Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English

Volume 1:Verbs with Prepositions & Particles
Volume 2: Phrase, Clause & Sentence Idioms

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OXFORD DICTIONARY OF CURRENT IDIOMATIC ENGLISH

Volume 1:
Verbs with Prepositions & Particles

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Volume 1:
Verbs with Prepositions & Particles

General Introduction

Familiarity with a wide range of idiomatic expressions, and the ability to use them appropriately in context, are among the distinguishing marks of a native-like command of English. Expressions such as **step up** (supplies), **lay on** (transport) and **take up** (the story) are part of the common coin of everyday colloquial exchange, and the tendency, especially in casual or informal contexts, to prefer the Anglo-Saxon combination to its single Romance equivalent – **increase, provide, continue** – helps to explain the widely-held view that idioms such as these are among the most characteristically 'English' elements in the general vocabulary.

To say that such expressions are in common use is not however to say that their meanings are always self-evident: a French speaker would surely understand **continue** more readily than **take up**, while a native speaker might have difficulty in explaining the sense of the combination in terms of its constituent parts. In fact, a close study of various kinds of idiomatic items brings to light many curious anomalies of form and meaning. While we can equally well talk of **angling for** or **fishing for** compliments, where the verbs are as freely interchangeable as when they are used in a literal sense, we should not say of a friend that he had difficulty in **making up his thoughts** (as distinct from **his mind**). And while we might want to say of him that he found it hard to **hit the nail on the head**, we should not substitute **strike** for **hit** unless we were thinking literally of his skill with the hammer rather than figuratively of his inability to say precisely what he meant. Among collocational pitfalls of this kind the mature speaker of the language picks his way with unconscious ease. The foreign student, however, or the native speaker of English whose control of idiom is not yet sure, looks for explicit guidance on a wide variety of expressions in current use, and often to a considerable depth of detail. As far as we are aware, no specialized dictionary of idiomatic usage at present exists which is sufficiently broad in scope to answer the various practical requirements of the learner, and it is chiefly with a view to meeting this need that the *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English* has been designed and compiled in two volumes. The present volume deals with only part of the total range of idiomatic expressions in English; other types of idiom are treated in the second volume. An important feature of the whole Dictionary is that the grammatical and semantic treatment of headphrases is supported by citations from a variety of contemporary sources, both written and spoken. Most of the quotations are drawn from an analysis of works of fiction, biography, history etc which was specially undertaken to provide illustrative material for the Dictionary. As the drafting of entries proceeded this archive of upwards of 30,000 recorded excerpts was added to from time to time, especially from such sources as the daily and weekly press and radio and television broadcasts.

The scope of the present volume is explained in some detail below (0.1). We set out the main idiom patterns represented here, discuss the problem of idiomaticity as it affects the question of what to include and what to exclude, and outline our reasons for adopting the particular grammatical framework used in the entries. The second part of the Introduction (0.2) touches upon some features of the entries which are specifically designed to encourage the use of the dictionary as a learning and teaching aid.

The scope of the dictionary

0.1   One feature of idiomatic usage in English which complicates the task both of the lexicographer and of the student is that idioms correspond to a wide range of grammatical types, or patterns. Idioms are found for example in the phrase patterns 'article + adj + noun' – *the last straw, a live wire, a lame duck*; 'article + present participle + noun' – *a parting shot, a sitting duck*; and 'article + past participle + noun' – *a foregone conclusion, a close-run thing.* Idiomatic expressions also span sentences of various structural types, as in *break the bank, fill the bill, make sb's day, jump the gun; give him an inch and he'll take a mile, spare the rod and spoil the child.* This is but a small sample of the great diversity of grammatical patterns in which idiomatic expressions may occur. The spread is enormous but there is one outstandingly large category that does permit coverage in depth and uniformity of treatment within a single volume, and that is the subject of this part of the dictionary.

