

MACMILLAN Collocations DICTIONARY

FOR LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

rapidly insight
steadily **gain** confidence
experience
understanding

restore boost inspire
confidence build
great gain
complete

real deep in-depth
understanding
profound clear complete thorough

Using the Macmillan Collocations Dictionary in IELTS

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The *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary* (MCD) is a valuable resource for anyone using English in an academic or professional context. It shows how the most frequent words in English typically combine with each other, and with other words, to form natural-sounding chunks of language – and this is what makes it an especially useful tool for people taking the IELTS exams.

There is an important distinction to be made between IELTS (the International English Language Testing System) and other exams. The purpose of IELTS is not to test students' *knowledge* of the English language, but to assess their *competence* in using it. Students are not awarded a pass or fail, but their scores are reported on a scale ranging from 1 ('Non-User') to 9 ('Expert User').

The word *User* is critical. Rather than testing students' knowledge of grammar or of specific vocabulary items, IELTS evaluates their ability to use the English language in the completion of tasks (within fairly tight time limits) in the four main skills of Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. This focus on testing *competence* rather than *knowledge* has implications for students and teachers alike, especially with regard to learning vocabulary.

Let us take, for example, a student who is about to take IELTS, and who has a reasonably large vocabulary, say of around 7,500 words. A vocabulary of this size is a desirable asset for anyone aiming to achieve a score of 6.5–7 in the academic version of IELTS. But learning words from vocabulary lists is not enough. If our imaginary student has no awareness of how words work naturally together, s/he will be at a disadvantage compared to someone who may have a smaller vocabulary (say 5,000 words), but who is able to use those words effectively by combining them in natural-sounding collocations.

What this illustrates is the importance of learning to *use* vocabulary, at speed, across tasks within the four main skills. This will improve fluency, clarity of expression, and naturalness – and hence competence in general.

The need for such flexibility in manipulating words to create the kinds of combination that a fluent speaker would produce naturally is what makes the *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary* an ideal companion for students as they prepare for the IELTS exam.

How producing natural collocations can help IELTS students

There are two aspects of vocabulary that illustrate the relevance of collocation and the value of a dictionary like the MCD:

- the relationship between frequency and 'coverage': research shows that the most common English words make up a high percentage of everything we read or write. The most frequently used words (the top 2,500) account for almost 80% of all text, while the 7,500 most common words make up over 90%.
- The relationship between frequency and collocation: the more frequent a word is, the more likely it is to enter into 'partnerships' with other words, forming combinations which convey a sense of naturalness and style.

This has implications for *processing information* in the four main skills tested in IELTS.

Processing information: Listening

In the IELTS Listening Module, students have to be able to process information at natural speed which they hear only once. Grammar and listening skills apart, such processing for students aiming for Score Band 7 requires an ability to identify facts and ideas, to see the relationships between them, and to recognise paraphrases and summaries. From the IELTS student's point of view, the skill of predicting relationships between words in collocations or identifying the paraphrase of one collocation to another at speed is very useful.

At a fairly simple level, this can be illustrated by the alternatives students might have to choose from in a multiple-choice question. As students have to process what they hear while listening, quick understanding of the audio and the questions is essential. Look at the second entry for the word *basic* in MCD:

2 of products or services, needed by everyone

• ADJ+n **necessities** *Their parents have to work from morning till night to provide the basic necessities.*
essentials foodstuffs sanitation amenities needs

A question in the Listening Module might look something like this:

Their parents have to work from morning till night to provide the

A basic necessities

B school fees

C expensive clothes

In the listening module, the speaker might say something like: ... *supply the children with accommodation, food and clothing*. Knowing that the word *basic* is frequently combined with *necessities* to mean things like *accommodation, food and clothing* makes it easier to process information while listening. If students have to think about the meaning of the two words combined, it will slow them down. Furthermore as the vocabulary used in the audio, and in the questions, is likely to be drawn from the most common 2,500 to 7,500 words (either as single items or in combination), then it makes sense to include work on collocation and on possible paraphrases as part of a course.

Processing information: Reading

The reading passages in the academic version of IELTS are long – around 800 words each and up to 2,700 words for the three passages – and students have to answer 40 questions about the passages in one hour. The skills needed for negotiating a text include skimming, scanning, rapid recognition of text type and organization, and the ability to process grammar at speed. But a flexible use of vocabulary can further enhance competence in reading. A good starting point is to acquire a thorough working knowledge of the most frequent English words and – critically – to learn the various ways in which they typically combine to form natural-sounding and predictable collocations.

Reading and processing speeds can be surely enhanced by a detailed understanding of the ways in which words fit together. If we take another entry from the MCD, for the word *significant*, a knowledge of collocation can help students predict as they read. In a text about the important consequences of a policy or decision, for example, the use of the adjective *significant* will 'prime' readers to expect nouns such as *impact* or *effect* to follow:

... *have a significant impact on the economy of the region.*

And collocation manipulation will also help the student to see that the phrase '... benefit that part of the country considerably' in a reading passage is being paraphrased by the phrase above in a True False Not Given statement or multiple-choice question. As the MCD shows, other words with which

significant regularly combines, to express the idea of an important result or effect of something, include *implications, consequence, influence, and benefit*. These provide yet another rich source of language to manipulate for paraphrasing and summarizing.

