Preface to the

*BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English: Your Guide to Collocations and Grammar*

Third Edition

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To use language you must be able to combine words with other words to form phrases and to combine words into grammatical patterns to form clauses and sentences. Traditionally, the combination of words with words has been called collocation and its result has been called phraseology. Traditionally, the combination of words into grammatical patterns has been called collocation or complementation or construction (though in BBI it is called collocation, too) and its result has been called valency. A dictionary that provides both phraseology and valency is a dictionary of word combinations; or, in the terminology of Igor Melchuk, whose work has inspired us, a combinatory or combinatorial dictionary. BBI is a combinatory dictionary.

Consider the sentence *I badly want to go there.* It offers you the phraseological information that the verb *want* can be intensified by the word *badly*. It offers you also the valency information that the verb *want* can take the pattern *to* + infinitive.

BBI offers such information about many types of words. It tells you that *since* collocates with *ever* (*I married her and we’ve been happy ever since*) and with *long* (*a custom long since abandoned*). It tells you that *reveal, revelation*, and *let on* can all take the pattern *that* + clause (*Don’t ¬reveal/let on¬ that you know the answer, or your revelation that you know the answer may disturb everyone.*) (where the occasional symbols ¬…/…¬ couple *let on* (two words) with *reveal* (one word) as alternatives). And so on. And so forth.

BBI offers that information by means of Codes (see our Introduction), Exemplification, and Discussion (as in Usage Notes).

In BBI 3, examples may be repeated at more than one word to show a particularly close or memorable relation between the words exemplified. Thus, we offer the example (*shock* and *awe*) at both *awe* and *shock*. And the famous phrase (“With malice toward none; with charity for all” — Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address,” 1865) appears as an example at both *charity* and *malice*. That shows also how BBI 3 offers examples of real English attributed to their real authors. Such authentic attributed examples help to motivate language-learners — as they would most certainly motivate me!
Moreover, in BBI 3, examples may be transformed to exhibit the relation between the words exemplified. Thus we offer:

- **vex** v. ...It *vexes* me greatly to read such things in the newspapers ...
- **vexation** n. ...my great *vexation* to read such things in the newspapers ...
- **vexed** adj. ...I’m very *vexed* to read such things in the newspapers ...
- **vexing** adj. ...It is very *vexing* to read such things in the newspapers ...

Furthermore, in BBI 3, examples may be combined to create mini-dialogues. Thus at *account*** v. we offer ("...“how do you *account* for the accident?” “it can be partly *accounted* for by the bad weather.”)

The repetition, transformation, and combination of examples help to knit the many entries of BBI together and to enable people to adjust their use of words appropriately to contexts.

The Usage Notes in BBI 3 allow a freer and more discursive explanation of language problems. Thus, the Usage Note at *thanks* not only offers the most typical responses to *thanks* and *thank you*, but also assesses those responses for their currency (is a response used throughout the English-speaking world or only in a part of it?) and contemporaneity (is a response up-to-date or old-fashioned?).

For a work to help people to use a cosmopolitan language, it is essential to specify where possible the range of acceptability of the items entered in the work. Thus, at *thanks*, our Usage Note specifies that the response “You’re welcome” is nowadays Common English (despite its probable American origin) whereas the response “Don’t mention it” is somewhat old-fashioned British English. Similarly, at *omit* we say that though the collocation in the example (she *omitted* his name from the list.) is Common English, the collication in the example (he *omitted* to explain why he had been late.) is chiefly British English rather than American English. In fact, the treatment of American-British differences in BBI 3 is one of its most important features.

Where come the entries in BBI 3? They are several thousand of the items that Morton Benson, Evelyn Benson, and I have found of most value in using our native language, English, and in seeking equivalents for when using other languages.

Where come the collocations and culligations offered in BBI 3 about those entries? From the authors’ intuition, supported by their reading of and listening to contemporary English and by consultation with such valued colleagues as Ms Janet Whitcut and Dr John Kahn. Nowadays, our task is eased not only by the availability of corpuses of contemporary English (such as the British National Corpus) but also by the amazing resource of the Internet itself, which enables us to search in it for a word and find superb examples of that word in context. Nor should it be forgotten that an important source of new information in BBI 3 is, paradoxically, BBI 2, now that the computer allows material from an entry in BBI 2 to be added to other entries in BBI 3 where such material is appropriate.

