

Exercises

41.1 Look at A. Choose the correct collocation.

My friends and I went camping this weekend. We put up our tent in a lovely spot beside a (1) *babbling / whistling* stream. The birds were (2) *piercing / singing* and it felt great to be so far from the noisy traffic of the town. The weather wasn't very good but it was cosy listening to the (3) *rumble / patter* of rain on the roof of the tent. When it eventually stopped there was (4) *an eerie / a piercing* silence all around us. The silence was suddenly (5) *broken / closed* when a shot (6) *crashed / rang* out. Someone was shooting rabbits.

41.2 Are these noises loud or soft? Write L (loud) or S (soft) after each collocation.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 a deafening sound | 7 an almighty bang |
| 2 a dull thud | 8 an ear-splitting noise |
| 3 music blaring out | 9 a machine humming |
| 4 a machine whirring | 10 someone giving a sigh |
| 5 raucous laughter | 11 leaves making a rustling sound |
| 6 a shrill voice | 12 a muffled sound |

41.3 Match each statement 1–8 with a response a–h.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 I think those people might have had too much to drink. | a Yes, it really is too much to play such loud music after midnight. |
| 2 Did the group react negatively to the news that the flight was delayed? | b Yes, I thought I heard a rumble of thunder in the distance. |
| 3 Our neighbours really make excessive noise, I think. | c Yes, she gave a cry of pain. |
| 4 I hate it when chalk makes that horrible noise on the board. | d Yes, the roar of the traffic kept me awake most of the night. |
| 5 I think this wonderful weather is going to change soon. | e Yes, you can tell by their raucous laughter. |
| 6 It's a comfortable hotel but it's a bit noisy, isn't it? | f Yes, I was woken by what sounded like a loud explosion. |
| 7 Did you hear that almighty bang in the middle of the night? | g Yes, they all gave a groan of disappointment. |
| 8 Did the child react when she had the injection? | h Yes, it's a horrible grating sound, isn't it? |

41.4 Answer these questions.

- What is more likely to make a dull thud – a person falling out of bed onto a carpeted floor in the room above you or a heavy metal box falling onto a stone floor?
- Who is more likely to have shrill voices – primary schoolchildren or old age pensioners?
- If waves are crashing on the beach, are they more likely to be little waves or big waves?
- If you hear a piercing cry, is it more likely to be from a machine or from a bird?
- What is more likely to make an ear-splitting noise – a group of motorbikes roaring past or a large waterfall in a fast-running river?

A Distance

| collocation | example |
|---|---|
| a considerable/long/short distance from | The hotel is a considerable distance from the beach. [quite a long way] |
| within commuting/walking distance | We have to live within commuting distance of my husband's office. [where it is possible to travel to work every day] |
| cover/travel (a distance of) x kilometres | On our cycling tour we managed to cover (a distance of) about 40 kilometres a day. |
| far-off/far-flung places | Bill is always travelling to far-off/far-flung places . [distant] |
| at close range | I've never seen a member of the royal family at such close range before. [so near] |
| neighbouring town/country/area | Many people who work here actually live in neighbouring towns . |

B Little, small and large

We talk about low prices, low wages, low levels. (NOT ~~small~~)

We say **small quantities**, **small numbers**, **small amounts**, a **small increase**. (NOT ~~little~~)

The opposite is **large quantities**, **large numbers**, **large amounts**, a **large increase**. Similarly, we talk about problems or objects being **on a large scale** or **on a small scale**:

If you are walking in the mountains you need a **large scale map**.

The UK has similar problems to the USA, but **on a smaller scale**.

In informal spoken English we often use **little** after another adjective to make it sound more friendly, e.g. **poor little Joe**, **dear little dog**, **nice little room**.

Little can also mean young, e.g. **little brother** [informal: younger brother, NOT ~~small~~ brother; the opposite is **big brother**]. Sometimes **little** or **small** suggests that something is not very important, e.g. a **little problem**, I've got a lot of **little things** to do, to make someone look **small**, to make **small talk** [talk socially, about unimportant subjects].

C Other size collocations

We can talk about **fat books** and **slim books** as well as **fat people** and **slim people**. Only people (not books) can be **plump** or **skinny** or **painfully thin**.

We use **a great deal of** (NOT ~~large~~ or ~~big~~) in contexts like this:

She should be able to help you because she has **a great deal of time** / **a great deal of money** / **a great deal of energy** / **a great deal of enthusiasm**.

Major and **minor** often collocate with words relating to problems or points in an argument, e.g. **major/minor difference**, **major/minor change**, **major/minor effect**, **major/minor difficulty**, **major/minor point**, **major/minor issues**, **major/minor factor**.


ERROR WARNING

Take care with the different collocations that go with **tall** and **high**. We talk about **tall people**, **tall trees**, **tall buildings**, but **high mountains**, **high prices**, **high interest rates**, **high heels**, **high tide**, **high jump**. Make a note of any collocations with **tall** or **high** as you notice them.

Exercises

42.1 Look at A and complete the collocations in these short travel texts.

- 1 Tassia, and the n..... towns of Hiol and Gebja, were all damaged during the civil war but have been rebuilt.
- 2 The roads in Baxa are bad, so don't expect to more than 50 or 60 miles in a day. Petrol stations tend to be a c..... distance from one another, so watch your fuel level.
- 3 If you love heading for-flung destinations in far-..... places, but in the safety of a small group, then Safetrek Holidays could be what you are looking for.
- 4 Within distance of our hotel was the Alfama Bird sanctuary, where we were able to see a wonderful variety of birds at range.

42.2 Cross out the five collocation errors in this text and write the correct words in the right-hand column. The first one has been done for you.

