

If someone uses a metaphor, they use a word in a way that is slightly different from its basic meaning. For example, the first meaning of *sunny* is connected with the weather, so we talk about a **sunny day**. However, *sunny* can also be used in expressions like a **sunny smile**, the **children's sunny faces** to mean happy; in these collocations *sunny* is used in a metaphorical way. Metaphors are more common in written than spoken English and often have the effect of sounding quite poetic.

A Light and dark

Light in English is associated with happiness. So a **face shines** with pleasure and **eyes shine** with excitement or delight. If someone's **face lights up** or their **eyes light up**, they show that they suddenly feel happy. If an **atmosphere lightens** or a **mood lightens**, it becomes more relaxed or cheerful than it was.

Darkness is associated with unhappiness and negative feelings. **Dark thoughts** are gloomy or sinister ones and **dark days** or **dark times** are unpleasant times to live through. If someone's **face darkens** or their **eyes darken** or someone's **expression darkens**, then we know that that person is unhappy, often because they are feeling angry.

B Water

collocation	example	comment
ideas flow, conversation flows	It was a very successful meeting. The ideas flowed .	<i>Flow</i> suggests that things progress easily, without effort.
a flood / floods of tears, tears streaming down someone's face	The little girl was in floods of tears . Tears were streaming down her face .	Both of these metaphors about tears suggest the girl is crying a lot.
people pour/stream somewhere	People poured out of the hall at the end of the lecture.	<i>Pour</i> and <i>stream</i> suggest lots of people moving smoothly.
people trickle	People trickled into the concert hall.	<i>Trickle</i> suggests a few people moving slowly.
a stream of visitors/ traffic	There was a stream of traffic outside our room all night.	<i>Stream</i> suggests continuous movement.

C Fire and heat

Words associated with fire and heat often suggest anger in English. A **heated debate**, a **heated discussion** or a **heated conversation** is one in which people disagree in an angry way with each other. If you say that someone has a **fiery temper**, you mean that they often get suddenly angry. The word *flare* means *show a bright light in the dark*. If you say **tempers flared**, you mean that people became angry with each other. Similarly **violence flares up** and **troubles flare up**. These all mean that problems which existed in the past suddenly become serious again.

However, not all metaphors relating to fire suggest anger. If you feel very embarrassed, your **cheeks burn with embarrassment**. A *blaze* is a very bright fire. We talk about a **blaze of glory** or a **blaze of publicity** meaning there is a lot of it and it is spectacular.

TIP

When you are reading English, try to notice metaphorical uses of language. This will help you to see how familiar words can be used in extra, interesting ways.

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Exercises

- 12.1** Use a word from the box in the correct form to complete each collocation. Use each word once only.

shine dark light up sunny lighten darken

- 1 I could tell Maria was in a good mood by the smile on her face.
- 2 The little boy's eyes when he saw his daddy approaching.
- 3 Let's put some happy music on to the atmosphere. Everyone's too serious.
- 4 My grandparents lived through the days of civil war from 1936 to 1939.
- 5 The girl's eyes with excitement as she prepared for the party.
- 6 Mr Garnham's expression as he was told the terrible news.

- 12.2** Read these remarks by different people, then answer the questions.

Jason: I was in floods of tears. It was such a sad film.

Thomas: An hour before the match there was already a trickle of vehicles entering the car park.

Emma: I had a heated conversation with Helena the other day.

Paula: I didn't think there'd be much traffic today but there was a steady stream of vehicles on the main highway.

Rob: Tempers flared, I'm afraid, and mine was one of them.

Yvonne: Everyone was pouring out of the stadium as I drove past.

	name(s)
1 Who saw a lot of cars?	
2 Who got very angry indeed?	
3 Who saw a lot of people all at once?	
4 Who had a disagreement or argument?	
5 Who saw a small number of cars?	
6 Who cried over something?	

- 12.3** Put these words in order to make sentences.

1 with / cheeks / embarrassment / burning / were / My

2 city / up / has / in / capital / flared / the / Violence

3 flowed / The / during / discussion / ideas / the

4 divorce / was / footballer's / The / publicity / surrounded / famous / a / by / blaze / of

- 12.4** Answer the questions.

1 What is most likely to be fiery: (a) someone's intelligence (b) someone's temper?

2 Which is the most typical collocation: a blaze of (a) temper (b) glory (c) joy?

3 What is most likely to be heated: (a) discussions (b) cheeks (c) troubles?

4 What is most likely to flare up: (a) love (b) interest (c) violence?

- 12.5** Use a dictionary to find collocations using these words in a metaphorical way.

