will be preparing the exercise for other students by replacing the actual words on a list with imposters. So, there is focus on meaning and on the type of words that are on the list.

Prepare two different lists of top 10 most frequent words. Split the class in two and each half gets a different top 10 list. Then divide each half of the class into pairs (a group of three is fine for odd numbers of students). The pairs work with their lists and change a prescribed number of words for words not on the list. While they are working, monitor and provide help where needed. Then, explain to them that words could be synonyms or other words similar to words on the list. When each pair has finished this task, they get together with a pair from the other half of the class and they exchange lists. Then the students work with their partners and try to pick out the imposters on the list. Once all have done that, they should tell the pair that gave them the list what their choices were and that pair will let them know how many they guessed correctly. You can have them award a point for every correct guess. If you had them do that, find out which pairs guessed the most correctly afterward.

Adjectives used with *marriage***Actual****With imposters**

1	GAY	1	HOMOSEXUAL
2	PREVIOUS	2	BEFORE
3	HAPPY	3	HAPPY
4	GOOD	4	GOOD
5	INTERRACIAL	5	INTERRACIAL
6	ARRANGED	6	PREPARED
7	TRADITIONAL	7	TRADITIONAL
8	FAILED	8	FAILED
9	BAD	9	AWFUL
10	PERFECT	10	EXACT

10. The Words I Know

This is a good activity for students at lower levels but it can be used with almost any level as long as there are a few words on the list whose meanings would not be known to students.

To begin, give students a list of the top 10 or top 20 most frequent words. Then put students in small groups and have them go over the list and select the words that at least one person in the group knows. They should put a check mark beside those words. Then they should start at the top of the list and discuss the meaning of each word in turn – even the ones that everyone says they know. For words not known by all members, whoever knows them should explain them to the rest of the group. They are not allowed to use dictionaries. When students have finished this task, find out how many words each group knew and give them a point for each one. Then start with the first word on the list and ask students to raise their hands if they know the meaning. Then ask one of the students with their hand raised to explain the word. If no students raise their hands for a particular word, explain it.

11. That's Not on My List

This activity is really useful for comparing words that have similar meanings but with a difference in usage. The lists below of nouns following the words *rapid* and *fast* provides a good indication of how they are used differently.

To set the activity up, choose your two words and then get a top 20 list for each. Then split the class into an equal number of pairs or small groups. Give the students in one half the class one list and the others, the other list. Students discuss with their partners which words on their list they think would not be on the other list. For example, *fast* would appear with *food* but *rapid* would not. After students have had some time to discuss this, put each pair/group with one from the other half. Then one team starts and says a word that they think would not be on the other team's list. If the other team confirms that it is not, they get a point, which they indicate by checking the word off on the list. If it is on the list, they lose a point. Play switches to the other team and it continues like this. Stop the activity whenever you want and find out which teams got the most points. Then you will need to elicit the words that were only on one list and confirm that they would not appear on the other list – keeping in mind that you only have the top 20. For example, *fast* appears with *water* but *rapid* can also be used with *water*, even though it is not among the top 20.

Nouns after fast

1	FOOD	1433
2	TRACK	711
3	LANE	291
4	CAR	191
5	BREAK	186
6	PACE	186
7	FRIEND	155
8	START	127
9	GROWTH	97
10	RULE	70
11	WAY	58
12	LEARNER	56
13	ACTION	54
14	BOAT	49
15	WATER	49
16	BALL	48
17	LIFE	47
18	MOTION	47
19	MONEY	43
20	THING	42

Nouns after rapid

1	GROWTH	1023
2	CHANGE	414
3	EXPANSION	247
4	INCREASE	241
5	SUCCESSION	229
6	RATE	222
7	PACE	211
8	DEVELOPMENT	195
9	RESPONSE	188
10	TRANSIT	180
11	RISE	179
12	POPULATION	169
13	PROGRESS	126
14	DECLINE	119
15	DEPLOYMENT	98
16	REACTION	80
17	ADVANCE	71
18	INDUSTRIALIZATION	69
19	EVOLUTION	56
20	RECOVERY	56

Form-based Activities

12. Eliminate the Pretenders

This activity increases students' familiarity with words that take certain prefixes or suffixes. The activity is based on the fact that lists of words ending or beginning with the letters used in certain affixes are not always affixed words, for example, *moment* (see below) is not an example of *ment* used as a suffix..