The ability to understand and use collocations helps students to increase their speed in processing information as they predict the text that is to cover the blank pages to come..

Building fluency and sounding unnatural: Writing Task 2

In Task 2 of the academic version of IELTS, students are required to write a minimum of 250 words. A student with a good grasp of collocation has a distinct advantage, as we can see by looking at the entry for *significant* in the MCD. It shows the nouns and adverbs that most frequently combine with *significant* to express a wide range of ideas. If you want to say something is 'very significant', there is a choice of typical adverbs. Or again, there are sets of nouns for conveying ideas like 'a significant achievement', 'a significant problem or challenge', or – as discussed already – 'a significant effect or result'. Here we look at the set of nouns frequently used to express the idea of 'a significant event or change':

change, development, improvement, move, trend, decision, action, initiative:

The most significant recent development has been the introduction of an integrated fares and ticketing structure.

Let's say a student makes a spelling or a grammatical mistake in the sentence (for example, writing *The most significant recent development* or *Most significant recent development*): despite these mistakes, the message is clear, But look at the difference if the student uses words of similar meaning but in unnatural combinations, and writes:

The most key recent act has been the initiative of an integrated fares and ticketing arrangement

Though the sentence is not 'incorrect', its intended meaning is much less clear, because inappropriate words have been chosen, resulting in untypical collocations. If this is then repeated with the same consistency throughout an essay, with or without grammar or spelling mistakes, it becomes more difficult for the reader (the Examiner), to recover the meaning. Texts like this give the impression the writer lacks fluency and is operating with a limited working vocabulary. Yet, with even quite small changes, the meaning would become more transparent and the text as a whole would feel more natural.

Building fluency and sounding unnatural: Speaking Parts 2 and 3

The need for fluency becomes even more critical in the Speaking module of IELTS. In Part 2 students are expected to talk about a particular topic: for example, *Describe a recent development in your life that you felt was important*. A good way of demonstrating a wide vocabulary is to employ natural collocations which paraphrase what the Examiner says rather than just repeating the exact words, for example: *I'm going to talk about a recent change in my life that was very significant*. If students are hesitant as they pick their way through the words that they *know* or simply repeat the words of the Examiner, this will affect their score band for vocabulary and fluency. Part 3 covers many abstract topics similar to those covered in Task 2 of the Writing module. Here students are asked to talk about subjects such as the development of technology and its effects in the workplace or on domestic life. Again the student who is able, with minimum hesitation, to choose words that fit together to make natural collocations is more likely to achieve a higher score band.

The *Macmillan Collocations Dictionary* is a useful companion for anyone working in an academic or professional context or taking exams such as FCE, CAE Proficiency, ILEC and ICFE. For IELTS, it is an especially valuable resource which seems tailor-made to meet the needs of students preparing for this exam.

- v+N have immunity **benefit from, enjoy** *Embassy staff will enjoy diplomatic immunity so long as they are in this country.*
- ▶ claim immunity **claim** *She claimed parliamentary immunity and refused to stand trial.*
- ▶ give immunity **grant (sb), guarantee (sb), promise (sb)** *Together with their families, they have been granted diplomatic immunity.*
- ▶ remove immunity **lift, waive** *His parliamentary immunity was lifted and he was sentenced to 16 years in prison.*
- N+from **action, jurisdiction, liability, proceedings, prosecution** *Prosecutors will now be able to offer immunity from prosecution.*

2 the body's protection against disease or a particular disease

- adj+N weak **compromised, decreased, depressed, impaired, lowered, suppressed** *You should avoid people with a lowered immunity if you have shingles.*
- ▶ lasting a long time **lifelong, long-lasting** *One infection is thought to confer lifelong immunity.*
- ▶ present at birth **maternal, newborn** *The puppy has received adequate maternal immunity to enable it to resist disease for some weeks.*
- v+N give immunity **confer, induce** *The new vaccine can confer immunity following just one dose.*
- ▶ get immunity **acquire** *Those who work with the varnish seem to acquire immunity to its actions.*
- ▶ make immunity stronger **boost, stimulate** *The high vitamin and mineral content helps to boost immunity and energy levels.*
- N+against/to **disease, infection, virus** *In childhood, the adenoids are probably useful in developing immunity against infections.* • Do adults acquire immunity to the virus?

impact N [usually singular]

1 an effect or influence

- adj+N strong **dramatic, enormous, huge, major, maximum, powerful, profound, significant** *The machine includes prominent branding for maximum impact at the point of sale.* • This important musician had such a profound impact on my life.
- ▶ not strong **limited, marginal, minimal, negligible** *The factory is designed to operate with minimal impact on the environment.*
- ▶ positive **beneficial, positive** *It is not clear whether these activities have a positive impact on children's reading skills.*
- ▶ negative **adverse, damaging, detrimental, devastating, disastrous, negative, serious, severe** *For the local community, the environmental impact of these new mines will be devastating.*
- ▶ direct **direct, immediate** *The results will have an immediate impact on the care that patients receive.*
- ▶ lasting a long time **lasting, long-lasting, long-term** *If we act now, we could make a lasting impact on poverty.*
- ▶ affecting your mind or emotions **emotional, psychological** *The psychological impact of living with HIV is an issue that affects both long-term survivors and the newly-diagnosed.*
- ▶ relating to money and business **commercial, economic, financial** *The study assesses the*

commercial impact of new information systems and the Internet.

