

Robert: Hello. Hello. Hello. It's me again. Robert Buckingham. How are you all you people out there studying for IELTS? What have you been up to recently? Have you been checking out all the things they've got to offer on the website on ieltspodcast.com, your free IELTS materials and also the excellent feedback you can get. Get into those special sections on vocabulary particular ones connected to writing tasks 2 and how you can organize your essays.

It's something I've been thinking about a lot recently as well as something I was talking to you about recently if you heard me on that one, the first one I gave on collocations; how important they are and what are they. Did I mention the seven different types of collocations and I think I added another one too to make no. 8 kind of those long fixed expressions.

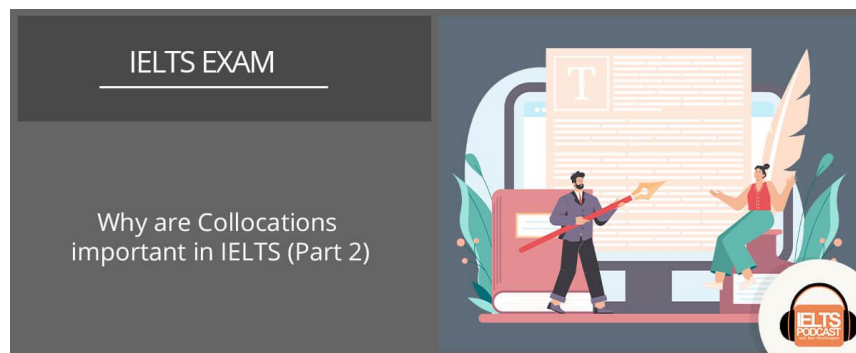
Well, today the topic I've-- well, I've given a title to it. This is the title. We like titles, don't we? It's simple. Collocations in IELTS. Big title. What does it really mean? Well, I've got a couple of examples, two pretty simple examples actually because it makes life nice for us if we see it



through a very clear simple example just to show you how vital collocations are, not only in the more productive parts of the test.

By productive I mean when you're speaking and when you're writing, but also they play a very important role in the listening and reading exams. Just take an example from a reading test. I didn't mean reading. I made a mistake. I'm sorry. I meant in the listening test. I was still looking at the word reading and thinking of reading. The listening test.

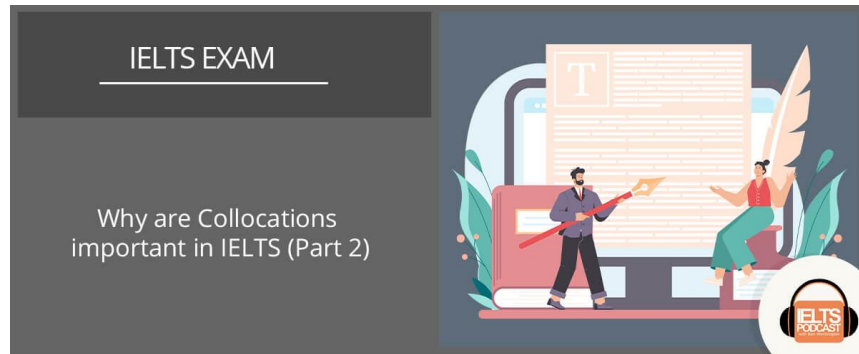
I don't know if you know this series. There's an official series published by Cambridge University Press on IELTS. They are sets of exams. Try them out. They're very good practice before you take the test. This is from the IELTS 14. It goes right up from no. 1. I think now they've reached no. 15. This is quite a recent one. The IELTS 14th set of practice exams from test 1 listening 2 questions 11 and 12. Lots of detail there.



Remember the 2nd listening in all IELTS exams is that kind of monologue. A monologue when just one person of course is talking to an imaginary or is usually describing something. Now, in this particular case, what is it? It's a woman but you have to put up with my voice. I'm going to imitate her voice.

On the tape it's a woman giving an induction talk to a group of new apprentices at a factory. She is the head of the human resources department and is talking to a group of young people who are going to do a six-month apprenticeship at the factory.

She begins talking and the first two questions in the exam they ask you which refer to the second paragraph actually of the script are these: it says questions 11 and 12. You can see this later when you check this out in the printed version of this talk, but I'll read it out to you now very slowly, okay?



It says choose two letters a) to e) with this question. Which two pieces of advice for the first week of an apprenticeship does the manager give? Which two pieces of advice does she give? a) Get to know colleagues. b) Learn from any mistakes. c) Ask lots of questions. d) React positively to feedback. And the final one e) enjoy new challenges.