To set this activity up, get a list of 20 words ending in a certain suffix (**ment*) or beginning with a certain prefix (*pre**). Make a copy for each pair or group of students. Put students in their pairs or groups and give them each a copy of the list. Deal with unknown words for meaning, if needed. Then, tell them to work together and eliminate any words that are not actually root words taking the suffix/prefix. There will be some discussion about certain words where it is unclear. For example, does *apartment* come from *apart*? Tell students they will get a point for each word they eliminate. When students have finished, get some of their ideas and encourage discussion about debatable words. You can make a judgement call about those words (e.g., *apartment*) as what is most important about the activity is not whether the word is actually an affixed one or not, but that the students remember some of the most common words with that ending or beginning.

Words ending in *ment*

1	GOVERNMENT	201112	11	STATEMENT	32437
2	MOMENT	103574	12	EQUIPMENT	31112
3	DEVELOPMENT	96216	13	APARTMENT	29823
4	DEPARTMENT	85646	14	ASSESSMENT	26272
5	TREATMENT	54248	15	ARGUMENT	25762
6	MANAGEMENT	51989	16	COMMENT	21780
7	MOVEMENT	51080	17	COMMITMENT	21670
8	ENVIRONMENT	48977	18	ACHIEVEMENT	18437
9	AGREEMENT	34740	19	INVOLVEMENT	17623
10	INVESTMENT	33139	20	ENFORCEMENT	17397

13. Determine the Parts of Speech

This is a very basic activity but one that gives students valuable practice in determining the part of speech of a word based on its form. It will also help raise their awareness of some of the common suffixes used to form nouns, adjective, adverbs and verbs.

Before class, get a list of the top 10 variations of a root word. Then, put students in pairs or small groups and give each one a copy of the list. Remind students of the four main parts of speech and then have students go through the list and identify what part of speech each word is. When they have finished, elicit their answers and ask them to explain how they knew a word was a particular part of speech. Make corrections, if necessary, and then find out how many points each group got.

1	<u>DIRECTOR</u>	<u>81209</u>
2	<u>DIRECTLY</u>	<u>38474</u>
3	<u>DIRECT</u>	<u>34693</u>
4	<u>DIRECTION</u>	<u>34600</u>
5	<u>DIRECTED</u>	<u>15899</u>
6	<u>DIRECTIONS</u>	<u>12913</u>
7	<u>DIRECTORS</u>	<u>10739</u>
8	<u>DIRECTING</u>	<u>3837</u>
9	<u>DIRECTS</u>	<u>2640</u>
10	<u>DIRECTORY</u>	<u>1896</u>

14. Matching Form to Meaning

This activity focuses students on suffixes which create different parts of speech. They will do that by looking for the words on their list which match definitions that they have been given. And, it is the students themselves who will supply the definitions.



To set the activity up, get a list of the top 10 variations of a root word created by adding different suffixes. Write the list on the board with the number ranking. Then divide students into pairs or small groups so that you can divide the 10 words equally among them. If you can't (e.g., 3 groups with 3 words each), then you can take the remaining word(s) yourself. To divide the words up, have a member from each pair/group come up and check off their words from the list on the board. Then have each team work at writing down a definition for their word. If they use dictionaries, insist that they rewrite the definition (try giving them a limit of how many words they can lift from the dictionary). Make sure they've included the part of speech in their definition. For example, "This is an adjective to describe someone who has done something well (successful)." You'll need to monitor to check their definitions for accuracy. When the students have finished, have one team read out their definition and have each group decide on the word on the board that matches it. Then tell them that when you say "Go", one person in the group should hold up the number of fingers that corresponds with the ranking of the word on the board, e.g., 3 for *successful*. Confirm the answer and have teams award themselves a point for each correct guess. When you are down to two words left, have both definitions read first, then ask for a show of fingers for the last one read. When the activity is finished, you can find out who got the highest score and it would be a good idea to go over the words and ask students how they knew each word was a certain part of speech, e.g., it ended with *ful* so it must be an adjective.