The basic requirement that expressions have to meet for inclusion in the present volume is a simple one: all consist of, or include, a verb and a particle or preposition (i e one of the words **down, for, in, off, on, up, with** etc). This restriction explains the 'verbs with prepositions and particles' of the sub-title. The simple combinations of verb + particle (or verb + preposition) – **back away, fall through, size up; abide by, run into, take to** – account for the bulk of the entries, but there is an important sub-type containing both a particle and a preposition **put up with, set up as, take out on**. A considerable number of entries, too, are devoted to more complex types, many having nouns (and sometimes also adjectives) as fixed elements in addition to the verb and preposition or particle: **lose track of, make a mental note of, put one's best foot forward, take to one's heels**.

In this brief survey of the grammatical types represented in the dictionary the question of idiomaticity has not been directly raised. Though various expressions have been cited as examples of each type, we have yet to say what it is that entitles us to refer to them as idioms. In turning now to consider this central question of idiomaticity it will be best to break down under separate heads the rather complex issues that are raised.

1 How in practice do we determine whether a given expression is idiomatic or not? We may sense for example that **put up** as used in the sentence

*They're having a memorial **put up** to him by public subscription.*

is not idiomatic, whereas **put up** in

*A well-wisher had **put up** the money (for the scheme).*

is idiomatic. What kinds of criteria can we call upon in support of our intuitions?

2 Is the distinction between non-idioms and idioms clear-cut, or does the one type shade off gradually into the other?

3 What criteria in particular determine the inclusion of some items in the dictionary and the exclusion of others?

4 Finally, what is the bearing of the conclusions we reach upon the grammatical labels we attach to idioms? If an expression such as **put up** (in the second example) is shown to be a unit of *meaning*, should we not describe it as a grammatical unit also, and generally abandon the 'verb + particle' labelling in idiomatic cases?

In considering these questions, unnecessary complications will be avoided if the complex items (e g **turn one's back on**) are considered separately from the simple two-word combinations (e g **turn on**). The immediate discussion

will centre particularly on combinations of transitive verb + particle; we shall return later to the more complex cases.

Discussions of idiomaticity are sometimes confused by introducing inappropriate grammatical criteria into an area where considerations of meaning carry particular weight. A question which is often raised in treatments of the verb + particle combination, but from the discussion of which the wrong conclusions are sometimes drawn, has to do with the different grammatical functions of **on** in such pairs of sentences as

*The machine **turns** (= rotates) **on** a central pivot.*
*Pop music **turns on** (= stimulates, excites) many young people.*

There is certainly a difference of function here: we cannot shift the final noun phrase to precede **on** in the first sentence, but we can in the second:

The machine **turns a central pivot **on**.*
*Pop music **turns** many young people **on**.*

Further evidence of the difference is the contrastive positioning of 'it' and 'them' (as replacements for the noun phrases) in the two sentences.

*The machine **turns on** it.*
*Pop music **turns** them **on**.*

It is on the basis of such criteria that **on** can be said to function as a *preposition* in the first example and as a *particle* (or adverbial particle) in the second. At the same time, we cannot use this grammatical evidence of contrastiveness in support of a claim that **turn on** (= 'excite') is a unit of meaning, and thus an idiom. If we did, we should have to explain why it is that **turn on** as used in the sentence

*The caretaker **turns on** the hall lights.*

appears, and can be shown to be, *less* idiomatic, while at the same time displaying the *same* characteristics with regard to the particle. Compare:

*The caretaker **turns** the hall lights **on**.*
*The caretaker **turns** them **on**.*

We should also have to account for the fact that, whereas **turn on** (verb + preposition) in

*The machine **turns on** a central pivot.*

is intuitively less idiomatic than its homonym in the following sentence, **on** is equally 'prepositional' in both cases:

*Our conversation **turned on** (= had as its main topic) what was to be done when the battle was over.*

The evidence of such examples points to the conclusion that whereas the particle/preposition contrast is a valid and important one, it has no bearing on whether expressions are idiomatic or not. The idiom/non-idiom contrast is different in kind and must be established by different means. Having said that, it is true that grammatical support of another type can sometimes be found for treating items such as **turn on** (in the sense of 'excite') as units of meaning. Whether we shall wish to argue from this that such expressions should be described as *grammatical* units (i e words) in the dictionary is a question we shall take up again when various (largely semantic) criteria of idiomaticity have been examined.