But the items that occur to us or that we find are passed through the filter of standard lists of complementation patterns in such works as *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* by Randolph Quirk et al. and of collocations (as in the lists...
How Entries are Structured in the BBI
A Visual Guide

appointment n. [agreement to meet] 1. a follow-up; outpatient – 2. to have; keep; give, make, schedule an – (with) (the hospital gave me a follow-up outpatient – with their cardiologist) 3. to break; cancel; miss an – 4. by – (she sees patients by only) 5. an – to + inf. (she had an – to see the dean) [selection] 6. to confirm; make an – 7. to block an – 8. an – to (we announced her – to the committee) [position] 9. an – as 10. to offer an – (we offered her an – as treasurer) 11. to have, hold; receive an – 12. an interim; permanent; temporary – 13. a political – [designation] 14. by – to Her Majesty

Usage Note: The phrases concerned about, concerned over, and, less frequently, concerned for mean “worried about” (concerned about your safety). The phrase concerned with means “interested in” (concerned with establishing the truth).
How Entries are Structured in the BBI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used only in American English</th>
<th>Used only in British English</th>
<th>Illustrative phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>meat n. 1. to barbecue; broil (AE), grill; cook; cure (fry, roast), roast; sear; stew  2. to carve, cut, slice  3. dark; red; white  4. fatty; lean  5. raw; tender; tough  6. halal; kosher  7. canned (AE), tinned (BE); fresh; frozen  8. boned; chopped (AE), ground (AE), minced (BE); soup  9. go bad, spoil  10. a cut, joint, piece; slice of  11. (misc.) off the bone; on the bone</td>
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</tr>
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<td>excited adj. 1. about, at, by, over (she got ~ about the news that they were coming) 2. to ~ inf. (she was ~ to learn that they were coming) 3. that + clause (she was ~ that they were coming)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Compound verb</th>
<th>Definition of verb in parentheses and double quotation marks</th>
<th>Verb patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>come out v. (d; intr.) to ~ against (“to oppose”)  2. (d; intr.) to ~ for, in favor of (“to support”) (to ~ for a proposal)  3. (d; intr.) to ~ for (“to try out for”) (are you ~ing out for the team?)  4. (d; intr.) to ~ with (“to make known; to publish”) (to ~ with a new book; to ~ with the truth)  5. (d) it came out that he had cheated  6. (d; intr.) (“to end up, result”) to ~ on top (“to be victorious”)  7. (d) the pictures came out fine  8. (misc.) to ~ in spots (“to be covered with spots as a result of illness”); they came out from behind the bushes; she meant it as a compliment, but it came out as an insult; she finally came out openly as a liberal</td>
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computer; radar; television. TV ~ 3. a smoke ~ (often fig.) (to lay down/up/put up/throw up/use~), a smoke ~ of obfuscation to conceal the truth ~ 4. the big, silver ~ (in the movies). 5. the small ~ (TV) ~ 6. a blank ~. 7. a ~ between 8. on a ~ (there was no picture on the TV ~) 9. (misc.) to clear a ~ (as on a computer). actors who are on-screen enemies but off-screen friends

screen II v. 1. (D; intr., tr.) to ~ for (to ~ for cancer) 2. (d; tr.) to ~ from (they ~d the bed from the rest of the ward)

screening n. 1. to do a ~ 2. (a; adj; ~) ~ 3. ~ 3. a computer ; radar ; television, TV ~ 3. a smoke ~ of obfuscation to conceal the truth ~ 4. open to ~ 5. under ~ (under constant ~; to come under ~)

scud v. (P; intr.) to ~ across the sky

scuffle I n. 1. to get into a ~ 2. (with) ~ 3. an abstract ~ of modern ~ 5. a piece of ~

scuffle II v. (D; intr.) to ~ about, over; with

sculpt v. see sculpture II v.

sculpted adj. see sculptured

sculpture I n. 1. to create, do, produce a ~ 2. to cast ~ 3. an abstract ~ of modern ~ 5. a piece of ~

sculpture II v. 1. (d; tr.) to ~ into (I ~d the stone into a figure) 2. (d; tr.) to ~ from, out of (I ~d a figure from the stone)

sculptured adj. ~ in; out of (~ in stone; ~ from stone)

scurry v. 1. (d; intr.) to ~ for (to ~ for cover) 2. (P; intr.) to ~ along the street 3. (misc.) we ~d (in order) to find cover