1	SUCCESS	54034
2	SUCCESSFUL	40409
3	SUCCESSFULLY	11105
4	SUCCEED	10224
5	SUCCEDED	6768
6	SUCCESES	4150
7	SUCCESSOR	3694
8	SUCCESSION	3596
9	SUCCESSIVE	2497
10	SUCCEEDING	1858

15. Creating Form from Meaning

This activity is similar to the one above but students only have knowledge of the root word and they have to create the affixed forms to match the teacher's definitions. Also, with this activity, you can also include prefixes to test students' knowledge of their meanings.

First, get a list of the top 10 affixed forms of a root word (see below for example with *arrange*). Then, tell students what the root word is and that you will be giving them clues about each word on the list and they will have to manipulate the root word to create a word that matches the clues. Then put students in pairs or groups of three. Then give them the definition of the first word, for example, "a past tense verb or an adjective to describe something that has been set up (*arranged*)." Allow students time to write the word down and then continue with the rest of the list. When you're done, elicit each word from the students and you can ask them how they knew to create the particular form of it. Then, when you are done, find out who got the most points.

1	ARRANGED	9085
2	ARRANGEMENT	7997
3	ARRANGING	2086
4	REARRANGE	639
5	REARRANGED	616
6	ARRANGES	530
7	REARRANGING	481
8	ARRANGER	220
9	PREARRANGED	215
10	REARRANGEMENT	174

Usage-based Activities

16. Explain the List

The focus of this activity is on why certain words might be as frequent as they are. As students have to explain why the words might be so common, it gets them to really think about usage. That task will not only help them to remember the words but also remind them of how they can use them.

To begin, give students a list of the top 10 most frequent words. Clarify meanings where necessary. Put students in an even number of pairs or small groups and they work together to come up with explanations of why all or some of the words are on the list, in other words, why they are used so frequently. You can decide how many you want them to deal with and different groups could deal with different ones. They should write down their explanations without using the actual words from the list (see below). When all the pairs/groups are finished, ask the pairs/groups to get together so they can get use their explanations as a guessing game. One student can read one of his/her explanations and the other group can guess which item on the list it goes with. You can ask them to award themselves points for each correct guess. When students have finished this task, you can have them switch pairings and do it again.

Nouns used with *debt*

1	CARD	415
2	GOVERNMENT	170
3	CONSUMER	125
4	STUDENT	79
5	MORTGAGE	77
6	WORLD	74
7	BANK	52
8	SLEEP	47
9	HOUSEHOLD	35
10	GAMBLING	30



(Credit) **card debt:** This is on the list because a lot of people buy things when they don't have money

Government debt: This is on the list because a lot of countries have this problem.

Student debt: This is on the list because university is expensive and people have to borrow money to go

Gambling debt: This is on the list because many people are addicted to this

17. We're Number One

Like the activity above, this one gets students to think about usage because they have to explain why certain words might be used so frequently. It also gives students valuable speaking practice especially in that they will be trying to persuade others why a particular word is so popular.

Get a list of the top 10 or top 20 most frequent words. Divide students into pairs/groups and give each an equal number of words from the top ten but make sure they don't know the ranking of those words. If you cannot divide the words equally, you can leave some out, e.g., 8 divided among 4 groups or 9 divided among three. You can clarify meanings, if necessary. Then, each group works together to come up with a reason why their words might be number 1 on the list. When they are done, everyone gives their explanations and all students listen for what they think is the number 1 word. After all the explanations have been given, read out each word and ask students to raise their hands if they think that that word was number 1. Make sure that you tell them that they cannot vote for their own word. Keep track of the scores for each word and then you can declare the group that got the most votes for their words as the winners. Then you can reveal the actual ranking of the words.

Most common nouns from financial magazines

1	YEAR	24549
2	COMPANY	24007
3	BUSINESS	12387
4	STOCK	11075
5	FUND	11012
6	TIME	10129
7	MARKET	8928
8	PEOPLE	8085
9	MONEY	7748
10	PRICE	6737

18. Our Word is Number One

This activity is a variation of the one above and, like the one above, it gets students to think about usage and why certain words might be so frequent. Like the above activity, it also requires students to persuade others that their word is number one.