We can begin the discussion of idiomaticity with a simple and familiar assumption: an idiom is a combination of two or more words which function as a unit

* marks sentences that are considered unacceptable.

of meaning. This assumption can be tested: if a verb + particle expression (for instance) is a semantic unit we should be able to substitute for it a number of single words (in this case verbs) of equivalent meaning. By this criterion, **step up** as used in the sentence

*His promotion has **stepped up** their social status.*

is clearly idiomatic, since it is synonymous with 'improve', 'enhance'. By the same token, **take off** is an idiom in the sentence

*Bill **took off** Winston Churchill to perfection.*

since it is equivalent in meaning to 'mimic', 'imitate'.

We can test our intuitions about idiomaticity in another way. If **step up** and **take off** are units of meaning, it should not be possible to break that unity either by removing the particle component or by replacing the verb component with other verbs of like meaning. The 'particle deletion' test shows both expressions to be idiomatic: the effect of applying it is to make nonsense of the example sentences:

His promotion has **stepped their social status.*
Bill **took Winston Churchill to perfection.*

'Verb replacement' also applies negatively in both cases: there are no precise equivalents to **step** and **take** as they are used here:

*His promotion has **stepped** up their social status.*
  *? **pushed***
  *? **bumped***

*Bill **took off** Winston Churchill to perfection.*
  ** **grabbed***
  ** **snatched***

(? marks choices which are acceptable in the context but doubtful synonyms, and * marks choices that are totally unacceptable.)

The semantic unity which is characteristic of idioms tends to make them behave as single *grammatical* words also. This tendency is reflected for example in the fact that some verb + particle expressions which are idiomatic can be converted into *nouns*. So **to make up** (one's face) has a corresponding noun **make-up**, and **to break down** (the accounts, the figures) has the corresponding form **breakdown**. This characteristic suggests a further test – of 'noun formation' – which applies positively to both our examples. In parallel with the cases just cited, we find that **to step up** (someone's status) can be changed into **a step-up** (in someone's status) and **to take off** (Churchill) into **a take-off** (of Churchill).

Idiomatic expressions are units of meaning; non-idiomatic expressions, conversely, are made up of distinct meaningful parts. We should expect this assumption about non-idioms to be borne out when they are tested in the same ways as idioms. This time however the tests should apply in reverse. Consider the item **draw out**, as in the example

*Robert **drew out** twenty pounds from his savings account.*

We note first that there is no corresponding noun in this case: we shall not attest **a* **draw-out** (of twenty pounds) to parallel **a step-up** (in status). We find too that we can equally well use **take** or **draw** in this context: the verbs are synonymous here. Again, the particle **out** can be deleted without affecting sense or acceptability:

*Robert **drew** twenty pounds from his savings account.*

The examples we have been looking at tend to suggest that there is a sharp contrast between idioms and non-idioms – that there are items like **take off** (a politician) to which all the tests apply, positively or negatively as appropriate, and other combinations like **draw out** (money) to which the same tests apply in reverse. In reality, the picture is not so clear-cut: even **draw out**, which on most counts seems unidiomatic enough, has a one-word equivalent in **withdraw** (suggesting semantic unity):

*Robert **withdrew** twenty pounds from his savings account.*

In fact, the more individual cases that we examine the more does it appear that the boundary between highly idiomatic items and the rest is not sharply drawn but hazy and imprecise. We shall do better to think in terms of a *scale* of idiomaticity, with the 'true' idioms (**step up. take off**) clearly established at the upper end and **draw out** appearing near the bottom, but with many items representing varying degrees of semantic and grammatical unity spaced out in between. Among the intermediate types, or 'semi-idioms', we find items like **put up**. as used in the sentence

