

## Collocation dictation

**Collocations** are words or expressions which commonly go together, like **throw a party**, **heavy rain** or **driving test**. A **collocation dictation** is a simple, learner-centred activity which can raise awareness of key collocations in reading or listening texts. It's quick to prepare and paper-free. The collocations can then be used as a basis for prediction before learners read or listen.

### Before the lesson

1 You're planning to do some reading or listening with your learners, for example:

## It was a virtual murder ... but the sentence is real

ONCE the stuff of low-quality science fiction movies, the crime of virtual murder may become a reality, following the arrest of a middle-aged piano teacher from southern Japan who murdered her virtual husband.

The 43-year-old woman hacked into the computer of the man she married in the on-line game MapleStory and deleted his carefully constructed virtual character after their relationship **turned sour**.

Police arrested her this week following a complaint by the man, a 33-year-old office worker who lives on the other side of the country in the northern city of Sapporo, 1000 km away. The two apparently never had a **face-to-face meeting** and the woman is not suspected of a flesh-and-blood crime, say the police.

She is accused of using her virtual partner's password and ID, which she acquired when they were a **happily married** virtual couple, to gain **illegal access** to his computer. The crime

carries a **maximum sentence** of five years in prison or a fine of about \$3,200.

"It sounds like a strange case but obviously it is illegal to hack into someone else's computer," said a spokesman for the Sapporo police. "That is why she has been arrested."

According to investigators, the woman **flew into a rage** when the relationship was abruptly terminated. "I thought everything was fine, and then I was suddenly divorced without a word of warning. That made me so angry," she was quoted as saying.

The two met while playing a hugely popular **role-playing game** called MapleStory, which encourages anonymous users to create **online characters** that explore alternative worlds, fight monsters and engage in virtual relationships. Long-term commitments and marriage are not uncommon among players, who are sometimes not even living in the same country. Originally from South Korea, MapleStory now reportedly has more than 50 million members worldwide.

The latest case comes amid growing controversy about online crimes. A court in the Netherlands sentenced two teenagers to a total of 360 hours of community service this month for breaking into a classmate's computer and stealing his virtual possessions. "These virtual goods are goods under Dutch law, so this is theft," said the court, which was criticised for going too far.

Online gamers are debating the possible results of the Japanese woman's arrest, with many supporting the 'murdered' husband. "It takes a lot of time and effort to build up a virtual character. This could mean other wronged people may seek real-world justice for people who harm them virtually," wrote one gamer. "I hope she goes to prison."

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Before the lesson, scan through the text and find some collocations which you think would be useful to highlight. For example, they might be collocations which your learners should already know and you want to revise, or challenging collocations which you want to pre-teach before reading / listening, or collocations which will allow learners to predict (without giving too much away!) the content of the text. You can vary the number of collocations according to your learners' needs.

2 Write your chosen collocations on a piece of paper, following the order in which they occur in the text:

*turned sour*

*face-to-face meeting*

*happily married*

*illegal access*

*maximum sentence*

*flew into a rage*

*role-playing game*

*online characters*

## In the lesson

- 3 Your learners have not yet read / listened the text. Make sure they have their books closed.
- 4 Say, in random order, the words and expressions which make up the collocations on your list: '*meeting ... illegal ... flew into ... married ... sour ...*' etc. Learners listen and write down the words and expressions. Be ready to help them with spelling if they ask you.
- 5 In pairs or small groups, learners work together to match up the words and expressions to make collocations. Tell the learners that all the collocations come from a text which they're going to read / hear later on.  
To set up the activity, do the first one with the class 'What word goes with *turned*? *Turned ...? Sour.*' Ask the learners, 'How many words do you have?' (16) 'So how many pairs do you have to make?' (8).

Option: if the learners find this very challenging, you can help them by writing the first word of each collocation on the board.

- 6 Go through the answers as a class, writing the collocations on the board in the same order as they occur in the text. Check that your learners understand the meanings of the collocations and clarify as necessary.

Note: learners may come up with collocations which are possible but not the same as those in the text, e.g. *online meeting*. If this happens, it is in fact useful to explore which collocations are (and are not) possible – but make sure that learners are clear by the end as to which collocations actually occur in the text.

- 7 Now that learners are familiar with key collocations from the text, ask them to predict what they think the text will say. You can support them in this by, for example, giving them the title of the text as well. Then the learners' first comprehension task can be to skim read / listen for gist and check their predictions.

## Variations

- Instead of dictating the words which make up the collocations, give them to learners on slips of paper so that they can play around with different combinations. The slips can be made with two different colours of paper to show which are the first / second words in the collocations.
- You can also use this technique to focus on collocations after learners have read / heard the text and done the tasks in the coursebook. To check their answers, learners simply scan the text one more time to find the collocations. With a listening, you could use the recording script at this point.
- If you would like learners to do some productive practice of the collocations: after reading / listening, ask learners to close their books and summarise the text orally in pairs, making sure they use all the collocations listed on the board in the correct order.