Prepare a list of top 10 most frequent words and write it on the board in random (or alphabetical) order. Explain meanings, if necessary and then divide students into pairs or small groups. A member from each grouping should come up and select one of the words from the board by crossing it off. Once each team has a word, tell them to discuss why their word might be number one and tell them they will have to convince the class that it is. After that has been done, each team gives their explanation. After all the explanations have been given, read out the random list of words one by one and get students to raise their hands if they think that word is number 1, but let students know they can't vote for their own word. Write the number of votes beside each word on the board. Then reveal the actual ranking and add the rank to the number of votes to determine a score for each team. So, for example, if a team had the number one word and got nine votes for it, they would end up with ten points. If a group had the number ten word and got one vote for it, they would also end up with ten points.

19. Top and Bottom

Like the two above, this activity also has the students thinking about usage and why certain words are commonly used. However, this activity has a little twist in that students are given two words, one from the top of the list and one from the bottom. They have to figure out which one is which and justify their decision.

Prepare a list of the top 20 most frequent words. Give pairs or groups one word from the top 5 (or 10) and one from the bottom 5 (or 10) but don't tell them which is which. Make sure the two words you give to a pair/group are not close to each other on the list. Clarify meanings of any words, if necessary. Students work with their partners and try to decide which word is from the top and which is from the bottom and they have to prepare a justification for their choices. Once all students have done that, each team shares their ideas with the class in turn and the other teams try to guess which word is from which place. Reveal the answer after each one and every team, including the team that has the words, gets a point for a correct guess.

20. Kick Out the Word

This activity is challenging in that students are asked which word from the top 11 is not in the top 10. The answer is not really that important as the word in 11th place may be almost as frequent as the one before it. The real value in this activity is that it really gets students to think about the usage of all the words on the list. By doing that, they will also be likely to remember them.

Prepare a list of the **top 11** most frequent words. Put students in pairs or small groups and write the list of 11 words on the board in random or alphabetical order. Deal with meanings, if necessary. Then, in their pairs/groups, students discuss which word they think does not belong and why. Tell them to do that in reference to the others, e.g., "X belongs because... but Y doesn't because..." After they have had some time to do this, ask each group which word they chose. Then get each group, in turn, to explain why they chose that word making reference to the other words. Then, when all have finished doing this, reveal the word that was number 11 and each team that chose that word gets a point.

Nouns after *leave*

1	ROOM	3033
2	HOUSE	2144
3	COUNTRY	1513
4	OFFICE	1497
5	SCHOOL	1107
6	TOWN	957
7	MESSAGE	818
8	WORK	744
9	HOME	687
10	PEOPLE	674
11	JOB	634

21. How Many Groups?

This is a great activity to help students discover the types of words that are collocates of a certain keyword. That discovery will give them valuable information about the usage of the keyword.

To set this activity up, give students a list of the top 20 most frequent collocates of a certain keyword. Then put them in pairs or small groups and ask them to look for similarities among the words on the list, e.g., words that have similar meanings. They can use dictionaries to check meanings, if they'd like. Tell the students that they should work with their partners and try to find words on the list to form different groups according to their similarity. Specify that a group must consist of at least two words. Also tell them that they will have to explain how the words in each group are connected. Once students have had time to do this, ask each team to tell you how many groups they found. You can award them a point for each one. Then elicit examples of groups from the students, making corrections where needed.

Some examples of groupings from the adjectives to describe the word *village* (see below).

Size: small, global, little, tiny

Type: Olympic, Native, Arab, African, English

Location: Nearby, remote, rural, coastal, neighboring

Proportion: Whole, entire

Age: Old, new, traditional

Adjective before *village*

1	SMALL	361	8	ENTIRE	131	15	AFRICAN	50
2	GLOBAL	272	9	REMOTE	106	16	COASTAL	50
3	LITTLE	264	10	NATIVE	88	17	NEW	49
4	OLYMPIC	237	11	RURAL	78	18	LOCAL	46
5	NEARBY	171	12	NEIGHBORING	75	19	ENGLISH	44
6	TINY	158	13	OLD	73	20	TRADITIONAL	37
7	WHOLE	150	14	ARAB	63			

22. Fill in the Top Ten

This activity is a good one for getting students to notice the similarities of words used in collocations. It is a simple activity where the students are given a gapped list of collocates and have to fill in the spaces from a supplied list of words.

