

A Family relationships

Sociologists talk about **nuclear** and **extended families**. A **nuclear family** is just parents and children. An **extended family** is a wider network including grandparents, cousins, etc.

Close relatives are those like parents, children, brothers or sisters. **Distant relatives** are people like **second cousins** [the children of a cousin of your mother or father] or **distant cousins**.

Close/immediate family refers to people who are your nearest **blood relatives**:

I don't have much **close/immediate family**.

She's a **distant cousin** of mine; she's not a **blood relative**.

Close can also be used to mean that the relationship is a very strong one:

We are a very **close family**. *or* We are a very **close-knit family**.

These adjectives also collocate with **family**:

loving, respectable, dysfunctional [unhappy, not working in a healthy way]

Simon came from a **respectable family**, so Mary's parents felt happy about the marriage.

Someone's **late husband/wife** is one who has died.

An **estranged** [formal] **husband/wife** is one who lives in a different place and has a difficult relationship with their husband/wife. They may be having a **trial separation** and may eventually decide to **get a divorce**. In some cases it can be a **bitter/acrimonious divorce**. [full of anger, arguments and bad feeling]

A person's **ex-husband/ex-wife** is a man/woman that she/he used to be married to.

Children whose parents have separated or divorced are said to come from a **broken home**.

If their family is a strong, loving one it can be called a **stable home**. If it is a poor one, not having the things that are necessary for a pleasant life, such as enough money, food or good living conditions, it can be called a **deprived home**.

A **confirmed bachelor** is a man who seems to have no intention of ever marrying.

B Parents and children

collocation	example	comment
start a family	They are hoping to start a family soon.	NOT begin a family
have children	I'd like to have three children .	NOT get children
expect a baby	Soraya is expecting a baby .	NOT wait (for) a baby
have a baby	Jill had her baby yesterday.	NOT get a baby
the baby is due	The baby is due next week.	= expected to arrive
single parent/mother	It's hard being a single parent .	may be either unmarried or divorced
raise / bring up children / a family	Helen had to bring up four young children on her own.	<i>Raise a family</i> is more common in US than in UK English.
apply for custody of give/grant [formal] custody	The father applied for custody of the children, but the judge gave/granted custody to the mother.	<i>custody</i> : the legal right or duty to care for a child after its parents have separated or died
provide for your family	Nick works very long hours to provide for his family .	= to earn enough money to support your family
set up home	We live with my mum now, but we'll set up home on our own soon.	= to start an independent life in one's own flat or house

Exercises

- 19.1 Fill the gaps in this old man's memories about his life with words from A.



I grew up in an (1) family as my grandparents and a couple of aunts, and an uncle, who was a (2) bachelor, lived with us. We saw a lot of our (3) relatives as well as our close ones. I think that families tended to be much more (4) then – we talked to each other more and did things together more. I'm sure there are far more (5) families now than there used to be – you know, where parents hardly spend any time with their children, or with each other – and a lot of parents who are divorced. My (6) wife, who died two years ago, used to say that it is not fair on children to let them grow up in (7) homes.

- 19.2 Look at B. Correct the six collocation errors in this young woman's plans for the future.



Charles and I are hoping to begin a family soon. We both want to get lots of children. Ideally, I'd like to have my first baby next year, when I'll be 25. My sister is waiting a baby now. It's coming next month. She's going to be a sole parent and it'll be hard for her to grow up a child on her own.

- 19.3 Match the two parts of these collocations.

1 apply for	cousin
2 get	separation
3 estranged	custody
4 nuclear	home
5 provide for	wife
6 distant	family
7 set up	your family
8 trial	a divorce

- 19.4 Answer these questions.

- Who do you have in your immediate family?
- Do you have much contact with your distant relatives? If so, when?
- Where did your parents first set up home?
- Which would most children prefer to live in, and why, a stable home or a deprived home?
- What collocation means the same as *to be pregnant*?
- Can dysfunctional families also be respectable ones?
- What can be put before the words *wife* and *husband* to indicate that they are no longer married to someone?
- What is a more formal alternative for *give custody*?

- 19.5 Write a paragraph about your own family using as many as possible of the collocations from this unit.

FOLLOW UP

Read some English language women's magazines and note down any other interesting family collocations that you find.