- ▶ relating to a particular subject **cultural, ecological, environmental, political, social, socio-economic** *This process will inevitably have some ecological impact.*
- v+N have an impact **create, have, make** *The funding is vital for the us to be able to make a real impact on the community.*
- ▶ reduce impact **absorb, cushion, lessen, limit, minimize, mitigate, reduce, soften** *Use your spending power to reduce your impact on the environment.*
- ▶ examine impact **analyse, consider, examine, explore, investigate, understand** *This paper examines the impact of new teaching methods that were introduced a year ago.*
- ▶ measure impact **assess, calculate, estimate, evaluate, measure, quantify** *In the next chapter, we assess the impact of the minimum wage on individuals and firms.*

2 an occasion when one object hits another

- v+N receive an impact **take** *The ball of the foot should take the initial impact.*
- ▶ make an impact less strong **absorb, cushion, lessen, soften** *Inflatable balloons cushion the impact of the controlled crash landing.*
- ▶ survive an impact **survive, withstand** *Cycle helmets are designed to withstand impact at speeds of around 13mph*
- v+on+N explode **detonate, explode** *The bombs are intended to detonate on impact.*
- ▶ break **break, shatter** *Casey's neck broke on impact.*

impair v

make something less good or effective

- adv+V **greatly, markedly, profoundly, seriously, severely, significantly, substantially** *His disability severely impairs his ability to walk.*
- V+n **ability, concentration, effectiveness, function, judgement, memory, mobility, performance** *The drug impairs mental functions such as attention and memory.*

impaired ADJ

prevented from using a particular ability fully

- adv+ADJ relating to the brain **cognitively, intellectually, mentally, neurologically** *The majority of children here are severely mentally impaired.*
- ▶ relating to sight **visually** *Reading web content can be especially problematic for visually impaired users.*
- ▶ relating to hearing **aurally** *The system is designed to help aurally impaired people*

You can also use the expressions hearing-impaired and sight-impaired: *Signing will be provided at the meeting for the hearing-impaired.*

- ▶ seriously **profoundly, seriously, severely, substantially** *We work with the most profoundly impaired children.*
- ▶ for ever **permanently** *Now her memory is permanently impaired.*

- ▶ not seriously **mildly, slightly** *I am fine, apart from a slightly impaired memory function.*
- ADJ+n ability to see **eyesight, sight, vision** *If your vision is impaired and you'd appreciate a large print version, please phone our Customer Services Department.*
- ▶ ability to hear **hearing** *Any child who has impaired hearing can join this group.*
- ▶ ability to walk **mobility** *This equipment helps us deal with patients whose mobility is impaired.*

impartial ADJ

not connected to or influenced by a particular person or group

- adv+ADJ completely **absolutely, completely, entirely, strictly, totally** *Our aim is to provide completely impartial advice.*
- ▶ really **genuinely, truly** *We offer genuinely impartial advice.*
- ▶ in a way that relates to politics **politically** *A politically impartial civil service is a great national asset.*
- ▶ as some people believe **so-called, supposedly** *I cannot fully share his admiration for the supposedly impartial civil service.*
- ADJ+n person or group that judges **adjudicator, assessor, judge, panel** *Entries will be judged by a panel of impartial adjudicators.*
- ▶ person or group that settles disagreements **arbitrator, mediator, tribunal** *The mediator is impartial: he or she does not take sides.*
- ▶ person who makes sure people obey rules in sports **referee, umpire** *The lack of impartial referees allowed players to break the rules.*
- ▶ advice **advice, guidance** *The service offers impartial advice to new businesses.*
- ▶ journalism **journalism, reporting** *We are committed to honest and impartial reporting of the news.*
- and/or **balanced, fair, objective, unbiased** *Members of the panel must be impartial and unbiased.*

impatience N

the annoyed feeling you have when something does not happen as quickly as you would like

- adj+N **growing, mounting** *His growing impatience with Robert began to show.*
- v+N show impatience **display, express, reveal, show** *Maintain normal eye contact and do not show impatience.*
- ▶ control impatience **conceal, control, curb, restrain** *I could no longer control my impatience at the delay; I climbed the stairs and opened the door.*
- n+of+N **feeling, gesture, sign** *I detect a feeling of growing public impatience.*

impede v

make it more difficult for something to happen or be done

- adv+V seriously **greatly, seriously, severely, significantly** *This situation could seriously impede economic growth.*
- ▶ in a way that is not necessary or reasonable **unduly, unfairly, unnecessarily, unreasonably** *We*

provide security without unnecessarily impeding users' ability to perform their job.