That type of question, a kind of multiple choice of that type of two from five. Sometimes it's three from five. It's a little bit different to your normal multiple choice question where you have a series of questions and you get four choices: a, b, c, d. This is a two from five type of question. Two are correct, three are not.

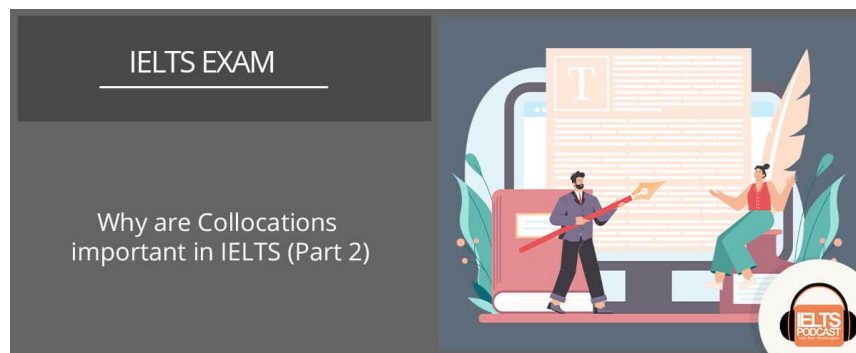
Now, of course the questions if I look at them again very briefly they are full of collocations. We can't avoid them. They are everywhere. Every time we look and speak and listen and open our mouths we are collocating. Listen, here we've got advice which collocates with give. Which two pieces of advice does the.... give? They're separated by lots of words, but give advice are very closely related together in our heads.



And then in these questions a) get to know. Get to know someone. b) Learn from. Learn from mistakes. c) Ask questions. Lots of questions. All of those four words collocate together. Ask lots of questions. d) React. How? Adverb. Positively to something. React positively to something. A positive reaction. And of course we can think of the opposite; a negative reaction.

Remember what I talked in the other podcast if you heard me that time. Adverb with verb, adjective with noun, adverb with adjective. React positively. A positive reaction, etc. And then the final one, challenges. New challenges. And of course, enjoy. That is pretty well associated with challenges. Oh, it's a challenge, but are you enjoying the challenge? Yes. I'm up for it. I'm enjoying the challenge. So, it's a verb we closely associate with challenge as well as the adjective new. Closely associated with challenge.

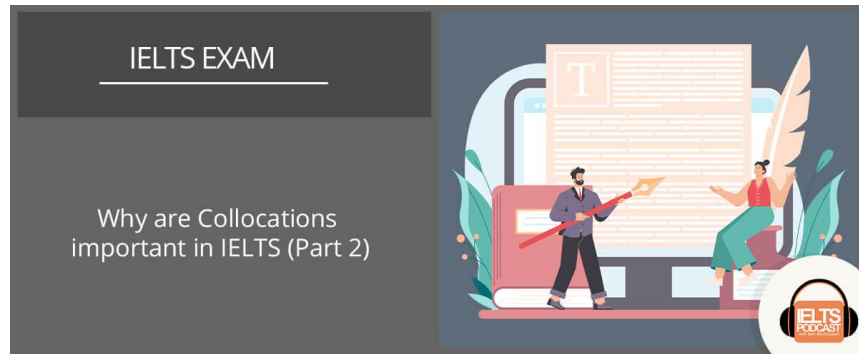
So, all of these of course before we hear the talk from the human resources manager are pretty possible, aren't they? All of them sound good. All of them sound pretty good, but if you hear me



now, I'm going to read the relevant part, only that part of the script which refers to that plus of course the introduction to it which is very short. Listen to this.

If you like, I can read it twice, but I think once is enough because I'm going to read it quite slowly and perhaps emphasize, over-emphasize the options we've got, the correct options because this is not a test. This is just playing around and practicing and listening for collocations, isn't it? Okay. I'm going to read it and you're going to feel that yes, yes, I get it. I can see that the correct answers those collocations are connected to other expressions, other collocations which are similar in meaning in the script itself.