1 bright 2 warm 3 cold

A Talking about the weather

It's great here. Have had **unbroken sunshine**¹ ever since we arrived. We're having a wonderful time – though in the middle of the day it's just too **scorching hot**² to do anything but lie on the beach **soaking up the sunshine**³. This is the life!
Anna

It's been **pouring with rain** all day. In fact I've never seen such **torrential rain**⁴! It's **freezing cold** in the tent – we all got soaked to the skin⁵. Every half hour we look out of the tent hoping for a **break in the clouds**. In vain! We're going to a hotel next year!

It **rained heavily** all day yesterday but it's dry at the moment. There's **thick cloud**, though, and it certainly **looks like rain**⁶. Quite a **strong wind** is blowing too! Am glad we brought warm clothes!

¹ only sunshine, no clouds in the sky

² extremely hot

³ enjoying the sunshine

⁴ heavy rain ⁵ very wet ⁶ looks as if it is going to rain

B Weather conditions

collocation	example	comment
weather deteriorates [opposite: improves]	The weather is likely to deteriorate later on today.	<i>Deteriorate</i> is quite formal – the weather is getting worse is more informal.
thick/dense fog patches of fog/mist a blanket of fog [literary] fog/mist comes down [opposite: lifts]	There is thick fog on the motorway. There are patches of fog on the east coast but these should lift by midday.	<i>Patches of fog/mist</i> are small areas of fog/mist, whereas a <i>blanket of fog/mist</i> is thicker and more extensive.
strong sun [opposite: weak]	Avoid going on the beach at midday when the sun is strongest .	
heavy rain (NOT strong rain) driving rain	Road conditions are difficult because of the driving rain .	<i>driving rain</i> = rain falling fast and heavily
heavy/fresh/crisp/thick/ driving snow	The snow is lovely and crisp this morning.	<i>crisp snow</i> = snow that is fresh and hard
hard frost	There will be a hard frost tonight.	opposite of a <i>hard frost</i> = a <i>light frost</i> (NOT a soft frost)
high/strong/light/biting winds the wind picks up [opposite: dies down] the wind blows/whistles	The wind was light this morning but it's picking up now and will be very strong by the evening. The wind was whistling through the trees.	<i>biting winds</i> = very cold winds If the wind picks up, it gets stronger.

C Extreme weather

FREAK¹ STORMS DEVASTATE SW

Yesterday **freak weather conditions** **hit**² the south-west of England. **Gale-force winds**³ **caused** a lot of **damage** to property. A number of **buildings were destroyed**, roofs were **torn off** and **fences were blown down**. Several rivers **burst their banks**⁴.

¹ very unusual or unexpected

² struck, badly affected

³ extremely strong winds

⁴ rivers flooded

Exercises

13.1 Look at A and B opposite and complete these weather collocations.

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1 crisp | 5 a hard |
| 2 patches of | 6 torrential |
| 3 strong | 7 unbroken |
| 4 a biting | 8 a blanket of |

13.2 Look at A and B opposite. Change the underlined words so that each sentence has the opposite meaning.

- There was a light wind yesterday.
- The wind picked up in the evening.
- The weather is likely to improve tomorrow.
- It was scorching hot here yesterday.
- There may be some light rain later on today.
- The mist came down at about midday.

13.3 Replace the underlined words in this letter with collocations from the opposite page.

I wish I'd worn a warmer jacket. There's a very cold wind. At least it's not raining heavily today. I got extremely wet yesterday. I wish I was sunbathing on a Mediterranean beach.

13.4 Answer these questions about the collocations on the opposite page.

- What might make a river burst its banks?
- What can you probably see if someone says, 'It looks like rain'?
- What kind of wind is a freak wind?
- Is it harder to drive if there's dense fog or if there are patches of fog?
- What kind of weather conditions have you got if the rain is described as driving rain?
- If we talk about severe weather conditions *hitting* or *striking* an area, what kind of image is created?
- What, apart from wind, can blow or whistle?
- Which of these verbs suggests most destruction and which least?
The storm *destroyed* / *damaged* / *devastated* the town.

13.5 Look up these words in your dictionary. Note down two more collocations for each one.

wind



rain



snow



FOLLOW UP

Either listen to the weather forecast on an English language TV or radio channel **or** go to the website www.bbc.co.uk/weather. (You can enter the name of your own country to get information about the weather there.)

Make a note of any other useful weather collocations that you find.