To set the activity up, get a top 10 or top 20 list of collocates of a certain key word. Then blank out some of the words on the list. It's best if those words are connected in some way to words that remain on the list. Then you will need to make a list of the missing words and other words that are thrown in to make it challenging for students. Then put the students in pairs or small groups and give them the blanked out list and the list of possible words that might go in the spaces. Clarify word meaning where necessary. Then, tell students to work together and try to figure out what the missing words are and where they go in the list, reminding them to think about which words might be more common. When all students have finished, elicit some of their ideas and ask for justification. Then tell them the correct answers. You can award them a point for each correct word added to the list and also bonus points for getting them in the right place. Find out who got the most points.

Nouns after *business*

1		1607	
2	LEADER	1591	
3		1570	university
4	COMMUNITY	1500	class
5	CARD	1179	college
6	PARTNER	1012	director
7		998	president
8	PLAN	947	manager
9	PEOPLE	897	owner
10	MODEL	893	executive
11	ADMINISTRATION	784	county
12		701	world
13	INTEREST	674	city
14		623	voyage
15	PRACTICE	620	tour
16	GROUP	586	trip
17		569	travel
18	SUIT	524	development
19	TRAVELER	486	arrangement
20		433	way
			procedure
			creation

Answers

1. school 3. owner 7. world 14. executive 17. trip 12. development 20. manager

23. Identify the Groups

This is a good activity to raise students' awareness of the kind of words that collocate with certain keywords. Collocates can often be broken down into certain categories and, by making students aware of some of these categories, the activity gives them important information about usage.

To begin, put students in pairs or small groups and give them a list of 20 most frequent words. Identify a group of words that are related in some way, the most common way being meaning. Then give the students an explanation of the properties of the group. For example, with the list below, students could be asked to look for collocations with *reach* that are about finding an answer to a problem after thinking or talking about it (*agreement, conclusion, consensus, decision*). Likewise, students could be asked for words that are about reaching a limit (*goal, top, end, peak, limit, bottom*). After giving students the description of the group, elicit their ideas, confirm their answers and add any that they missed. Each pair or group can award themselves a point for each one they got. You can repeat the activity with another group of words from the list.

Nouns after *reach*

1	POINT	1442
2	AGREEMENT	1311
3	GOAL	802
4	LEVEL	774
5	AGE	755
6	CONCLUSION	745
7	TOP	721
8	END	668
9	PEAK	568
10	CONSENSUS	446
11	PEOPLE	392
12	PERCENT	379
13	HEIGHT	353
14	HAND	329
15	DECISION	326
16	DESTINATION	318
17	COMMENT	311
18	DOOR	307
19	LIMIT	278
20	BOTTOM	265

24. Categories on Walls

This is a more dynamic version of the above activity. It gets students to look for words that fit into prescribed categories. Once they find a word, they are to write it up on a category sheet that has been posted on the wall – making it easy to check their answers.

To set this activity up, prepare a list of the top 20 most frequent words and go through it and pick out different categories of usage. Then get a blank sheet of paper for each category and explain the category on the top of the sheet of paper. For example, below are some explanations based on the list in the nouns that go with *reach* from the previous activity. If need be, as with *LIMIT*, you can use one of the actual words as the category title.

- Solutions to problems from discussion
- Reaching the limit
- Reaching a place on a scale
- Getting a message across
- A physical place
- Other

When you have the categories on the papers, post them on the walls throughout the classroom. Then give each pair or small group of students a different coloured marker. Tell them that when you give them the list, they are to choose words that fit the categories on the walls and write the word on the appropriate paper. Explain that it is a competition and that there are two rules. The first is that they cannot write something on a paper that another team has already written. The other is that they cannot write two in a row on one paper – they have to write something on another paper and then they can come back to the original one. Give them the list and start the activity. When they are done, go over the sheets and make corrections, where needed. Then get each group to count how many contributions they made to determine a winner. An example is below of what the sheets might look like after the activity with collocations of *reach*.

<p>Solutions to problems from discussion</p> <p>agreement conclusion consensus decision</p>	<p>Reaching the limit</p> <p>goal top end peak limit bottom</p>	<p>Reaching a place on a scale</p> <p>point age height percent level</p>
<p>Getting a message across</p> <p>people</p>	<p>A physical place</p> <p>door destination</p>	<p>Other</p> <p>hand comment</p>

25. Odd Ones Out

This is a good activity to get students to focus on the usage of words on the list and to pick out any that don't seem to fit. Essentially, you are getting students to do the work for you as, instead of you removing those words, you can leave them in and get students to take them out.

