

SECTION 07

Collocations



En esta sección vamos a trabajar “*common collocations*”, o lo que es lo mismo, combinaciones de palabras que tienen que ir juntas.

Por ejemplo, en castellano decís ‘cometer un error’, y no ‘hacer un error’, pero en inglés decimos “*to make a mistake*”. Lo mismo pasa con ‘desayunar’, ya que en inglés es “*to have breakfast*”. Como ves, “*to make a mistake*” y “*to have breakfast*” son ejemplos de palabras que van juntas (“*to make*” + “*mistake*” y “*to have*” + “*breakfast*”), ya que si cambias el verbo y dices “*to commit a mistake*” o “*to take breakfast*” estarías cometiendo un error.

Aunque hay muchas categorías de “*collocations*”, las más comunes y fácilmente distinguibles son aquellas formadas por las combinaciones de:

- verbo + sustantivo: “*make the bed*” (no decimos “*to do the bed*”; “*make*”, por tanto, va con “*bed*”)
- adjetivo + sustantivo: “*heavy rain*”
- adverbio + verbo: “*strongly suggest*”
- adverbio + adjetivo: “*completely satisfied*”
- sustantivo + verbo: “*dogs bark*”
- adjetivo + preposición: “*happy about*”
- sustantivo + sustantivo: “*sales department*” (también conocido como “*compound noun*” o ‘sustantivo compuesto’)

Es importante que seas capaz de identificar estas combinaciones de palabras, porque en los exámenes del nivel B1 te encontrarás con numerosas preguntas que hacen referencia a las mismas.

COLLOCATIONS CON VERBOS

A continuación te presentamos algunas de las “*collocations*” más comunes que se forman a partir de un verbo.

TO ACCEPT*

■ accept defeat	aceptar una derrota	She was so good that I had to accept defeat .
■ accept a challenge	aceptar un reto	My dad told me to always accept a challenge .
■ accept an apology	aceptar una disculpa	I'm glad my best friend accepted my apology .
■ accept an invitation	aceptar una invitación	Did she accept your invitation to the party?
■ accept responsibility	asumir una responsabilidad	I'll accept responsibility for the accident.

*¿Qué tal la pronunciación de “*accept*”? Nada de /accept/; “*accept*” se pronuncia /akssept/, marcando bien todas las consonantes. En pasado (“*accepted*”), suena así: /aksséptidd/.

TO ANSWER

■ answer a letter	responder a una carta	Has she answered your letter yet?
■ answer a question	responder a una pregunta	You still haven't answered the question!
■ answer an advertisement	responder a un anuncio	I got the job after I answered an advertisement.
■ answer the door	abrir la puerta (recibir a alguien)	Could you please get up and answer the door?
■ answer the phone*	contestar el teléfono	I didn't want to answer the phone.

* También es muy común usar el *phrasal verb* "to pick up" cuando 'contestamos' el teléfono, como por ejemplo: "She's not **picking up her phone**", o simplemente, "She's not **picking up**".

TO ASK

■ ask a favour	pedir un favor	He only called when he wanted to ask a favour.
■ ask a question	hacer una pregunta	He said he wanted to ask a question.
■ ask permission	pedir permiso	If I ask for permission , can I leave the room?
■ ask for advice*	pedir consejo	I think I need to ask for advice.
■ ask for directions*	pedir indicaciones	I know how to ask for directions in French.

* Ten en cuenta que "for" no puede faltar en "ask for advice" y "ask for directions". Y no caigas en el error de decir "ask for indications". La palabra "indication" en inglés suele usarse para decir 'indicio' o 'señal'.

■ abuse drugs	abusar de las drogas	He started abusing drugs when he was very young.
■ achieve one's goal	lograr un objetivo	He's about to achieve his goal.
■ admit defeat	admitir la derrota	It was horrible to have to admit defeat.
■ apply for a job	solicitar un trabajo	He applied for a job in the local factory.
■ arrive on time*	llegar puntual	Our flight arrived on time.
■ attract attention	generar interés	My favourite singer is attracting attention in America.
■ attract someone's attention	atraer la atención de alguien	She wore a pink dress to attract everyone's attention.

* Es fácil confundir "arrive on time" con "arrive in time". La primera "collocation" significa que algo o alguien es puntual porque llega a la hora prevista. La segunda normalmente va seguida de "for" + sustantivo o "to" + verbo, ya que quiere decir 'llegar a tiempo para (hacer) algo': "The doctor **arrived in time to save the boy**", "We **arrived in time for the birthday surprise**".