*Increased transport costs will **put up** the prices.*

and **muck up**, as in the example

*The weather really **mucked up** our weekend.*

What gives such items their special status is that when the tests used to identify idioms (or non-idioms) are applied, the results are not conclusive either way. We find for example that whereas **put up** and **muck up** are unitary according to one criterion ('raise' or 'increase' can be substituted for the first expression and 'spoil' or 'ruin' for the second), they are separable according to another criterion (replacement of the verb component by a verb, or verbs, of equivalent meaning). Thus we can say

*Increased transport costs will **send up** the prices* (or: *cause the prices to **go up***).

where **send** and **go** replace **put** in the original sentence; and we can also say

*The weather really **messed up** our weekend.*

where the synonymous **mess** has replaced **muck**.

What has been said about the nature of the relationship between idioms and non-idioms applies also to more complex expressions – those containing a noun and an adjective, for example. Here too there is a gradual shading-off from absolutely fixed expressions, such as **make an honest woman of** or **make a clean breast of**, through those which allow the replacement of certain words by others of related meaning- **make effective/good use of, put a bold/brave/good face on it/ things** – down to expressions of which an adjective (etc) is not an essential part – **keep a (careful, close, watchful etc) eye on, take (strong, instant, particular etc) exception to**. As these examples suggest, the distinctive character of each complex expression (as more or less idiomatic) is brought out by applying the same simple tests of replacement and deletion that were demonstrated earlier.

We have discussed at some length the nature of idiomaticity chiefly to throw light on the special problems raised when deciding what to include in a dictionary which has 'idiomatic' as part of its title. Clearly all those items which are demonstrably units of form and meaning must be recorded. Equally, there are expressions at the lower end of the scale for which an adequate case cannot be made. But as regards the central area – the semi-idioms – where is the line to be drawn? On the whole we have tended to be accommodating to marginal cases, drawing the line low rather than high. There are certain criteria, too, to

which we have given special weight. These we explain below with reference to a number of recurrent types of semi-idiom.

1 We have tended on the whole to include any expression, simple or complex, from which the preposition(s) or particle(s) cannot be deleted (i e without making nonsense of, or changing the sense of, the wider context in which the expression is used). This tendency explains the inclusion of pairs such as the following, which in terms of meaningful links between their verbs are less than idiomatic:

angle for	**fasten on/upon**	**jack in** (= abandon)
fish for	**seize on/upon**	**pack in**

2 The weighting given to this criterion also in part explains the inclusion of many semi-idiomatic expressions containing one of the major verbs **come**, **go**, **put**, **take** etc. Because of the relationship of 'intransitive' to 'transitive' which exists between **come down** (for example) in certain of its senses and **bring down**, these expressions are often not full idioms. The fixity of the particle ensures their inclusion. In many such cases, we have also been guided by the need to include items which, while not idioms themselves, may throw light on the meanings of items which are. So **put aside** (a book, one's knitting) is included because it is related in sense to **put aside** (money, cash) and **put aside** (a grievance, one's differences).

3 Even when an expression contains a preposition which can be removed without affecting the meaning of the sentence in which the whole item appears, it may none the less be recorded, provided that the preposition has a strong tendency to co-occur with the verb. Similarly, if a verb combines in a predictable way with two particles (or prepositions), such a combination is also included. The decision to deal with such expressions in the dictionary explains the presence of many verbs of Romance origin, whose meanings are often understood in isolation:

abstain (from)	**develop (from) (into)**
agitate (for)	**transfer (from) (to)**

4 Verbs of motion such as **march**, **run**, **walk** combine with a wide range of particles and prepositions of direction to form sets of expressions – **march through**, **march up**; **run across**, **run back**; **walk away**, **walk in**, **walk out** – whose meanings can be easily grasped. We have not attempted to account for these many possibilities in the dictionary. But when any such combination is used in a specialized way – as **march past** is when it means 'move ceremonially past sb' (i e on parade), or as **walk on** is when it means 'have a small part, appear briefly, in a play' – then that expression is recorded, even though the specialized meaning may sometimes be readily understood.