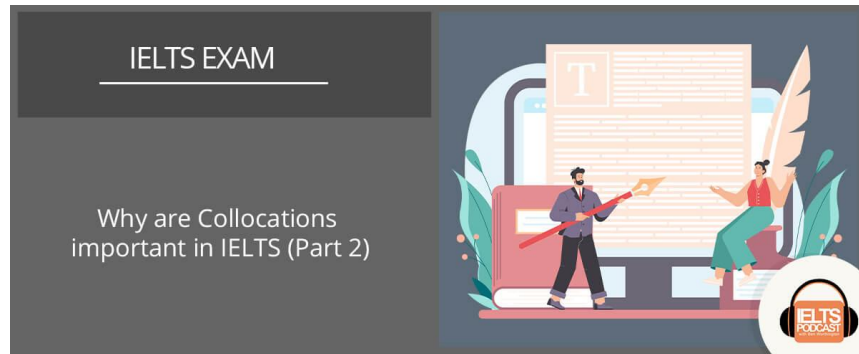
Remember the importance not only of collocations, but also of paraphrasing, synonyms, antonyms, saying things in the same way, saying something in a different way. Wow! These things are vital for any language learner and especially for the IELTS exam. It really is the key to an awful lot of stuff. Okay. Give me a second. Let me find this. I've got it here. Okay. Here we



go. I'm pretending my name is Janet Parker. I'm not going to speak in a high voice, but just understand that I'm not Janet Parker. I'm Rob, okay?

Good morning, everyone. Good morning, everyone. My name is Janet Parker and I'm the human resources manager. We're very happy to welcome you to your new apprenticeship. I hope that the next six months will be a positive and enjoyable experience for you. I'd like to start with some general advice about being an apprentice.

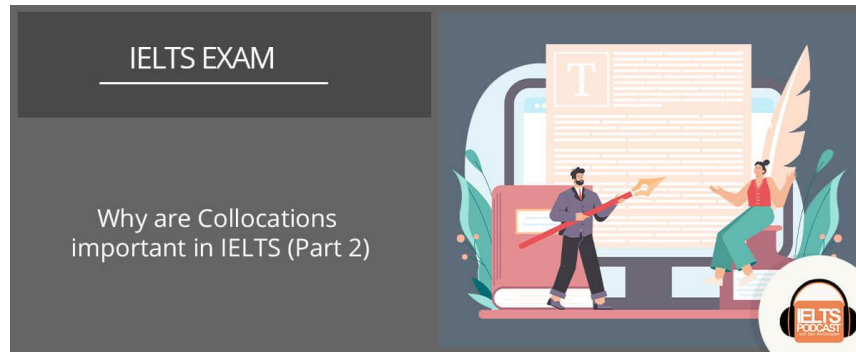
Most of you have very little or no experience of working for a big organization and the first week or so may be quite challenging. There will be a lot of new information to take in, but don't worry too much about trying to remember everything. The important thing is to check with someone if you're not sure what to do. You'll find your supervisor is very approachable and won't mind explaining things or helping you out. You're here to learn, so make the most of that opportunity.



You'll be spending time in different departments during your first week. So, make an effort to talk to as many people as possible about their work. You'll make some new friends and find out lots of useful information.

Goodness me. That's it. Two paragraphs, about six or seven lines of text. So full of very interesting expressions actually. Collocations. We could spend 24 hours discussing that paragraph and analyzing all those expressions and collocations there, but let's think of what we've got.

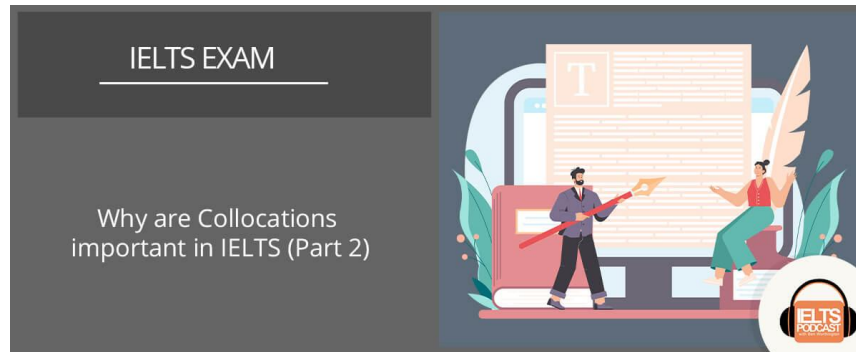
This is not a natural way to do this because of course in the exam you would see the questions in front of you and you would be listening, but we're not doing that. We're just listening, aren't we? And it's a little bit different, but if we go back to those questions, we've got remember the options. What were they?