TO BRING

■ bring attention to	llamar la atención sobre	The film brought attention to AIDS.
■ bring something to an end	poner fin a algo	The truce brought the war to an end .

TO BREAK

■ break a law	infringir la ley	She has never broken a law in her life.
■ break one's arm*	romperse el brazo	I broke my arm playing basketball.
■ break a promise	incumplir una promesa	If you break a promise , nobody will trust you.
■ break a record	batir un récord	The swimmer broke a world record this year.
■ blow one's nose*	sonarse la nariz	He used a tissue to blow his nose .
■ book a flight	reservar/comprar un vuelo	I'd like to book a flight to Moscow.

* Cuidado, usamos el posesivo y no "the" en estas "collocations": "I broke MY arm", "I blow MY nose".

TO CALL

■ call a meeting	convocar una reunión	He called a meeting for next Tuesday.
■ call a name*	decir un nombre en voz alta	The presenter called a name and it was mine!
■ call an election	convocar elecciones	The prime minister has just called an election .
■ call attention to	llamar la atención sobre	He called attention to the dangers of nuclear energy.
■ call the police	llamar a la policía	They called the police after the accident.

* Hay una diferencia importante entre "call a name" y "call someone names". Esta última expresión significa 'insultar', como en "They called him names because he stopped the car in the middle of the street".

TO CHANGE

■ change course	cambiar de rumbo	The ship will change course if there's a storm warning.
■ change the subject	cambiar de tema	Can we please change the subject ? I'm eating!
■ change one's mind	cambiar de opinión	She didn't want to come, but in the end she changed her mind .

TO COME

■ come alive	cobrar vida	■ come to an end	llegar a su fin
■ come closer	acercarse	■ come to someone's rescue	ir al rescate de alguien
■ come to a conclusion	llegar a una conclusión	■ come true	cumplirse, hacerse realidad
■ come to a realisation*	llegar a darse cuenta		

* Otra manera de expresar **“to come to a realisation”** es con el verbo **“to realise”**: **“I realise now that I've made a mistake”**. No olvides que no tiene nada que ver con **‘realizar’**, que en inglés es **“to carry out”** o **“to make”** (**“to make changes”, “to carry out a task”**).

■ catch a cold	coger un resfriado	■ cost a fortune	costar una fortuna
■ cause trouble	causar problemas	■ cover costs	coverir costes
■ claim responsibility	asumir la responsabilidad	■ copy and paste	copiar y pegar
■ conduct research	realizar una investigación	■ cut and paste	cortar y pegar
■ consider the possibility	considerar la posibilidad	■ cut costs	reducir costes

CAN'T + VERBO

■ can't afford	no poder permitirse	I can't afford to be late for the meeting.
■ can't help	no poder evitar	My problem is that I can't help eating chocolate.
■ can't stand*	no soportar	They can't stand each other.

* **“To stand”** en realidad significa **‘estar de pie’**, pero en esta expresión fija (siempre con **“can't”**, no con **“don't”**) cobra el significado de **‘no soportar/ aguantar’**. Recuerda que **“to support”** significa **‘apoyar’**.

■ seriously damage	perjudicar/dañar seriamente	The earthquake seriously damaged the houses in the poorer areas of the city.
■ declare war*	declarar la guerra	My grandfather remembers when the Allies declared war on Germany.
■ drive someone crazy	volverle loco a alguien	That noise drives me crazy.
■ drop the subject	dejar el tema	Can't you just drop the subject?

* Fíjate en que se dice **“declare war”** sin **“the”** y que va seguido de la preposición **“on”**.

TO EAT

■ eat properly*	comer/alimentarse correctamente	He lost weight when he started eating properly.
■ eat well	comer bien	We always eat well at Christmas.

* "Properly" significa 'adecuadamente' o 'correctamente' y se usa a menudo con "to work" para decir que algo funciona bien: "Does the program work properly?".

TO EXPRESS

■ express concern (about)*	preocuparse (por)	She expressed concern about the lack of space.
■ express interest (in)*	mostrar interés (en)	I expressed interest in buying the house.

* Si a "to express interest in" y "to express concern about" les sigue un verbo, éste tiene que terminar en "-ing".