- V+n movement **circulation, flow, mobility, movement, passage, progress** *No sofas, chairs, or other furniture impeded the free circulation of the guests.*
- ▶ ability **ability** *All of these factors impede the ability of the blood to absorb oxygen.*
- ▶ action or progress **action, development, effectiveness, efforts, implementation, innovation, performance, progress** *Progress was impeded by problems of planning permission.*
- ▶ economic performance **growth, recovery, trade** *At first, worries about the safety of online transactions impeded the growth of e-commerce.*

impetus N [always singular]

a force that makes something happen or develop

- adj+N strong **considerable, dramatic, enormous, great, powerful, strong, tremendous** *The railway gave a powerful impetus to the prosperity of the town.*
- ▶ most important **main, major** *The main impetus behind the rise in inflation comes from the impact of higher food prices.*
- ▶ new and different **fresh, new, renewed** *This news lends fresh impetus to the union's campaign.*
- ▶ given at the beginning **initial, original** *The initial impetus for a literacy project came from a local literacy training day.*
- ▶ extra **added, additional, extra, further** *Recent legislation has brought further impetus to this project.*
- v+N be an impetus **act as, serve as** *The building project served as an impetus for regeneration.*
- ▶ give impetus **bring, give, inject, lend, provide** *Economic factors are providing the impetus for more automated solutions.*
- ▶ create impetus **create, generate** *The interest shown in our town has served to create a renewed impetus in the project.*
- ▶ gain impetus **acquire, derive, gain, receive** *This strategy is gaining impetus globally.*
- ▶ lose impetus **lose** *The songs cause the film to lose impetus.*

implement v

make an idea, plan, system or law start to work

- adv+V successfully **correctly, effectively, efficiently, properly, rigorously, successfully** *We successfully implemented the scheme on 17 February 2009.*
- ▶ completely **fully** *The planned changes have not yet been fully implemented.*
- ▶ immediately **immediately, quickly, swiftly, with immediate effect, without delay** *The adjudicator's decision is final and must be implemented immediately.*
- ▶ over a particular area **locally, nationally, widely** *National contracts will be locally implemented.*
- ▶ badly **badly, poorly** *Legislation which is poorly implemented is not acceptable.*

Usage Implement is usually passive in all of the adv+V combinations shown above: *Their advertising campaign was badly implemented.* ● We are now working to ensure that the recommendations are effectively implemented.

- V+n something that tells people how to deal with a problem **guidelines, recommendations** *The government now aims to implement the recommendations of the safety review.*
- ▶ way of dealing with a problem **measures, policy, solution, strategy** *One purpose of implementing these measures is to control the flow of traffic.*
- ▶ law or rule **directive, law, legislation, provisions, regulations, ruling** *The legislation was fully implemented in July 2005, when international tobacco advertising was banned.*
- ▶ plan **plan, programme, proposal, scheme, system** *The committee agreed to implement the plan as soon as possible.*
- ▶ official agreement **accord, agreement, resolution** *He visited the US and Europe, promising to implement the peace accord.*
- ▶ change **change, improvements, reform** *There has been steady progress in implementing reforms in the police force.*
- v+to-V agree to implement something **agree, promise** *The management apologized and agreed to implement the recommendations.*
- ▶ try to implement something **attempt, try** *Many school teachers are attempting to implement the reform proposals.*
- ▶ have to implement something **be forced, be obliged, have** *You may be forced to implement change by internal factors.*
- ▶ fail or refuse to implement something **fail, refuse** *The council has refused to implement the ruling due to budget cuts.*

implementation N

the process of implementing something

- adj+N successful or complete **effective, efficient, full, proper, smooth, successful** *We will consult widely to ensure smooth implementation of the legislation.*
- ▶ quick **immediate, rapid, speedy, timely** *Establish a timetable for the speedy implementation of recommendations.*
- ▶ covering a wide area **full-scale, large-scale, widespread** *The widespread implementation of the new methods is encouraging.*
- ▶ actual **actual, concrete, practical** *The actual implementation of a new policy can be challenging.*
- ▶ in stages **phased, step-by-step** *The phased implementation will be carried out in seven police forces.*
- v+N achieve implementation **achieve, ensure** *Regular meetings are held to ensure the smooth implementation of policy.*
- ▶ manage implementation **coordinate, manage, monitor, oversee, supervise** *The Department has a responsibility for overseeing implementation of EU directives.*
- ▶ help implementation **accelerate, aid, assist in, contribute to, facilitate, simplify, support** *This company was chosen to facilitate the implementation of the project.*
- ▶ delay implementation **defer, postpone** *Permission was granted to postpone implementation.*
- N+n **date, phase, plan, process, schedule, stage, strategy, timetable** *The implementation process*

required close collaboration between the various departments.

- n+to+N **barrier, delay, obstacle** *The group will research the barriers to implementation of change in the industry.*