Although we had a little increase in our pay small
 last month, we still earn very small wages.
 We have not had a big deal of help from the
 union, and tall prices mean that life is not
 easy. Luckily, we only have a small level of
 inflation at the moment.

42.3 Change the underlined words so that each sentence has the *opposite* meaning.

- 1 Cilla is having some minor difficulties at work.
- 2 She was wearing red boots with low heels.
- 3 The company manufactures these components on a small scale.
- 4 We have had low interest rates for the last three years.
- 5 It's quite a fat book.
- 6 There were small quantities of oil in the tanks.
- 7 I had to share a room with my big brother until I was ten.
- 8 Jane is shorter than her mother.

42.4 Answer the questions.

- 1 What adverb beginning with 'p' collocates with thin?
- 2 Do we normally say 'a plump book'?
- 3 What do we call the maximum level of the sea on a beach or in a harbour?
- 4 Which adjective usually collocates with people, trees and buildings: *high* or *tall*?
- 5 Which word could fill the gap? That poor child looks lost.
- 6 Which word could fill the gap? Dave has a great of enthusiasm.
- 7 Which word could fill the gap? I'm no good at making talk.
- 8 Would we say 'Could you help me do some small things before dinner?'
- 9 If you owe the bank money, what kind of interest rates do you prefer?

A Describing colours

Look at these letters to *Home making* magazine, asking for advice about colours.

I love **bright** colours. I have a **bright yellow** jacket and I think the **colour goes well with** my bright green trousers. But my best friend thinks the **colours clash**. She says I should get some **yellow trousers to match the jacket**. Who is right?
K. Williams (Mrs)

With black jeans the **colour** always **fades** after two or three washes. Is there any way to stop this?

A. Lacey (Ms)

I put a pair of red socks in the washing machine with my white shirt and my **pale**¹ blue shorts and the **colour ran**.
E. Jitt (Mr)

My clothes are so dull, and I always wear **subdued**² colours. My favourite is **dark green**. How can I add a **touch of colour** to my wardrobe without spending too much money?
B. Grey (Mr)

¹ a light colour that is not bright or strong

² not very bright

B Describing light

Look at these extracts from short stories, where the writers describe different kinds of light.

It had **grown dark**, the **candle flickered** and Bertram could see almost nothing, but suddenly a powerful **beam of light** shone into the room and a police officer entered, with a torch in her hand.

A **ray of sunlight** fell on his face and woke him up. It was six a.m. Soon the **glare of the sun** would make it difficult to see his way across the desert. He must get to the village at once.

It was **pitch dark** when she left the house, but by the time she arrived at the beach, the **faint glow** of dawn was visible on the horizon. The sky was **tinged with gold**.

Above her, the **stars twinkled** in the night sky. Then she saw a **pinpoint of light** in the distance. As she walked towards it she realised it was a man on a bicycle coming towards her.

C Colour and light: metaphorical collocations

The law about re-using pictures from the Internet seems to be a **grey area**. [an unclear area]
The trip to Brazil certainly **added colour** to our rather boring lives.

My brother cares a lot about **green issues** and has volunteered to do conservation work.

The government tried to **blacken his name** because he was critical of their policies. [destroy his reputation]

I'm hoping Hilary can **shed/throw some light on** what happened at work yesterday. [explain]

My sister's illness **cast a shadow over** our New Year family reunion. [made it less happy/cheerful]

Jim has always **been under the shadow of** his super-intelligent sister. [got less attention]

Exercises

43.1 Look at A and choose the right collocation to complete each of these sentences.

- 1 Shocking pink, lime green and orange are very and I personally prefer to wear more
- 2 I think I'll wear my dark blue sweater and those grey trousers. The well together.
- 3 When I washed my red and white football shirt, the and it's ruined now!
- 4 I don't think it is a good idea to wear a purple top with orange trousers and red shoes – the terribly, in my opinion.
- 5 I like that red brooch on your black dress – it adds a lovely
- 6 My son always washes new jeans so that the before he wears them.

43.2 Match the two halves of each collocation.

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| 1 a candle | dark |
| 2 a beam | glow |
| 3 pitch | area |
| 4 a faint | someone's name |
| 5 a star | of light |
| 6 pale | a shadow |
| 7 green | green |
| 8 a grey | flickers |
| 9 cast | twinkles |
| 10 blacken | issues |

43.3 Rewrite each sentence using the word in brackets, so that it keeps the same meaning.

- 1 The police are looking for someone who can explain how the accident happened. (SHED)
- 2 He has always been in an inferior position to his world-famous father. (SHADOW)
- 3 In the east the sky had some golden shades in it. (TINGE)
- 4 Joe's crazy behaviour certainly brightens up our dull office. (COLOUR)
- 5 Very bright sun can make driving difficult at this time of day. (GLARE)
- 6 She walked until the fire was just a little light in the distance. (PINPOINT)
- 7 Darkness was falling and Jill began to feel a little afraid. (GROWING)
- 8 The newspapers seem to be trying to destroy the minister's reputation. (BLACKEN)

43.4 Now answer these questions about the collocations in exercise 43.2

- 1 What probably causes a candle to flicker?
- 2 A *beam* of light is often used about the headlights of a car or the light of a torch. What similar phrase is used about sunlight?
- 3 Would you use *pitch black* to describe someone's hair or the night?
- 4 If you see a light as *a faint glow* is it likely to be far away or near to you?
- 5 What is the difference in meaning between saying that a star *shines* and a star *twinkles*?
- 6 What kind of issues are green issues?
- 7 What do you feel about something if you say that it is a grey area?
- 8 What sort of thing might cast a shadow over a special celebration?
- 9 If Mark accuses Karen of 'blackening his name', what has Karen done?
- 10 If something adds colour to someone's life or to a story, what happens to the life or the story?