Option a) was get to know colleagues. Was there anything there that you thought yes, get to know colleagues. Get to know colleagues. Learn from any mistakes. Did she talk about mistakes? She did say you're here to learn, but I don't think she talked about learning from mistakes.

Ask lots of questions. Did she talk about questioning, about asking questions? I think she did. Let's check that in a minute. React positively to feedback. Was there any mention of feedback? Not in an explicit way, was there? I don't think so.

Enjoy new challenges. Well, she did mention challenges. She said something like the first week will be challenging or quite challenging. Why? Because it's new. Probably if they are apprentices, they're probably very young I imagine, just left school or something and so they don't have any experience of work or very little experience of work and so obviously, everything will be new, everything will be challenging.

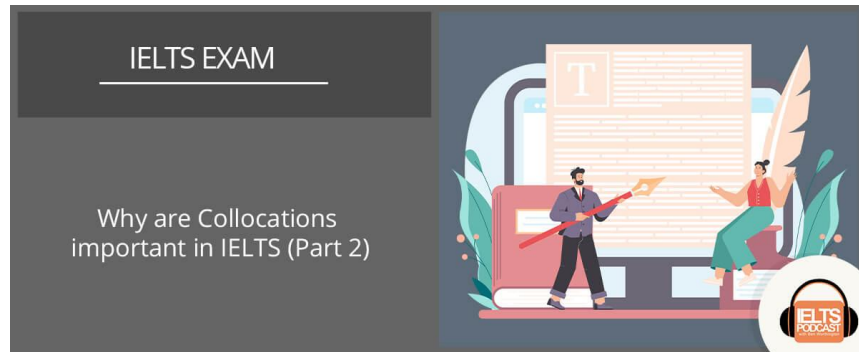


So, what would you think in those contexts? Even if we didn't have the text in front of us or hearing that script, probably you would think what's the most important thing to do when you start a new job? Ask questions. If you have any doubts, ask me. Ask your boss. Ask the supervisor. Ask somebody, please.

And then of course maybe it's also pretty important to keep smiling, keep talking, keep listening, get to know people some way that we learn as well, isn't it? So, in fact, the correct answers are a) get to know colleagues and c) ask lots of questions. Why?

Let's go back again to the original text or the script and listen to this advice again. She says most of you have very little or no experience of working for a big organization and the first week or so may be quite challenging. Oh, dear.

There will be a lot of new information to take in, but don't worry too much about trying to remember everything. The important thing is to check with someone if you're not sure what to

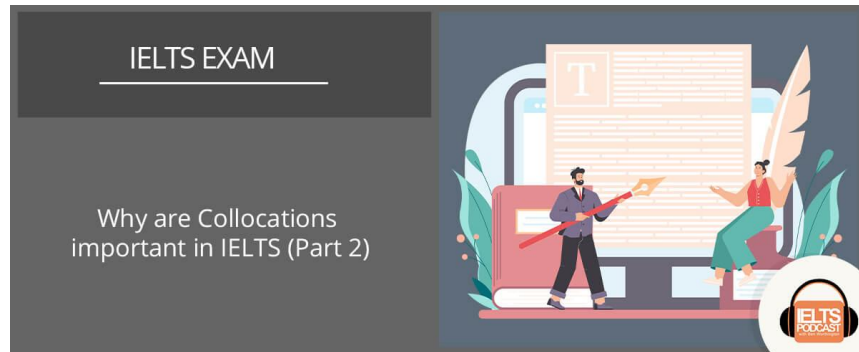


do. Check with someone if you're not so sure what to do. In other words, ask lots of questions. Ask lots of questions. Ask lots of questions.

You'll find your supervisor is very approachable and won't mind explaining things or helping you out. So, the supervisor will explain, but first ask the question. Check with him or her, okay? You're here to learn so make most of that opportunity.

You'll be spending time in different departments during your first week. Different departments. So, make an effort to talk to as many people as possible about their work. Get to know people. Get to know your colleagues and also of course ask questions. You'll make some new friends and find out lots of useful information.

That last expression, that last combination of two things at the end of that paragraph; you'll make some new friends and find out lots of useful information. They really kind of summarize the whole thing, don't they? The answer to those two questions.



Okay. If we look at that from an analytical grammar point of view or vocabulary point of view, of course, yes. It all depends on what I understand when I listen, my knowledge of expressions, my knowledge of the meaning of words, of collocations in particular. How words combine and how those combinations have particular meanings and how we can say those meanings in different ways.