5 Verbs such as **puff**, **steam** and **zoom** also combine freely with particles and prepositions to give such expressions as **puff across**, **puff past**; **steam along**, **steam into**; **zoom down**, **zoom out** etc. Such combinations have a different status from those containing **walk**, **run** or **march**, however. Since **steam**, for example, in combination with a particle of direction is interpreted as a verb of motion (**steam across** = 'move across under steam power' etc) the particle cannot be removed without changing the sense of the verb. Compare:

*The train **steamed out** noisily.*
*The train **steamed** noisily.*

It is for this reason that we have indicated in the dictionary the possible combinations in which verbs such as **steam** can occur (though in a special kind of entry: ⇨ *The headphrase*, 1.5, for fuller details).

Finally, we can take up again the grammatical questions raised earlier. We have seen that items that are highly idiomatic tend to function in certain ways as grammatical units (i e as single words). Should this kind of unity be reflected in the way items are grammatically described in the dictionary?

One approach would be to say that it should, and to use the familiar term 'phrasal verb' (in itself indicative of unity) when referring to idiomatic expressions of the verb + particle type, and the rather less familiar 'prepositional verb' to designate idioms of the verb + preposition type. Dividing the 'phrasal' category to take account of the difference between transitive and intransitive would give the following general scheme:

phrasal verb (transitive)   *phrasal verb* (intransitive)
make up (one's face)   (of a witness) **come forward**
take off (a politician)   (of an actor) **walk on**
prepositional verb
run into (difficulties)

This scheme of three unitary 'verbs' will be familiar to many users of this dictionary; there are however serious criticisms to be made of it. We shall not go into the linguistic questions that are raised, but confine ourselves to practical arguments for not adopting it as a descriptive framework for the dictionary. As we have seen, there is no clear dividing line between idioms and non-idioms: they are the end points of a scale. This being so, the question is raised of how 'semi-idioms' are to be described in terms of the above scheme. To call such expressions 'phrasal verbs' or 'prepositional verbs' would imply that they are unities, which is inconsistent with the facts. A second practical objection is that the dictionary contains many complex items · **push the boat out** and **bring the house down** for example – which the scheme does not provide for. While both these expressions contain a verb and a particle it would not make sense to speak of them as 'phrasal verbs'. Finally, if we were to adapt and enlarge the scheme so that it took account both of the scale of idiomaticity *and* of the difference between simple and complex expressions we should end up with a system that was both cumbersome to operate and difficult to interpret. These considerations have led us to look elsewhere for a grammatical framework of reference for the dictionary.

Throughout the Introduction we have referred *separately* to the grammatical structure of expressions (i e in such terms as 'verb + particle', 'verb + preposition') and to their idiomatic status (as 'idioms', 'semi-idioms' etc). This separation is in line with our view that idiomaticity is largely, though not wholly, a question of meaning. This approach has the descriptive advantage of enabling us to speak of **make up** (one's face) etc as a unit of meaning while at the same time leaving us free to speak of the grammatical separability, or mobility, of its parts (as in **make up** one's face/**make** one's face **up**).

This general view governs the way expressions are described in the entries. Whether idioms or not, they are treated *grammatically* as combinations of verb + particle etc functioning in sentence patterns. The item **make up** (one's face) for instance is identified as 'verb + particle in a transitive sentence pattern'. In practice, the identification is by means of a simple code – here [B1i]   which refers the user to a full treatment of the pattern in tabular form (⇨ *Content and arrangement of the entries*, 3.4).

When in addition to being verb + particle etc an expression is *also* idiomatic, this information is conveyed separately. Idiomaticity may be reflected by the definition (⇨ 5.2), or shown by cross-referencing the expression to its synonyms

(⇨ 5.3), or indicated by specifying possible *changes* to the sentence pattern(s) in which the item is used (⇨ 3.2).

