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One of the least appreciated tools for learning English is using a collocation dictionary. A collocation can be defined as "words that go together." In other words, certain words tend to go with other words. If you think about how you use your own language for a moment, you'll quickly recognize that you tend to speak in phrases or groups of words that go together in your mind. We speak in "chunks" of language. For example: I'm tired of waiting for the bus this afternoon. An English speaker doesn't think of ten separate words, rather they think in the phrases "I'm tired of "waiting for the bus" and "this afternoon". That's why sometimes you may say something correctly in English, but it just doesn't sound right. For example: I'm tired of standing for the bus this afternoon. To someone who's imaging the situation "standing for the bus", makes sense, but "standing" goes together with "in line". So, while the sentence makes sense, it isn't really correct. As students improve their English, they tend to learn more phrases and idiomatic language. It's also important to learn collocations. In fact, I'd say it's the single most under-used tool by most students. A thesaurus is very helpful to find synonyms and antonyms, but a collocations dictionary can help you learn the right phrases in context. I recommend the Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English, but there are other collocation resources available such as concordance databases. Try these exercises to help you use a collocations dictionary to improve your vocabulary. Choose a profession you are interested in. Go to the Occupational Outlook site and read the specifics of the profession. Take note of common terms that are used. Next, look up those terms in a collocations dictionary to extend your vocabulary by learning appropriate collocations. Example Aircraft and Avionics Key words from Occupational Outlook: equipment, maintenance, etc. From the collocations dictionary: Equipment Adjectives: the latest, modern, state-of-the-art, high-tech, etc.Types of Equipment: medical equipment, radar equipment, telecom equipment, etc.Verb + Equipment: provide equipment, supply equipment, install equipment, etc. Phrases: the proper equipment, the right equipment From the collocations dictionary: Maintenance Adjectives: annual, daily, regular, long-term, preventive, etc.Types of Maintenance: building maintenance, software maintenance, health maintenance, etc.Verb + Maintenance: carry out maintenance, perform maintenance, etc.Maintenance + Noun: maintenance personnel, maintenance costs, maintenance schedule, etc. Choose an important term that you might use on a daily basis at work, school, or home. Look the word up in the collocations dictionary. Next, imagine a related situation and write a paragraph or more using important collocations to describe it. The paragraph will repeat the keyword too often, but this is an exercise. By repeatedly using your key term, you'll create a link in your mind to a wide variety of collocations with your target word. Example Key Term: Business Situation: Negotiating a contract Example Paragraph We're working on a business deal with an investment company who carries on business with profitable businesses throughout the world. We set up the business two years ago, but we've been very successful due to our business strategy. The CEO's business acumen is outstanding, so we're looking forward to conducting business with them. The company's business headquarters are located in Dallas, Texas. They've been in business for more than fifty years, so we expect their business experience to be the best in the world. Make a list of important collocations. Commit to using at least three of the collocations each day in your conversations. Try it, it's more difficult than you might think, but it really helps with memorizing new words. The publisher of the complete Oxford English Dictionary says the OED may be the next printed work to give up on paper and go completely digital. The Oxford University Press said recently it may not have enough market demand to publish a hardcover version of the third edition of the multivolume OED, according to an Associated Press report. The Oxford University Press would instead focus on selling subscriptions to the OED's online version. It should be pointed out, however, that no official publication date is set for the third edition of the OED. Scholars have been working on the text since 1989, and as of June 2010 only entries from "A" to "Rococoeseque" have been completed. That means the OED's editorial team completes approximately 0.83 letters of the alphabet every year. At that pace, who knows if we'll even be using Websites when the third edition is completed. The OED is widely considered to be the preminent authority on the English language, and has been available in print since 1884. The second edition of the complete OED was published in 1989 as a 20-volume hardcover set. The OED contains more than 21,000 pages detailing word pronunciation, history, usage, and spellings. The set sells for about \$1300 on Amazon and weighs 137.72 pounds. While that may sound impressive, the entire text of the OED's second edition takes up just 540 megabytes of digital storage space. That means you would need just three-quarters the storage capacity of a typical blank CD to store all of the current OED's 291,500 entries. Considering the tradeoff in excess weight, it's no wonder users are eschewing print versions for the OED's online offering. The Web version of the OED (launched in 2000) receives 2 million hits a month, while the complete OED has sold just 30,000 copies total since its publication in 1989, according