First, prepare a list of top 10 or 20 most frequent words. While you are on the site, you might want to check usage of words where it is not apparent (click on the word to get some sample sentences). In class, put students in pairs or small groups and give each of them the list or write it on the board. Tell them to think about how the words are used and then to pick out any that don't seem to fit with the others, especially ones they can't figure out. Then, elicit their ideas about the words that don't fit, confirm how those words are actually used and contrast them to the others on the list. If you want to make it competitive, tell students before they begin that they will receive one point for each word they pick out that is, in fact, different.

Below are some examples of verbs that don't seem to fit well with *business* and explanations of how they actually do fit.

- *Be* is used in constructions such as “be business partners”, “business is business” etc.
- *Mean* is used in the expression “to mean business”
- *Show* business is the entertainment industry
- *Say* is used in reported speech, e.g., “He says business is good.”
- *Talk* is used in the expression, “talk business”.
- *Make* is used when business acts like an adjective as in “make business deals/decisions”
- *Repeat* is used like an adjective as in “repeat business”.
- *Mix* is used in the expression “to mix business with pleasure”.

Verb + *business*

1	DO	4504	11	MAKE	114
2	BE	956	12	TAKE	91
3	HAVE	346	13	STUDY	80
4	CONDUCT	325	14	REPEAT	63
5	MEAN	296	15	ATTRACT	54
6	SHOW	157	16	MIX	54
7	SAY	154	17	BRING	47
8	TALK	133	18	HELP	46
9	GET	131	19	TEACH	45
10	LOSE	123	20	HURT	43

26. My Favourite Collocations

This is a great activity to emphasize to students that whenever they notice collocations, they should be assessing them as to how useful they might be. The activity is quite simple in that it asks students to look at a list of collocations individually and to decide which ones they think would be worth remembering.

To set the activity up, give individual students a list of top 10 or top 20 most frequent words. Deal with meanings, if necessary. Then, tell students to think about which of the collocations (or grammar constructions) they think would be most useful for them. Give them a number to select, e.g., five. Once all students have done that, have each student go around the class and find out how many other students chose the same words that they did. After comparing lists with one student, they can indicate the words of theirs that the other student chose by putting tally marks beside each word. Students continue talking to other students in the class and keeping score. When all students have finished, have them add up all their tally marks and find out who chose the most words that were deemed most useful by the other students. Elicit those words from the students and discuss why the chunks they form might be so useful.

Adjectives before *circumstances*

1	CERTAIN ///	441
2	NORMAL	331
3	OTHER //////////////	297
4	DIFFERENT //	258
5	DIFFICULT	232
6	SPECIAL //	229
7	SIMILAR ////	220
8	ECONOMIC	163
9	RIGHT	147
10	CHANGING	143

27. Don't Say the Words

This activity is good for getting students to think about how they would use a certain collocation productively – in this case, in speaking. The activity is made more interesting in that the students who have the conversation that creates the context for the collocation cannot actually mention it. Then the whole class is required to consider their context and think about which collocation it might fit

To set this up, get a list of top 10 or 20 most frequent collocates and write them on the board with their keyword. Divide students into pairs or groups of three and divide the collocations among them by giving each group/pair a paper with their collocation(s) written on it. The groups discuss how they will have a conversation about the collocation without actually saying it. After giving each group time to plan and practise, have the groups hold their conversations for the rest of the class. When they are finished, the rest of the class tries to guess which collocation they had. Then it continues to the next group. If you want to make it competitive, you can award a point to the first team that guesses it.

Nouns after *leave*

1	ROOM	3059	6	MESSAGE	1071
2	HOUSE	2182	7	HOME	1057
3	COUNTRY	1552	8	TOWN	972
4	OFFICE	1531	9	JOB	801
5	SCHOOL	1161	10	WORK	744



Sample conversation for “leave the country”

A: I don't like the winter here.
B: I don't like it either but what can you do?
A: I am planning to do something about it.
B: What is it?
A: I am taking a course to learn how to teach English.
B: That's a good idea. They need a lot of English teachers in Brazil.
A: Yes, there are other places too.