■ earn a living	ganarse la vida	She earns a living as a dancer in Las Vegas.
■ enter politics	meterse en política	My sister was thinking about entering politics.
■ exceed expectations	superar las expectativas	Your report exceeded expectations.
■ extend a deadline	ampliar un plazo	He extended the deadline by two weeks.

TO FACE

■ face a challenge	enfrentarse a un reto	They faced the challenge bravely.
■ face the fact(s)	enfrentarse a los hechos	He faced the facts and resigned.

TO FALL

■ fall asleep	quedarse dormido	She fell asleep during the movie.
■ fall in love with	enamorarse de	She fell in love with her Biology professor.

* No olvides que es "to fall in love WITH", ¡no "to fall in love of"!

TO FIGHT

■ fight a fire	apagar un incendio	They are currently fighting a fire near Cáceres.
■ fight corruption	luchar contra la corrupción	We are fighting corruption daily but it's difficult.
■ fight hard	luchar duramente	We are fighting hard to keep our jobs.

TO FIND

■ find time	encontrar tiempo	We need to find time to sort this out.
■ find it difficult*	resultar difícil	I find it difficult to drive in the snow.

*¡No hay que olvidar el pronombre “it”! Decimos “**to find IT difficult to do/doing something**”, aunque no parezca ‘lo’ en ninguna parte. Así que no digas “*He finds difficult to sleep on the train*”, sino “**He finds it difficult to sleep on the train**”. El adjetivo “**difficult**” se puede sustituir por “**easy**”, “**impossible**”, “**strange**”, etc., sin que la estructura cambie. ¡Vamos a trabajarlo con una lista de traducción! Tapa la columna de la derecha y practica:



A ella le resulta difícil expresarse en francés.	She finds it difficult to express herself in French.
A él le cuesta concentrarse cuando todo el mundo está hablando.	He finds it difficult to concentrate when everybody is talking.
¿Te resulta fácil conocer gente nueva?	Do you find it easy to meet new people?
Encuentro frustrante hablar con alguien que no escucha.	I find it frustrating to talk to someone who doesn't listen.
Le cuesta dormir cuando toma demasiado café.	She finds it difficult to get to sleep when she drinks too much coffee.
Me cuesta sonreír cuando estoy enfadada.	I find it impossible to smile when I'm angry.
Le resulta imposible decir “no”.	He finds it impossible to say “no”.
Me parece raro que nadie llamara.	I find it strange that nobody called.

TO FOLLOW

■ follow a pattern	seguir una pauta	Economic crises usually follow a pattern .
■ follow someone's advice*	seguir el consejo de alguien	He didn't follow my advice , that's why he's in trouble now.
■ follow directions	seguir indicaciones	It frustrates me that you don't follow directions .
■ follow instructions	seguir instrucciones	He succeeds because he follows instructions .

* No olvides que “**advice**” es un sustantivo incontable, por lo que no se dice “*an advice*”, sino “**advice**” (a secas), “*some advice*” o “*a piece of advice*”. “**Advice**” se pronuncia /advvvaís/, con ‘s’ castellana, mientras que el verbo “**to advise**” se dice /advvvaí(s)/, con ‘s’ vibrada.

■ feel guilty	sentirse culpable	I feel guilty about what happened.
■ fill a gap	llenar un espacio	This discovery has filled a gap in our knowledge.

TO GET

Le dedicamos un apartado especial al verbo **“to get”**, ya que tiene muchas posibles acepciones. Es un verbo que funciona como un comodín, por lo que consideramos que en vez de darte las múltiples variantes a la hora de traducirlo al castellano, será mejor que pasemos a la acción directamente y te mostremos una tabla con diferentes estructuras y usos. ¿Preparado?