implication N

1 [usually plural] a possible effect or result

- adj+N important **considerable, enormous, important, profound, significant** *These differences have significant implications for growth and development.*
- ▶ negative **devastating, negative, serious** *This ruling could have devastating implications for thousands of people.*
- ▶ possible **possible, potential** *The potential legal implications of this approach are enormous.*
- ▶ affecting a large number of people or things **broad, far-reaching, wide, wide-ranging** *The legislation has far-reaching implications for property owners in the UK.*
- ▶ over a long period of time **long-term** *We need to carefully consider the long-term implications of development.*
- ▶ relating to a real situation **practical** *This report has practical implications for our work in the classroom.*
- ▶ relating to money **budgetary, economic, financial** *You should consider carefully the financial implications of studying for a higher degree.*
- ▶ relating to a theory or method **methodological, theoretical** *In this chapter we discuss the methodological implications of two theoretical frameworks.*
- ▶ relating to a particular subject **environmental, ethical, legal, moral, pedagogical, philosophical, political** *Many decisions doctors take have ethical implications.*
- n+N **cost, health, policy, resource, safety, security, tax, welfare** *They also identify the cost implications of achieving improved energy ratings.*
- v+N have implications **carry, have** *Some of these changes carry more wide-ranging implications.*
- ▶ consider implications **consider, discuss, examine, explore, investigate, ponder, reflect upon, think about** *The paper discusses the implications of our findings in relation to students' learning.*
- ▶ make a judgment about implications **assess, evaluate** *Most users do not consciously assess the privacy implications of every online situation they encounter.*
- ▶ understand implications **appreciate, grasp, realize, understand** *We have failed to realize the wider implications of these events.*

2 [usually singular] something that you suggest is true

- adj+N **clear, obvious, underlying, unspoken** *The obvious implication was that Simon was lying.*
- v+N **deny, reject, resent** *She resented his implication that she was a cheat.*

implicit ADJ

not stated directly

- ADJ+n something that people understand and

accept or agree to **acknowledgement, agreement, assumption, recognition, understanding** *There is an implicit assumption among the community that these issues will be resolved.*

- ▶ criticism **condemnation, criticism, critique, rebuke** *Throughout the report there was implicit criticism of the council's actions.*
- ▶ threat **challenge, threat** *We had to accept peace on their terms, at the implicit threat of renewed violence.*

imply v

suggest that something exists or is true, without saying so directly

- adv+V clearly **clearly, plainly, strongly** *The report clearly implied a growing need for new tests.*
- ▶ wrongly **falsely, incorrectly, misleadingly, wrongly** *The broadcast falsely implies that cycling is an unusually dangerous activity.*
- ▶ as a logical result **automatically, inevitably, logically, necessarily** *If we teach writing more effectively, does that logically imply that our students will become better writers?*
- ▶ not necessarily or not at all in **no way, not necessarily** *Autonomy does not necessarily imply unlimited freedom.*
- V+n the fact that you approve of something **acceptance, approval, consent, endorsement** *A link to another website does not imply endorsement of the material on that site.*
- ▶ the fact that you do not approve of something **contradiction, criticism, rejection** *Inclusion on the Register does not imply criticism of the person in question.*
- ▶ the fact that something exists **existence** *A positive result does not necessarily imply the existence of the disease.*
- n+V information that you discover **data, evidence, findings, study** *Our findings imply the presence of liquid water on Mars.*
- ▶ something that is said or written **comment, definition, language, narrative, phrase, statement, wording** *This statement implies that we might as well just accept things as they are.*
- ▶ theory **hypothesis, theorem** *This hypothesis implies that when something occurs, it has more chance of happening again.*

importance N

the fact of being important

- adj+N great **considerable, enormous, extreme, great, huge, immense, key, major, much, profound, tremendous** *These findings are interesting but they are not of much importance at this stage.*
- ▶ essential **critical, crucial, decisive, fundamental, key, vital** *People must understand the vital importance of these resources for future generations.*
- ▶ more than anything else **cardinal, especial, first, highest, overriding, overwhelming, paramount, particular, primary, prime, special, supreme, utmost** *I believe motivating students to learn is of paramount importance.*
- ▶ little **little, minor** *Compared to health, education, and taxes the issue is of minor importance.*
- ▶ relative to something else **equal, less, lesser, relative, secondary** *We assessed the relative importance of different factors in predicting whether*

young people would use drugs. • Winning is of secondary importance, although it is very nice.

- ▶ becoming more/less **declining, diminishing, growing, increased, increasing** *His growing importance in shaping policy became clear during the strike.*
- ▶ of a particular type **archaeological, architectural, ecological, economic, historic, historical, strategic, symbolic** *The river port gave the city a special strategic importance.*
- ▶ in a particular geographical area **international, national** *This is a list of sites considered to be of national importance for nature conservation.*
- v+N be or become important **assume, have, take on** *Air power has assumed a greater military importance in recent times.*
- ▶ give something importance **accord sth, ascribe, attach, attribute, give sth, place** *Do not attach too much importance to the differences in admissions procedures between the Colleges. • Their business strategy places great importance on IT.*
- ▶ understand something's importance **acknowledge, appreciate, be convinced of, grasp, note, perceive, realize, recognize, understand** *We understand the importance of keeping you informed of progress.*
- ▶ emphasize something's importance **affirm, assert, emphasize, highlight, reaffirm, reassert, reinforce, reiterate, stress, underline, underscore** *Dr Connolly stresses the importance of being open and honest with children.*
- ▶ exaggerate something's importance **exaggerate, overemphasize, overestimate, overstate** *We cannot overstate the importance of this point.*
- ▶ deny or forget something's importance **deny, downplay, ignore, overlook, underestimate, underplay, understate, undervalue** *The Minister seemed to be downplaying the importance of the inquiry.*
- ▶ show something's importance **confirm, demonstrate, explain, illustrate, indicate, point to, reflect, reveal, show** *The report points to the importance of patients being able to access the service quickly.*
- ▶ discuss how important something is **assess, discuss, evaluate, examine** *This lecture will discuss the importance of patents to the pharmaceutical industry.*
- N+v be in, lie in *The unit's importance lies in the pioneering work it is doing with children who have been excluded from mainstream schools.*
- v+in+N **decline, gain, grow, increase** *The town grew in importance in the late 18th century.*

important ADJ

having a major effect on someone or something

- adv+ADJ very **critically, crucially, enormously, extremely, fundamentally, highly, hugely, immensely, incredibly, massively, profoundly, really, so, terribly, tremendously, very, vitally** *During their captivity that friendship was vitally important to them.*
- ▶ especially **especially, particularly, supremely** *This advice is especially important for younger women.*
- ▶ rather **pretty INFORMAL, quite** *Listen carefully. This is quite important.*