28. Guess the key word

With this activity, students are given the list of collocates and they have to come up with a keyword that collocates with all of them. Unless the students are at a high enough level, it's best to give them a few keywords to choose from.

To set the activity up, prepare a list of the top 10 most frequent collocates of a keyword and come up with a few related keywords to use as distracters. For example, the list below is for the verb *plan* but you could add *arrange*, *prepare* and *organize*. Write the top 10 list on the board and write the keyword possibilities above it. Deal with any unknown words, if necessary. Then put students in pairs or small groups. Each pair or group tries to decide what the real keyword is and they have to choose some collocations that justify it, e.g., “plan an attack”. When students have finished discussing, ask each group which keyword they chose and, for the ones that got it correct, ask them for collocations to justify it.

Plan/Arrange/Prepare/Organize

1	ACTION	526
2	TRIP	466
3	ATTACK	369
4	PLACE	295
5	ACTIVITY	196
6	STRATEGY	193
7	PROGRAM	187
8	WEDDING	186
9	DAY	173
10	WORK	146

29. Words in Common

This is a good activity for comparing the collocates of two words that are synonyms or related in other ways. For example, the lists below are adjectives that are used with *boy* and *girl*. These two lists indicate, for example, that words like *little*, *young* and *small* are used for both but adjectives like *beautiful* and *pretty* are only used with *girl*.

To set the activity up, choose two synonyms or words that are otherwise related. Get a list of top 20 collocations for each, using the same kind of collocates, e.g., adjectives. Then make copies so that pairs of students will have one or the other list. In class, tell students what the two key words are. Then give copies of one list to half the class and copies of the other list to the other half. The keyword would be on the list. Then divide each half into pairs or small groups. Each team studies their list and tries to determine which of the collocates would also appear on the other list. Monitor to help, if needed. When students have finishing the task, get each pair/group to combine with one that has the opposite list. Then the teams take turns guessing which words are on the other team's list. They get a point for each correct guess and lose a point for each wrong guess. Stop the activity whenever you want and find out who got the most points. You can then discuss why words appeared on one or both lists.

Adjectives with boy

1	LITTLE	623
2	OLD	392
3	GOOD	332
4	SMALL	216
5	YOUNG	194
6	DEAR	121
7	NEW	85
8	BIG	62
9	CLEVER	57
10	NAUGHTY	53
11	HEAD	52
12	POOR	51
13	OTHER	47
14	BAD	43
15	WEE	39
16	TALL	38
17	GOLDEN	33
18	BLACK	32
19	LOCAL	30
20	AMERICAN	29

Adjectives with girl

1	LITTLE	873
2	YOUNG	502
3	GOOD	357
4	OLD	184
5	OTHER	178
6	POOR	123
7	PRETTY	87
8	NICE	86
9	GOLDEN	73
10	BEAUTIFUL	72
11	CLEVER	66
12	BIG	65
13	NEW	57
14	DEAD	54
15	LOVELY	52
16	ENGLISH	51
17	TEENAGE	51
18	SMALL	48
19	DEAR	40
20	HEAD	40

30. Select the words

This is a good activity to get students to think about how certain collocations might be used. This is accomplished by giving them a task to do and they have to select the collocations that could be used for that task.

To set up this activity, get a list of top 20 collocates of a keyword. Write them on the board with the keyword or hand the list to your students. Deal with any clarification and then put students in pairs or small groups. Tell students that they need certain words for a certain function, e.g., to decide on something really important. Tell them to look through the list and select all the collocations that could be used and point out that they will have to explain how they might be used to the rest of the class. After students have had time to select the collocations, find out how many each team got, if you want to make it competitive. Then elicit their choices and have them explain how they could be used (some examples are bolded on the list below). Then, if you want, you could have them actually do the task.

The bolded words below could be associated with deciding on something really important.

Nouns after *make*

1	SENSE	17322
2	DECISION	15091
3	MONEY	8931
4	DIFFERENCE	8890
5	WAY	8823
6	MISTAKE	7997
7	POINT	4847
8	PEOPLE	4737
9	CHANGE	4343
10	THING	4210
11	CHOICE	3814
12	CASE	3757
13	LOVE	3617
14	PROGRESS	3453
15	USE	3300
16	SERVING	3075
17	EFFORT	3055
18	LOT	2966
19	STATEMENT	2862
20	LIVING	2542