to the AP. Access to the OED online costs \$295 per year or \$29.95 monthly for an individual, and as an added bonus, the OED online doesn't require any heavy lifting. In December, the OED online Website will see its first major overhaul since the online lexicon launched in 2000. The Oxford University Press says that despite the fate of the complete OED, the publisher will continue to publish smaller versions of the dictionary such as the condensed and pocket editions. Connect with Ian on Twitter (@ianpaul). Our editors independently research, test, and recommend the best products; you can learn more about our review process here. We may receive commissions on purchases made from our chosen links. When buying a French dictionary, you need to consider your language proficiency and what you'll be using the dictionary for. It's also important to keep in mind that bilingual dictionaries are a great tool, but they can have discrepancies, both major and minor. Their main weakness is in offering words that are no longer used. The following French-English / English-French dictionaries are arranged by quantity and quality of entries. This is the largest and best French-English English-French dictionary, with more than 2,000 pages. Entries include slang, regionalisms, and expressions. There's also a useful section on "language in use," with vocabulary and expressions grouped by categories such as suggestions, advice, business correspondence, and much more. In my opinion, this is the only option for fluent speakers and translators. Paperback dictionary with 100,000 entries, including slang, culture, and more. Intermediate students will find that this dictionary has everything they need. When a Nigerian says "see you next tomorrow," the person actually means the day after tomorrow.It's one of the colloquialisms of Nigerian English that have made it into the latest updates of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). Like in many English-speaking societies, Nigerians have crafted new words, phrases and meanings that have, overtime, become widely adopted as part of the country's local lexicon.And that's a reality that OED acknowledges. In release notes announcing the updates, the dictionary says Nigerians "have made, and are continuing to make, a unique and distinctive contribution to English" through these words. The 29 new additions from Nigerian English, OED says, are "either borrowings from Nigerian languages, or unique Nigerian coinages" that have been used since the 1970s and 1980s.For example, "Tokunbo", a Yoruba name often given to a child born in a foreign land, became a popular tag used for secondhand cars imported into the country as new car sales crashed in the 1980s' economic downturn. The OED has it as an adjective, as in "tokunbo car".Sometimes it's about expanding the use of a word from its original conception. The word "gist" has is usually used for the substance or essence of a discussion or speech. But in Nigerian English it is a noun which means "rumor" but also a verb, which means "to gossip".It's the latest nod for Nigerian English as a variant of its own. Last year, Google introduced a "Nigerian English" option on its Maps service, complete with a Nigerian voice and accent. "It's a variant of English that has come to stay and is as valid as others," says Kola Tubosun, linguist and 2016 Quartz Africa Innovator honoree who led the team that developed the Nigerian accent and voice for Google. With updates happening quarterly, there's a chance more Nigerian English words may yet be added to the dictionary as they gain more currency. Tubosun says.The rapid global rise of Nigerian pop culture across music, film and literature over the last two decades with Afrobeats, Nollywood and writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has meant the Nigerian use of English has more listeners and readers than ever before.Nigerian English isn't alone in being recognized for offering new word additions to English globally though: over 900 words and phrases that are distinctive to Indian English have also been added to the Oxford Dictionary. Last December, 24 South African English words were also added to the dictionary including Shackland, defined as slums where people live without official permission, and Howzit, a casual greeting and shorter version of "how's it going?"As it turns out, several words and phrases that make up Nigerian English originate from yet another variant of English that's popular in the country: Pidgin English. A mix of English, words from local languages and a range of street slang, Pidgin English is believed to have developed as a way for foreign merchants to communicate with locals in West Africa during the trans-Atlantic slave trade era. And the informal language has proven durable as it is now spoken by millions in Nigeria—and across West Africa—as an alternative to English. It has also become the language of choice for international media looking to boost their reach in the region.But despite growing international recognition, Nigerian English still faces some acceptance hurdles back home. For instance, Tubosun believes teachers in Nigerian schools will likely favor at students incorporating Nigerian English phrases in examinations despite using those same words during teaching lessons.The hope however is that the inclusions in OED might signal a shift. "We need an educational system that is responsive to this," Tubosun says. "You don't have to keep depending on the old standard because the language has evolved and changed."Sign up to the Quartz Africa Weekly Brief here for news and analysis on African business, tech and innovation in your inbox

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