Just check with somebody. In other words, just ask someone. Ask lots of questions. Yes, you're working in different departments, so yes, wherever you go talk to as many people as possible. Talk to many people. Get to know people. We get to know people through talking usually, okay?

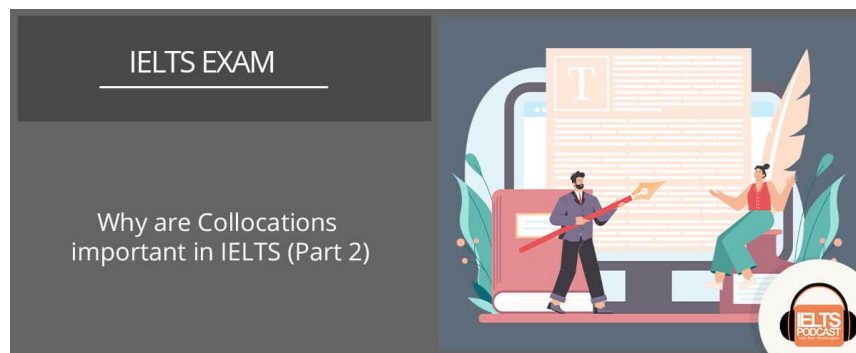
So, in the listening as well as of course in reading which we're not going into it today although I did say reading. I didn't really mean it. We can see how these things are so important; the paraphrasing of it and the use of collocations.



Okay. Pause for a moment. Let's move on. Let's talk about the more productive part of the test. Let's go back to writing, Writing Task 2. If we take any writing topic, what I've chosen because it's easier if you've been listening to me of late because I think I talked a while ago about a Task 2 topic and about the importance of vocabulary and I'm taking that topic again.

Remember it was-- the one I took from the IELTS Podcast file there that has got a lot of information on recent topics and I think this came from January was it? January this year? January 2022, yes it was. Yes. So, not long ago and this was the title of that task. Remember? In many countries, plastic shopping bags are the main source of rubbish. They cause water and land pollution and so they should be banned. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Now, remember what I did before with that thinking of the planning stage of the essay is very important, two or three or four minutes planning stage at the beginning was to note the key words and I was cheating using an online dictionary and a little bit of help from Google. I got all the following. These were my important words. Let me go through them again very quickly:

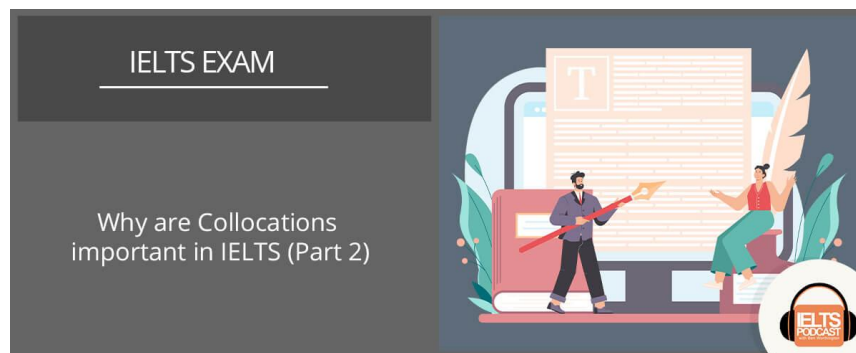


bags, plastic bags, rubbish, source, pollution, and banned. They were the five key words. Plastic bags, rubbish, source, pollution, banned.

And then according to those basic key words was some other words associated with each. I got these synonyms and these kind of collocations as well. For example, plastic bags. I got chemicals released, chemicals released into the atmosphere or into the water, non-gradable or biodegradable is the opposite. They don't disappear easily, do they? They're not gradable. And of course the negative impact to the environment, the threat to humans, fish, society, etc.

The next was rubbish. I also got some synonyms there like garbage or the very general word waste. I thought of disposal, the disposal of waste or to dispose of waste or throw out, throw away-- some different verbs to describe what we do with our waste products.