sea n. 1. to sail the ~ 2. a calm, smooth; choppy, heavy, high, raging, rough, stormy, turbulent ~ 3. the deep; open ~ 4. at (buried at ~) ~ 5. (esp. BE) by ~ (a holiday by the ~) 6. (misc.) (at) the bottom of the ~; to drift out to ~; to go to ~ ("to become a sailor") ; to put out to ~; (all) at ~ ("bewildered") ~ 7. I couldn't recognize her in the ~ of faces in the auditorium (see also seas)

seaboard n. (esp. AE) 1. the eastern ~ (of the U.S.A.) 2. along; down; on; up the (eastern) ~

seal I n. ["sea mammal"] 1. ~s bark 2. a colony, pod of ~s 3. a young ~ is a pup 4. a female ~ is a cow 5. a ~ is a bull

seal II n. ["piece of molten wax"] 1. a privy; wax ~ "[closet]" 2. to break a ~ 3. a hermetic ~ ["stamp, symbol"] 4. to affix a ~ of official; royal ~ 6. a ~ of approval (they get/received the official ~ of approval)

seal III n. 1. a colony of ~s 2. a young ~ is a pup 3. a female ~ is a cow 4. a male ~ is a bull

seal off v. (D; tr.) to ~ from

seam n. 1. to let out; rip open, tear open a ~ 2. (misc.) to be bursting at the ~ (also fig.) ; to come apart at the ~ (also fig.)

seamman n. an able, able-bodied; junior (BE), ordinary; merchant ~

seance n. 1. to conduct, hold a ~ 2. at ~

seaport n. a bustling, busy ~

search I v. 1. (D; intr.) to ~ securely; tightly; together (to ~ securely) 2. (d; tr.) to ~ securely; tightly; together (to ~ securely) 3. to do a ~ (they did a ~ on her)

search II n. 1. to do a ~ 2. (a; adj; ~) ~ 3. ~ 3. a computer ; radar ; television, TV ~ 3. a smoke ~ of obfuscation to conceal the truth ~ 4. open to ~ 5. under ~ (under constant ~; to come under ~)

scruple adj. ~ 1. a cigarette from me)

~ 2. (to wheedle) to ~ from (they ~d the text thoroughly for errors)

scribble v. 1. (A) she ~d a note to me; or she ~d a note to me. 2. (D; tr.) to ~ with (to ~ with a pencil)

scrip v. 1. (D; intr.) ("to be frugal") to ~ on (~ on food) 2. (misc.) to ~; and save

script n. ["alphabet"] 1. cuneiform; phonetic ~ (transcribed in phonetic ~) ["text"] 2. a film ~ (wrote a film ~ for a major Hollywood studio)

Scriptures n. the Holy ~ (to be found in the Holy ~)

scrounge v. (coll) (D; intr.) ("to scavenge") to ~ for 2. (D; tr.) ("to wheedle") to ~ from, off the ~ (a cigarette from me)

scrounge around v. (coll) (D; intr.) ("to scavenge") to ~ for

scrub v. 1. (D; tr.) to ~ at (we ~d the table until they were clean of dirt) 2. (N; used with an adjective) we ~d the tables clean of dirt

scuff n. (to take snb.) by the ~ of the neck

scruples n. 1. to have; overcome ~ 2. moral; religious ~ 3. ~ (about she had moral ~ about referring to her opponent in public)

scrupulous adj. ~ in (she was ~ in avoiding references to her opponent in public)

scrutinize v. 1. to ~ closely, intently, thoroughly 2. (D; tr.) to ~ for (we ~d the text thoroughly for errors)

scrutiny n. 1. to bear ~ (his record will not bear close ~) 2. to subject smt. to ~. 3. close, intense, strict, thorough; constant; public ~ (we've subjected the text to thorough ~ for errors) 4. open to ~ 5. under ~ (under constant ~; to come under ~)