A Friendship

Here are some common collocations relating to friends and friendship.

collocation	example	comment
make friends	When you go to university you will make a lot of new friends .	NOT find friends (a common student error)
strike up a friendship	Jack struck up a friendship with a girl he met on holiday.	= start a friendship
form/develop a friendship	Juliet formed a lasting friendship with the boy she sat next to at primary school.	NOT make a friendship
cement/spoil a friendship	Spending several weeks on holiday together has cemented their friendship .	cement = strengthen spoil = have a bad effect on
a friendship grows	We were at school together, but our friendship grew after we'd left school.	grow = get stronger
close/special friends mutual friends	I'm glad that our children are such close friends , aren't you?	<i>mutual friends</i> = friends that you share with someone else
a casual acquaintance	I don't know Rod well. We're just casual acquaintances .	= someone you know a little
have a good relationship with someone	Anna and Marie have a very good relationship . They love doing things together.	NOT have a relation / relations with
keep in contact/ touch	We must keep in contact when the course ends.	opposite = lose contact/touch

B More than just good friends

A love story



I **fell madly in love with** Anton from the moment I met him. It was certainly **love at first sight**. I knew at once that he was **the love of my life** but at first I was not sure if my **love was returned** or not. Within a few days, however, he had told me that he was **desperately in love** with me too. A couple of weeks later, we realised that we wanted to **make a commitment** to each other and, when Anton asked me to marry him, I immediately **accepted his proposal**. I'm sure we will always **love each other unconditionally**¹. Neither of us would ever consider **having an affair**² with someone else.

¹ love that is total and does not change regardless of what you or the object of your love does
² have a sexual relationship with someone outside marriage

Exercises

20.1 Look at A. Choose an appropriate word to complete each sentence.

- 1 Kay is quite a shy person and finds it hard to friends.
- 2 Do Paul and Sophie a good relationship?
- 3 Sam is always up friendships with people he meets on trains and planes.
- 4 I hope their disagreement over the bill won't their friendship.
- 5 It's amazing, when you meet someone new, how often you find that you have some friends.
- 6 Apparently, people most of their closest friendships when they are young.
- 7 I wouldn't call Graham a close friend, more a casual
- 8 We didn't really like each other at first, but our friendship as we got to know each other better.

20.2 Make nine collocations out of the words in the box. Use each of the words once only.

a	a	a	accept	affair	an	at
commitment		contact	contact	first	friends	
friendship	have	in	keep	lose	make	
love	love	proposal	return	sight		
someone's	special	strike	up			

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

- 1 Which verb suggests that friendship can be seen as a plant?
- 2 Which collocation suggests that love is close to being crazy?
- 3 Which collocation from the love story means *agree to marry someone*?
- 4 Which collocation means the same as *special friends*?
- 5 Which collocation means the same as *keep in contact with*?

20.4 Complete these questions. Then answer them.

- 1 Have you ever fallen in love at first
- 2 Do you think it's true that men are more reluctant to a commitment than women?
- 3 How old were you when you in love for the first time?
- 4 Do you think it is possible to have one person who is the love of your
- 5 Have you ever been in love with someone who has not your love?
- 6 Do you think that men or women are more likely to be tempted to an affair?

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

love friend friendship relationship

A Feeling happy

Look at these messages in cards sent to Brian and Helen on their wedding day. Note the collocations in bold.

Brian and Helen,
Have a great day. I know you'll
be **blissfully¹ happy** together.
Simon

Dear Helen and Brian,
We hope marriage brings you
lasting happiness.
Jake and Maria

¹ very/extremely

To Brian and Helen –
Best wishes to **the happy couple²**,
Jack

Brian and Helen,
With love and best wishes on this
happy occasion,
Uncle Eric

² a standard way of referring to a newly married couple

B Feeling sad and upset

In these letters to the problem page of Good Life magazine, useful collocations are in bold.

Dear Good Life,
My grandmother died six months ago and I've
felt **desperately sad** and **deeply depressed**
ever since. Is this normal for a 26-year-old?
Karen Young

Dear Good Life,
I felt a **great sadness** when I had to say goodbye
to my friends at the end of our three years in
university. The farewell party was such a **sad**
occasion. What can I do? My life feels empty
without them.
Jo Hart

Dear Good Life,
I was **bitterly¹ disappointed** recently when a friend
let me down badly. How can I **express** my
disappointment to her without appearing silly or
childish? I'm not very good at **showing my feelings**.
Yolanda Reed

Dear Good Life,
I failed an exam recently and it was a **huge**
disappointment to me. Now I'm feeling **increasingly**
anxious that I'll fail the next one. In fact I'm
worried sick. What should I do?
David Wright

¹ deeply disappointed is also common

C Anger and emotion

There is **mounting** [growing] **anger** over the new tax, along with **widespread condemnation** of it [a lot of people in many different places have condemned it]. It has especially **aroused feelings** of resentment among professional people.

I **lost my temper** and was **seething with anger** when she called me an idiot. [I suddenly became very angry]

Divorce is a **highly emotional** experience for all those involved. It's hard not to give a pure **emotional response**. The **emotional involvement** of both parties is intense, and the **emotional impact** on children is huge. [these are rather formal collocations]

Jack was an **emotional wreck** [informal: in a bad emotional state] after his girlfriend finished with him.

TIP

This page gives a number of synonyms for *very/really/terribly* and for *big*, words which learners sometimes use too much. Make a special note of them.