- ▶ possibly **potentially** *Anxiety was recognized as a potentially important factor.*
- ▶ relative to something else **doubly, equally, increasingly, most, too** *It is equally important for Government Offices to monitor and review progress.*
 - *Our friendship is too important to risk over something so silly.*
- ▶ clearly **clearly, obviously** *It is obviously important to liaise with the owner of the land.*

The expression the single most important is very common: *This was probably the single most important factor in the decision.*

- ▶ in a particular way **architecturally, biologically, clinically, commercially, economically, historically, industrially, medically, strategically** *All the churches on the list are architecturally or historically important.* • *This report highlights the decline in strategically important areas of industry.*
- ▶ across a particular geographical area **globally, internationally, locally, nationally, regionally** *The island is home to internationally important seabird populations.*
- ADJ+n factor or aspect **aspect, component, consideration, element, facet, factor, feature, thing** *Socioeconomic deprivation is an important risk factor for heart disease.* • *Music is the most important thing in the world to me.*
- ▶ role **contribution, part, role** *Carbohydrates play an important role in maintaining health.*
- ▶ point or issue **issue, point, question** *The website explains why climate change is such an important issue and what you can do to help.*
- ▶ difference **difference, distinction** *There is an important distinction to be made between cosmetic surgery and reconstructive surgery.*
- ▶ decision or action **decision, milestone, step** *Volunteers from across the country gathered to mark this important milestone for the organization.*
- ▶ something you learn **discovery, lesson** *What is the most important lesson you've learned in your professional life?*
- v+ADJ **be, become, consider sth, deem sth, feel, prove, remain, seem** *Knowledge of foreign languages is becoming increasingly important to businesses.* • *It is considered important that feedback is given immediately after the session.*

impose v

to force people to accept something

- adv+V from outside **centrally, externally** *They have to make difficult choices within externally imposed budget constraints.*

Usage Impose is usually passive in these combinations: *Don't insult their professional judgement with a lot of centrally imposed regulations.d*

- ▶ in an unreasonable way **arbitrarily, artificially, heavy-handedly, rigidly, simply, unilaterally** *No one was consulted in any way about the scheme, it was simply imposed.* • *Agreement means consent from both parties, not one side unilaterally imposing its view.*
- ▶ using force **aggressively, forcefully, forcibly, physically** *In seeking to forcibly impose a belief system on everyone else, they display cultural intolerance.*

- V+n punishment **fine, penalty, punishment, sanctions, sentence** *The judge said she had no option but to impose a custodial sentence.*
- ▶ restriction or limit **condition, constraints, curfew, deadline, limit, limitation, moratorium, quota, requirement, restraints, restriction** *Section 23 imposes various restrictions on the Parliament's powers.*
- ▶ tax or charge **charge, levy, surcharge, tariff, tax** *Some Scandinavian countries impose much higher taxes on car ownership than does the UK.*
- ▶ ban **ban, blockade, embargo, prohibition** *They imposed an embargo on all exports to the area.*
- ▶ rule **regulation, rule** *The landlord is entitled to impose parking regulations on his tenants.*
- ▶ duty **duty, liability, obligation** *The Directive imposes obligations on public bodies with regard to how they use personal information.*
- ▶ burden **burden, strain** *The emissions from aircraft impose a great burden on the world's climate.*
- ▶ will **will** *It is wrong to impose the will of a small elite on the majority.*

impossible ADJ

unable to be done or to happen

- adv+ADJ completely **absolutely, completely, downright, quite, simply, totally, utterly** *I realized that it was absolutely impossible to get a job without a proper work permit.*
- ▶ almost all but, almost, nearly, practically, virtually, well-nigh *It's all but impossible to have a rational discussion about the issue.* • *The prison cells were so overcrowded that it was almost impossible for prisoners to sit down.*
- ▶ obviously **clearly, manifestly, obviously** *Bringing a life-sized tree onto the stage was obviously impossible.*
- ▶ apparently **apparently, probably, seemingly** *We should be grateful for his tireless efforts against seemingly impossible odds.*
- ▶ in a particular way **humanly, logically, logistically, mathematically, morally, physically, politically, technically** *It would have been physically impossible to read them all even if you did nothing else for a week.*
- v+ADJ **appear, be, become, be rendered, look, prove, seem, sound** *The game was rendered impossible by the wintry conditions.* • *It proved impossible to reach an agreement.* • *Telling your life story in 20 seconds sounds impossible.*

impractical ADJ

not sensible, or not likely to be effective or successful

- adv+ADJ very **highly, hopelessly, quite, ridiculously, simply, totally, utterly, wholly, wildly** *Without technology these activities would be totally impractical.*
- ▶ rather **probably, rather, somewhat** *These cars are regarded as somewhat impractical, with little carrying capacity and poor fuel consumption.*
- ▶ obviously **clearly** *Building such a large single telescope is clearly impractical.*
- v+ADJ **be, become, be considered, be rendered, prove, seem** *Exchanging large files was rendered impractical by the low speed of the modem.* • *It may*

prove impractical to move large quantities of fresh water.

