

Building ideas

Introduction

When using high frequency words, it is very helpful to notice and use some of the words they often occur with (these are known as *collocations*). Using accurate collocations will enable learners to achieve greater fluency as they manipulate chunks of language.

Nouns such as *concept, impact, issue, principle* and *problem* have been given various names, for example *shell nouns* or *carrier nouns*. They are important for IELTS students as they are flexible words that form the essential DNA of a text. Students can learn to use these nouns to add information, to build ideas, to connect, summarize and bind a text together. A thorough knowledge of these words can help them to read, write, speak and listen efficiently.

Aims of worksheet:

- To introduce students to the concept of *shell* or *carrier nouns*.
- To enable students to find their way around the *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary*, by looking for answers in a limited section of the book and noticing how the information is organized.

Time and materials

- Allow the following times for the activities:
activities 1 and 2 – 10 minutes; activities 3 and 4 – 15 minutes; follow up – an hour if done in class, or as a homework assignment.
- Students need access to the *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary (MCD)* to complete the exercises.

Procedures

1. Hand out the worksheet and make sure each student or group of students has a copy of the *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary*, as the answers to the questions are all in there.
2. Working in groups, ask the students if they know and use all the words that typically occur with nouns like *impact*, and why there are so many of them.

3. Ask them to complete each exercise and discuss the answers in their groups, then gather the class together to discuss.

Activity 1

Working individually or in pairs, then checking answers with other students. Once students have identified the correct adjectives, ask them which they use / like most. For further practice, choose another noun and ask students to find the adjectives in the dictionary.

Answers

dramatic	enormous	huge	major
maximum	powerful	profound	significant

Activity 2

Working in pairs or small groups.

Answers

1. absorbed cushioned lessened minimized
mitigated reduced softened
2. calculates estimates evaluates measures
quantifies
3. made had

Activity 3

Working in groups. The diagram summarizes the information in meaning 1 of the dictionary entry for *impact*. Students should fill in the blanks, creating examples for both their own answers and the entries already supplied in the diagram. Ask one group to take the class through the dictionary entry for *impact*, then together discuss possible examples.

Answers

meaning 1: an effect or influence

adjectives: strong / not strong

adjectives: negative / positive

adjectives: relating to a (particular) subject

preposition: on

verb: reduce

Activity 4

Working in pairs or groups. Point out that there are both singular and plural nouns available. For IELTS students, use this as a pre-reading tool when you do a paragraph-matching exercise, to help them focus on the 'DNA' nouns that make up many headings.

Answers

1. A long-term solution to the housing problem (housing problems in cities: problem, cause / solution)
2. Compelling arguments for education (education as a solution to problems like poverty: claim / argument / effect)

3. A profound effect on traffic congestion (traffic jams in cities: problem / solution)

4. The benefits of job creation (work / jobs: benefits / effects)

Follow up

As a group exercise, either in class or as homework.

If computers are available, allow students to use them to produce their summaries. Ask them to present their diagrams to the class, to a set time limit. When all presentations are done, the class should vote on a) the best visual presentation and b) the best oral presentation. Encourage students to keep their summaries in their vocabulary folders.