Veamos primero **“to get”** junto con un sustantivo:

■ get a call	recibir una llamada	■ get a ticket	comprar un billete/ una entrada
■ get a message	recibir un mensaje	■ get the impression	tener la impresión
■ get a chance	obtener una oportunidad	■ get the message	entender / captar el mensaje
■ get a job	conseguir un trabajo	■ get permission	conseguir permiso
■ get a joke	pillar un chiste	■ get some sleep/rest	dormir/descansar

Las siguientes **“collocations”** se componen de **“to get”** seguido de un adjetivo, participio o adverbio:

■ get upset	alterarse, enfadarse	■ get tired	cansarse
■ get wet	mojarse	■ get ready	prepararse
■ get angry	enfadarse	■ get someone/ something ready	preparar algo/a alguien
■ get better (at)	mejorar en	■ get changed	cambiarse
■ get old(er)	hacerse mayor	■ get dressed	vestirse
■ get started	empezar, comenzar	■ get divorced	divorciarse
■ get worried	preocuparse	■ get lost	perderser
■ get drunk	emborracharse	■ get married	casarse
■ get frightened	asustarse	■ get pregnant	quedarse embarazada

Por último, una mezcla de elementos que siguen a **“to get”**:

■ get home*	llegar a casa	■ get to know	(llegar a) conocer
■ get here/there*	llegar aquí / allí	■ get rid of	deshacerse de
■ get back	volver	■ get nowhere	no conseguir nada, no llegar a ninguna parte
■ get back together	volver juntos	■ get into trouble	meterse en problemas

* En la mayoría de los casos usamos **“to get to”** en lugar de **“to arrive in/at”** para decir ‘llegar a’ un sitio: **“to get to the office”, “to get to the airport”, “to get to Paula’s house”,** etc. Solamente prescindimos de **“to”** en **“get home”, “get here”** y **“get there”**.

Hay mucho que asimilar respecto a **“to get”**, así que practica con unos ejercicios:

EXERCISES

01. Replace the words in bold with a “collocation” from the following list. Remember to use the correct verb form and tense.

get angry	get nowhere	get dressed	get rid of	get drunk
get into trouble	get divorced	get the message	get home	

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| a) She got out of the shower and put some clothes on . _____ | a) got dressed |
| b) When did you arrive at your house last night? _____ | b) get home |
| c) My little brother keeps putting himself in a difficult situation . _____ | c) getting into trouble |
| d) My mother became infuriated when she discovered a pack of cigarettes in my bag. _____ | d) got angry |
| e) You don’t have to explain it to him. I think he understood what you wanted to say . _____ | e) got the message |
| f) Her parents separated when she was seventeen years old. _____ | f) got divorced |
| g) Some of my friends consumed a lot of alcohol at the birthday party. _____ | g) got drunk |
| h) You don’t achieve anything if you constantly complain. _____ | h) get nowhere |
| i) I need to throw away the clothes that don’t fit me anymore. _____ | i) get rid of |

02. Complete the sentences using one or two words from the box below.

tired the impression worried ready pregnant
better married some sleep a chance

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| a) I think you should call your parents, otherwise they may get _____. | a) worried |
| b) Wow, what a beautiful ring! When did you get _____? | b) married |
| c) Have they left already? I didn't get _____ to say goodbye. | c) a chance |
| d) My mother got _____ when she was 35. | d) pregnant |
| e) We need to be there at 8. How long does it take you to get _____? | e) ready |
| f) Let's go home. I'm getting _____ of waiting. | f) tired |
| g) I got _____ that he really liked our proposal. | g) the impression |
| h) What are you still doing at the office at 11pm? Go home and get _____. | h) some sleep |
| i) I can't believe I beat you at chess! I'm gradually getting _____ at it! | i) better |

03. Translate the words in brackets.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| a) My mobile (<i>se mojó</i>) _____ because of the rain. | a) got wet |
| b) He (<i>se asustó</i>) _____ when I told him there were ghosts in the house. | b) got frightened |
| c) I'd like to (<i>conocer</i>) _____ her a little better. She seems very nice. | c) get to know |
| d) They (<i>volvieron juntos</i>) _____ ten years after breaking up. | d) got back together |
| e) How did you (<i>llegaste aquí</i>) _____? | e) get here |
| f) I don't know how to (<i>volver</i>) _____. | f) get back |
| g) I (<i>compré dos entradas</i>) _____ for the opera this weekend. | g) got two tickets |
| h) She (<i>obtuvo permiso</i>) _____ to use the material. | h) got permission |
| i) When I left university, I tried to (<i>conseguir un trabajo</i>) _____ as soon as possible. | i) get a job |
| j) Did I (<i>recibí algunas llamadas</i>) _____ this morning? | j) get any calls |

TO GIVE

- | | | |
|---------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| ■ give advice | dar un consejo | The neo-natal nurse gives advice on childcare. |
| ■ give birth | dar a luz | They gave birth within an hour of each other. |