impression N

an opinion or feeling about something or someone

- adj+N good **favourable, good, positive, the right** *The food and service all made favourable impressions.*
- ▶ bad **bad, negative, poor, unfavourable** *It is regrettable that a negative impression has been created.*
- ▶ incorrect **erroneous, false, incorrect, mistaken, wrong** *Whoever is paying you is doing so **under** the mistaken impression that you're actually doing some work!*
- ▶ that deceives someone **deceptive, misleading** *A biased sample can give a misleading impression of the severity of the problem.*
- ▶ accurate **accurate, the right** *Your CV should convey an accurate impression of what you have achieved.*
- ▶ general **general, overall, overriding** *The picture gives an overall impression of peace and serenity.*
- ▶ strong **big, clear, deep, distinct, overwhelming, powerful, profound, striking, strong, vivid** *The visit made a deep impression on me. • I got the distinct impression they were tired of being there.*
- ▶ lasting a long time **abiding, indelible, lasting** *No matter how old you are this film will leave a lasting impression.*
- ▶ vague or brief **fleeting, vague** *Many people have no idea what we do, beyond a vague impression that it is 'good work'.*
- ▶ immediate **first, immediate, initial, instant** *His first impression of the party was not a very positive one.*
- v+N create an impression **convey, create, give, leave, make, produce** *His account is incomplete and gives the wrong impression.*
- ▶ get or have an impression **form, gain, get, have** *I had the impression of a settled and happy community.*
- ▶ correct an impression **correct, counter, dispel** *I would like to correct the impression you may have got that I can't play.*
- ▶ confirm an impression **confirm, reinforce** *Evidence confirms our earlier impression that the effect is small.*

impressive ADJ

very good, large etc in a way that you admire

- adv+ADJ very **deeply, enormously, especially, extremely, genuinely, highly, hugely, immensely, incredibly, massively, mightily, mighty** **INFORMAL, particularly, really, so, truly, very** *As a committed supporter of the disability movement, she is a mightily impressive individual.*
- ▶ rather **fairly, pretty** **INFORMAL, quite, rather** *It must have once been a rather impressive town house.*
- ▶ certainly **admittedly, certainly, undeniably** *Their live performances are said to be exhilarating, and this debut album is certainly impressive.*
- ▶ compared with something else **doubly, equally, similarly** *To achieve such subtlety with such a young cast is doubly impressive.*
- ▶ in a particular way **architecturally, technically, visually** *Even after all these years, the film is still visually impressive.*

- v+ADJ **be, become, look, prove, remain, sound** *The results so far have proved impressive.*

imprisonment N

the punishment of being put in prison

- adj+N illegal **arbitrary, false, illegal, unjust, unlawful, wrongful** *He would like to thank everyone who has supported him over his 8 long years of wrongful imprisonment.*
- ▶ long **continued, indefinite, long, long-term** *Those who went against the authorities could find themselves facing execution or indefinite imprisonment.*
- ▶ for a particular length of time **life, 12 months', 5 years' etc** *The prisoner was fined and sentenced to 28 days' imprisonment for possession of drugs.*
- v+N when someone is imprisoned **receive, serve, suffer, undergo** *He was told he had to serve eight months' imprisonment.*
- ▶ avoid imprisonment **avoid, escape** *Although she was heavily fined, she managed to escape imprisonment.*
- ▶ risk imprisonment **face, risk** *Some risked imprisonment and even death to take part in the protest.*
- ▶ impose imprisonment **impose, sentence sb to A** *sentence of imprisonment was imposed by the magistrate.*

improve V

to make something better or to become better

- adv+V a lot **considerably, dramatically, drastically, enormously, greatly, hugely, immeasurably, immensely, massively, radically, remarkably, tremendously, vastly** *In the second half of the game, his concentration seemed to improve greatly.*
- If something has improved a lot, you can say that it is much improved: *The bus services in this area are now much improved.*
- ▶ a little **marginally, slightly, somewhat** *Road conditions improved slightly today.*
 - ▶ noticeably **demonstrably, markedly, materially, measurably, notably, noticeably, significantly, substantially, tangibly, visibly** *These developments will significantly improve healthcare facilities in the area.*
 - ▶ certainly **certainly, definitely, undoubtedly** *The use of the program definitely improved the general understanding of the class.*
 - ▶ all the time **consistently, constantly, continually, continuously** *He continually improves his performance by setting goals and raising them.*
 - ▶ slowly or gradually **gradually, progressively, slowly, steadily** *Employment rates for older people have steadily improved.*
 - ▶ quickly **fast, quickly, rapidly** *Current computing technology is rapidly improving.*
 - ▶ generally **generally, overall** *Results have generally improved this year.*
 - ▶ in this way **consequently, hence, thereby, therefore, thus** *More and more trees are being planted to provide green areas, thereby improving air quality.*
 - V+with **age, experience, practice, time, use** *It is a*

complex skill and, like all skills, it improves with practice.