Just as the idiomaticity of an item does not affect its basic structural description, so no distinction is drawn between simple expressions (**make up**) and more complex ones (**make one's mind up**) *on grounds of complexity alone* when deciding what pattern to assign them to. Since these two items both contain a verb and a particle, and both are used transitively, they are described exactly alike in their respective entries. The analysis is reinforced in this case by the fact that the expressions have the same passive pattern:

*Her face is **made up**.*   ***His mind** is **made up**.*

As well as being in accord with the facts, this approach to the grammatical treatment of complex idioms has the great practical merit of keeping to the minimum the number of distinct structural types in the overall scheme for the dictionary. All the expressions recorded, whether idiom or non-idiom, simple or complex, are accounted for by a system of six basic patterns (⇨ 3.1).

The dictionary and the practical needs of the learner

0.2   Although the dictionary is not intended simply as a practical work of reference for the student of English, we have taken special account of his needs in deciding what information to include in the entries and how best to arrange it. In particular, we have incorporated certain special features which are designed to encourage the confident use of idiomatic expressions in grammatical patterns and lexical contexts beyond those which the student has already met. It is in this sense that the dictionary is designed as a practical learning and teaching aid.

Three related features are singled out for special mention here: the design of the *headphrases* (as embodying limited ranges of lexical choice); the inclusion in most entries of the habitual *collocations* in which headphrase items occur; and the extensive *cross-reference system* by means of which intransitive verbs (for example) are explicitly linked to their appropriate transitives.

A problem commonly facing the would-be user of an idiomatic item is that of deciding how fixed it is. Take, for example, the complex expression **buck one's ideas up**. How invariable is this? Can **up** be deleted? Is **thoughts**, say, freely substitutable for **ideas**? The student needs clear guidance on fine points of lexical detail such as those, as also on the question whether singular **idea** is as acceptable as plural **ideas**, since without it he may produce such variants as ***buck one's ideas** or ***buck one's notions up**. When the lexical shape of an expression is perfectly fixed, as it is here, the help can be given simply and straightforwardly through the headphrase itself (ie the form in which the expression is conventionally represented in **bold type** at the head of the entry). Examples of headphrases which represent *fixed* expressions are:

buck one's ideas up   **take the gilt off the gingerbread**
let the side down

Sometimes a very limited range of options is available to the speaker: he can choose to say, for example, either **drag** (sb's name etc) **through the mire**, or **drag** (sb's name etc) **through the mud**, where **mire** and **mud** are permitted alternatives, but ***slime** is not. This restricted range of choice can again be conveyed through the headphrase, by the use of the oblique. The single oblique in the following headphrases shows that the choice of noun in each case is limited to two:

drag through the mire/mud   **take sb's mind/thoughts off**
put the cat among the canaries/pigeons

As the examples show, there is often a clear relationship of meaning between the words marked off by the oblique in this kind of headphrase: **canaries** and **pigeons** are both kinds of birds. But this awareness does not help us to determine what the acceptable choices are in any particular case.

The problems which the learner faces in handling the meanings of such complex expressions (and those of the more numerous two-word combinations) are well known. He may have difficulties of understanding or interpretation (especially when the form of an expression is a poor guide to its meaning). He may have trouble in discriminating accurately between various meanings of the 'same' item – those of **put out**, for example, or **take in**. And again, he may need help in distinguishing between expressions which are related in form (cf **level off** and **level up**) though not necessarily in meaning. Among the features we have included in the dictionary to help the student deal with such problems is the regular listing in entries of 'collocating' words. We can consider briefly the special advantages of this guidance here.

The collocates of an expression are the particular words which are commonly combined with it to form sentences. Among the words which regularly appear (as subjects) in the same sentences as **bring to blows**, for example, are disagreement, difference and rivalry, and among those habitually associated (as direct objects) with **bring to attention** are troops, platoon, company. The learner normally becomes aware of these word associations, or collocations, one by one through meeting them in books or hearing them in conversation, and as one association builds upon another he gradually develops a firm understanding of the meanings of **bring to blows** and **bring to attention**. The advantage of bringing together a number of these associated words in one place – as in the entries shown just below – is that the student is made aware of several at the same time. As a result the learning process can be greatly speeded up.

bring to attention ... **S**: sergeant, officer. **O**: troops; platoon, company ...

bring to blows ... **S**: disagreement, difference (of opinion): rivalry, enmity. **O**: (two) sides, parties ...