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~ for (the ~ for truth) 9. in ~ of 10. (misc.) (legal)
unwarranted – and seizure
second I v. 1. to – carefully, painstakingly, system-
atically, thoroughly 2. to – all over, everywhere, 
high and low 3. (D; intr.) to – for (to ~ for a lost 
child) 4. (D; intr.) to – through (she ~ed through her 
purse for the keys and then ~ed through it again)
searching n. online ~
searchlight n. 1. to direct, focus, shine ~ and ~ed 
play on (a wall)
search party n. to organize; send out a ~
searched adj. – in, into (that day is ~ into my 
memory)
sea n. 1. the high ~ (on the high ~) 2. see 
sea 2.; calm, smooth; choppy, etc. ~
seashore n. at the ~
seasick adj. to get; feel ~
seasider n. (BE) at, by the ~ (a holiday at the 
~ = a ~ holiday) (esp. AE has seasideshore, shore)
season I n. 1. to open, usher in (the ~) 2. to close, 
usher out the (a) ~ 3. the dead, low, off, slack ~ 
4. the high ~ 5. (sports) the baseball; basketball; 
fishing; football; hunting; open ~ 6. the dry ; hurr-
icane; monsoon; rainy ~ 7. the Christmas, festive; 
holiday; tourist ~ 9. the breeding, mating, rutting 
~ 10. at a ~ (at that ~ of the year) 11. in ~; out of ~ 12. (misc.) the height 
~ of _ (~ in English) (see also 
second II n. 1. one who ranks after the first;] 1. a close 
~ assistant] 2. a ~ to smb. 3. (misc.) ~ away (in 
wrestling); ~ out! (in boxing) [~ second gear] 4. to 
put (a vehicle) into ~ 5. in ~ (the car’s in ~; don’t 
start in ~) [“vote of endorsement”] 6. (do I hear) a ~ 
to (the motion?) 7. (undergraduate second-class hon-
sors degree at a British university] 7. to get a ~ 8. a 
lower (2.2); upper (2.1) ~ 9. a ~ in (to get an upper 
– in English] (see also 
seal v. 1. (D; tr.) to ~ with (we will ~ the salad 
British Council to a university) temporarily”) to ~ from ; to (she was ~ed from the 
Confederacy) tried to ~ from the USA) 5. in ~ (to meet in ~ ; 
ask for ~ 2. to offer ~ 3. (misc.) who wants ~ ? = 
ours degree at a British university”] 
second class adv. to travel ~
second-class n. [“subordinate role”] to play ~ to 
second hand n. at ~ (“indirectly”) 
second place n. to take ~ to her personal life took 
to her job] 3. to keep ~ at ~ (“indirectly”) 
secret II v. 1. to (~ for none) [“placing 
after the first”] 2. to come (in), finish, place ~ in (a 
race) 3. the ~ to + inf. (she was the ~ to arrive and 
among the last to leave)
secede v. (D; intr.) to ~ from (a township cannot 
~ from a county; there was a Civil War when the 
Confederacy tried to ~ from the USA)
second adj. [“inferior”] 1. – to (~ to none) [“placing 
after the first”] 2. to come (in), finish, place ~ in (a 
race) 3. the ~ to + inf. (she was the ~ to arrive and 
among the last to leave)
second II n. – from (the Confederacy’s attempted ~ 
from the USA) 
seclusion n. in ~ 
secede v. (D; refl., tr.) to – from 
seclude v. (D; refl., tr.) to – from
secret adj. 1. to make a ~ of smt. ; to make no ~ 
of smt. (they made no ~ of the fact that they were
The **BBI** helps to cope with the combination of words into phrases, sentences, and texts.

These recurrent, semi-fixed combinations, or **collocations**, can be divided into two groups: **grammatical collocations** and **lexical collocations**. Grammatical collocations consist of a dominant word – noun, adjective/participle, verb – and a preposition or a grammatical construction. Lexical collocations, on the other hand, do not have a dominant word; they have structures such as the following: verb + noun, adjective + noun, noun + verb, noun + noun, adverb + adjective, adverb + verb. The **BBI** is a specialised dictionary designed to help learners of English find collocations quickly and easily.

The **BBI** helps you with both vocabulary and grammar.

The **BBI** shows you important vocabulary and grammatical differences between American and British English.

The **BBI** gives you plenty of examples that are authentic quotations from works of American and British literature that can serve as models for your own use of English.

The **BBI** has been “highly recommended” by the English-Speaking Union.

This Third Edition of the **BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English** is an expanded and updated version of the First Edition (1986) and its New Printing (1993), both of which were favourably received. In this Third Edition, the contents of the **BBI** have been increased by over 20%.

In the selection and presentation of new material, many sources have been used, including: Internet searches; The British National Corpus; Reading and listening to English-language material; For Grammatical Patterns: *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Randolph Quirk et al.); For Collocations: Lists of Lexical Functions (compiled by Igor Melchuk et al.).

Using the **BBI**: A workbook with exercises is now available online at: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/z.bbi.workbook](http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/z.bbi.workbook)