improvement N

the process of becoming better or making something better

- adj+N great **big, considerable, dramatic, drastic, great, huge, major, massive, radical, remarkable, substantial, tremendous, vast** *England's 10-year-olds have shown a dramatic improvement in maths tests over the past decade.*
- ▶ small **marginal, minor, modest, slight** *I had an X-ray and the doctor said there was a slight improvement already.*
- ▶ noticeable **appreciable, definite, demonstrable, distinct, genuine, marked, measurable, notable, noticeable, real, significant, tangible** *These proposals will make a significant improvement to the current position.*
- ▶ continuing **constant, continual, continued, continuous, lasting, long-term, ongoing, sustainable, sustained, year-on-year** *It is clear that results have risen again this year, demonstrating the continued improvements in education.*
- ▶ slow or gradual **gradual, incremental, progressive, steady** *Then there was a gradual improvement in his work, particularly in science.*
- ▶ rapid **immediate, rapid** *After a few sessions of therapy there was a rapid improvement in his condition.*
- ▶ general **general, overall** *The inspectors noted an overall improvement on the previous year.*
- ▶ necessary **much-needed, necessary, needed, welcome** *The revenue raised would go into much-needed improvements in public transport.*
- ▶ recent **recent** *Recent technical improvements means that a better solution is available.*
- ▶ possible or planned **further, future, planned, possible, potential, suggested** *Other suggested improvements included a greater police presence and better street lighting.*
- ▶ of a particular type **agricultural, cosmetic, environmental, genetic, operational, technical, technological** *Recycling has the potential to create jobs and achieve environmental improvement.*
- v+N make an improvement **achieve, effect, implement, introduce, make, secure** *Her mission is to achieve a lasting improvement in her quality of life.*
- ▶ cause an improvement **bring, bring about, deliver, enable, produce, yield** *None of these variations of the basic design yielded any great improvements.*
- ▶ notice an improvement **identify, measure, note, notice, report, see** *The doctor said that if I didn't notice an improvement we would try a different drug.*
- ▶ show an improvement **demonstrate, show** *The overall pass rates showed a marginal improvement.*
- ▶ be an improvement **represent** *This represented a 13 per cent improvement in profitability.*
- ▶ experience an improvement **experience, undergo** *The area around the harbour is currently undergoing improvement.*
- ▶ want or need improvement **demand, expect, need, require, seek** *The actual wording of the report needs improvement.*
- ▶ suggest an improvement **plan, propose, recommend, suggest** *If you would like to suggest*

improvements to our website we would be happy to hear from you.

- ▶ encourage improvement **encourage, ensure, facilitate, promote, support** *Feedback should promote learning and facilitate improvement.*
- ▶ promise an improvement **promise** *I can report today that the promised improvements in the system are being delivered.*
- n+for+N **need, opportunity, room, scope** *The present service is good but there is always room for improvement.*

impulse N

a sudden strong feeling that you must do something

- adj+N sudden **sudden** *On a sudden impulse, I rode after him.*
- ▶ first **first, initial** *My first impulse was to go out and buy a whole new set of clothes.*
- ▶ strong **irresistible, powerful, strong** *There came to him an irresistible impulse to pray.*
- ▶ natural **natural, primitive, spontaneous** *Our natural impulses can be altruistic and cooperative as well as selfish.*
- ▶ violent, destructive **aggressive, anarchic, destructive, murderous, sadistic, self-destructive, suicidal, violent** *His life is a constant struggle to control his destructive impulses.*
- ▶ generous **charitable, generous** *On a generous impulse he gave the man his coat.*
- ▶ creative **artistic, creative** *The exhibition is a celebration of the creative impulse, which we all possess but which is so often stifled.*
- ▶ not rational **contradictory, irrational** *She will always be a woman of contradictory impulses.*
- ▶ not expressed **repressed** *Hidden motives, repressed impulses, and secret passions are revealed in the course of the play.*
- v+N have an impulse **feel, have** *He felt an impulse to assist her.*
- ▶ fight an impulse **control, fight, repress, resist, restrain** *She resisted the impulse to give him a hug.*
- ▶ obey an impulse **follow, obey** *What I really want to do is just obey my own impulses.*

inability N

the fact that you cannot do something

- adj+N complete **complete, sheer, total, utter** *What this indicates is their utter inability to deal with any policy issue.*
- ▶ apparent **apparent, seeming** *He deplors humanity's seeming inability to love selflessly.*
- ▶ very bad or unfortunate **chronic, pathological, woeful** *There is a woeful inability to learn from past experience.*
- v+N show inability **demonstrate, highlight, prove, reflect, reveal, show** *This simply demonstrates an inability to work together effectively.*
- ▶ overcome inability **overcome** *Helen Keller was a deaf and blind girl who overcame her inability to communicate.*

inaccurate ADJ

not accurate or correct

- adv+ADJ very **completely, grossly, highly, hopelessly, totally, very, wholly, wildly** *Many of the*

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