Another advantage, of course, is that the student can make up sentences of his own on the basis of the collocates recorded in such entries, so strengthening still more his grasp on the meanings of the headphrases themselves.

Illustrative sentences in dictionary entries can serve much the same purpose as lists of collocates. If the illustrations are carefully chosen, they too will contain words that are characteristically and unambiguously associated with the headphrase, and which help to develop the learner's understanding of its meaning. But collocates and examples have different and complementary parts to play in the definition of meaning. In a list of collocates some of the more important clues to our understanding of an expression are abstracted from their real contexts and presented in a highly condensed form. In illustrations, various kinds of information – grammatical and stylistic as well as lexical – are combined in actual instances of language use, though the most important clues to meaning may be rather thinly spread.

A further advantage of indicating the collocates of headphrases, and it is related to the first, is that it enables the learner to distinguish, more precisely than he might otherwise be able to do, between items that are pronounced or spelt alike but which differ in meaning. Take for example the two items entered and defined in the dictionary as:

come down[1] [A1 emph] collapse, drop; fall.
come down[3] [A1 emph] fall, be reduced.

These items have the same grammatical patterns, and their definitions are related, but their *collocations* are quite unalike, and indicate clearly and economically the difference in sense between 1 and 3:

come down[1] ... **s:** ceiling, wall; curtain, picture; rain, sleet ...

come down[3] ... **s:** prices, costs, expenditure ...

(where **s** in each case indicates that the collocates function as subjects.)

Yet another practical application of collocate lists has to do not so much with the learning of new meanings as with indicating and suggesting to the student fresh contexts in which a partially known item can be acceptably used. Take for example the sets of words shown to function as Subjects (**s**), Direct Objects (**O**) and prepositional objects (**o**) in the following entry:

lend (to)[3] ... make (more) significant, believable etc. **s:** event, development. **O:** meaning, significance; credibility, genuineness. **o:** view, interpretation, analysis ...

The student may already 'know' this sense of **lend (to)**, in that he can confidently use the expression in some of the collocations indicated, e g

(This) event ... lend(s) ... meaning ... to ... (his) view.

The statement of other likely collocates in itself extends this capacity, so that for example he can now in addition construct the sentence:

This development lends significance to the analysis (already made by economists).

But as well as being directly available for use in this way, the collocates view, interpretation, analysis (for example) can also suggest – perhaps to the more advanced student – the area in which other suitable choices should be sought (study, account, statement, narrative).

Statements of likely or probable collocates are in an important way linked to the special cross-references which are given at the end of many entries, especially those where the verb in the headphrase is one of the 'heavy-duty' group **come, go, bring, take** etc. Consider the collocates and cross-references in:

bring to fruition ... cause sth to be fulfilled or realized. ... **O:** hope, dream, ambition; plan ... ⇨ come to fruition.

The cross-reference to **come to fruition** indicates that the latter is the 'intransitive' equivalent of the 'transitive' headphrase, a correspondence which is reflected in the tendency for the *same* words to collocate with both expressions. The matching collocates appear in the **come to fruition** entry, as follows:

come to fruition ... be realized, fulfilled. ... **s:** hope, dream, ambition; plan, scheme ... ⇨ bring to fruition.

How can the student make use of this information in a productive way? First of all, he can be confident that when a **bring** entry is cross-referenced to a **come** entry the two normally correspond as transitive to intransitive. He can check that there is a close correspondence in particular cases by comparing collocates and definitions. Having grasped the relationship between the expressions, he can practise it systematically, drawing on his awareness of the shared collocates:

Their hopes were never brought to fruition.

Their hopes never came to fruition.

Once again, the illustrative sentences in the entries are a further source of clarification and practice. Since the **bring/come** correspondence applies to many pairs of simple and complex expressions recorded in the dictionary (cf **bring to the ground/come to the ground**), the learner's exploitation of it in one case can be extended to the numerous parallel cases.

The content and arrangement of the entries

In the following set of entries, the user is referred from a number of features which are often found in the dictionary itself to the detailed explanations provided in sections 1–9 of *The content and arrangement of the entries*.

alternative preps in headphrase **1.1.2**	**centre** on/round [A2] emph rel [B2] pass emph rel] have, fix, as its centre, (cause to) revolve about/around (q v). **S:** [A2] **O:** [B2] movement, activity; commerce, industry. **o:** (key) figure, personality; port, capital city □ *She became involved in the whirlpool of activity which* **centred round** *Joe.* AITC □ *To give access to markets, the new industries had been* **centred on** *a motorway junction* [□ some purists object to the use of round with the v centre.]	basic patterns **3.1** codes repeated before collocates **6.3.1** usage note **8**
alternative nouns in headphrase **1.1.3** cross-reference to synonym **5.3**	**dart a** glance/look **at** [B2 pass emph rel] look suddenly, sharply, at sb; [shoot a glance (at) (q v)]. **adj:** furtive, anxious, hostile. **o:** stranger, visitor; watch, clock □ *She* **darted an** *interested* **glance** *at the handsome newcomer from under lowered eyelids* □ *The villagers were guarded in their reception So many suspicious* **looks** *were* **darted at** *him.*	transforms **3.2, 3.4**
'anomalous' transform **3.3, 3.4** headphrase picked out in illustration **7.3**	**flashback** [nom (A1)] (cinema) a return during a film either to events that have already been shown, or to events that occurred before the main action of the film began □ *The main action of the film portrayed the hero's adult life: scenes from his boyhood were shown in* **flashback**.	register marking **4.2**
optional prep in headphrase **1.2** codes preceding each illustration **3.1.2** cross-reference to other major verbs **9.1**	**go across** (to) [A1 A2 A3] [pass from one side to the other (of)]; go over (to) (q v). **o:** (across) road, bridge; river; Channel; (to) shop; other bank; France □ [A2] *Planks were laid so that the villagers could* **go across** *the marshy area.* □ [A3] *'I'm just going* **across** *to the pub for half an hour.'* ⇨ **get across'; send across (to), take across (to).**	definition **5** preps repeated before collocates **6.2**
reference to set of adjs **1.4, 7.3.5** source of quotation **7.2**	**make a** good etc **job of** [B2 pass pass(o) rel] (informal) perform a task well, ill etc (esp make repairs or decorations to sth well, badly etc) (adj:) good, excellent, satisfactory; poor, dreadful. **o:** car, cooker: bathroom, kitchen □ *Many machines wash, rinse, spin-dry — but the new Acme Twin-Speed Combination* **makes a better job of** *all three.* (DM)	style marking **4.1** grammatical functions of collocates **6.3**
'dummy' entry **9.3**	**spray on/onto** [B2 pass rel] send liquid in a stream of tiny drops (onto sth). **O:** paint, varnish; perfume; disinfectant, weed-killer. **o:** wall; skin; plant □ *The gardener* **sprayed** *insecticide* **on** *the rose-bushes* (or: **sprayed** *the rose-bushes* **with** *insecticide*). □ *Insect repellent should be* **sprayed onto** *the skin to discourage mosquitoes* (or: *The skin should be* **sprayed with** *insect repellent* etc).	internal arrangement of collocate lists **6.4** transform shown in illustration **7.4**
	spray with [B2 pass rel] ⇨ previous entry.	
restricted set of collocates **6.5**	**turn in** [A1 B1i pass adj] face or curve inwards (naturally); cause to face inwards. **S:** [A1] **O:** [B1] △ one's toes, feet, knees □ *His big toe* **turns in** (i e towards the other toes on that foot). □ *His feet* **turn in** (i e towards each other).	numbered headphrase **1.6**