I took the word source and thought well, it's very similar to origin or cause. I can also use cause as a verb and say the course of and then I thought well, lots of good adjectives collocate very

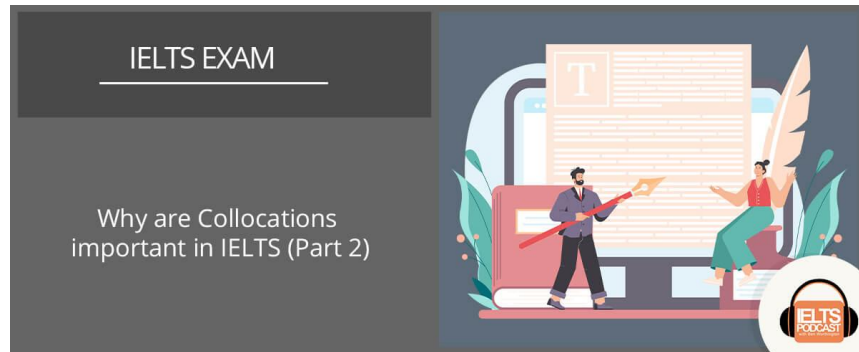


closely with cause. For example, major cause, a major course of ... is or principle cause of, main, major, principle course of.

And then of course a big word like pollution which we could also say contamination or verbs would be pollute, to contaminate. We could think of adjectives: a pollutant, a contaminant. We could think of course in more general terms of the environment; use environment as an adjective and talk about environmental contamination, environmental pollution.

I can get very common verbs associated with these topics and use for example to destroy. Destroy the environment, harm the environment, destroy the natural habitat of fish, animals, or whatever it's going to be.

And so I'm building up words. These are not isolated words. I'm really beginning to think and I'm getting halfway there because well, I've got banned to come, but I'm already thinking how do these words combine together? How can I get them all together? For example, with ban or

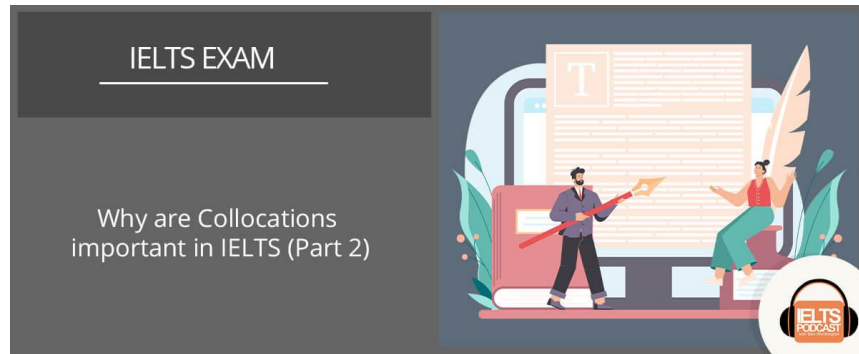


banned from my key words I've got a synonym prohibited. I could think of the nouns: a ban, a stop, a halt, a halt to and I can think of a halt, a ban, a stop to what? The manufacture of bags, the sale of bags.

Or do I really want to ban things, prohibit them 100%? I could also cut production, cut sales, reduce the sale of. And coming back to ban, I can think of an adjective associated with ban which means 100% ban. A total ban. Yes, that's my favorite one there. We use that a lot, don't we? A total ban on the sale of.

So, I'm already collecting things. Are you beginning to see what I'm saying? These key words are already forming collocations in my head and on paper too of course in the exam. They're giving me the very basis not only of my essay, but also of the sentences I will write.

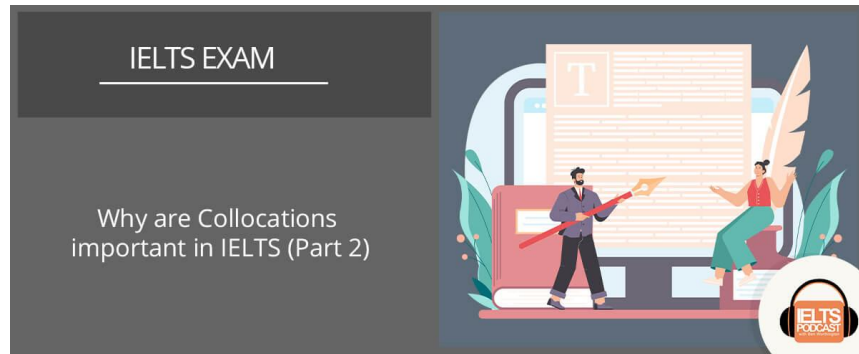
This is the big difference between when we can use a language fluently and well compared to when we are struggling with a new language, when we don't have the words to say what we want



to say because when we know what we want to say, when we have the words and the collocations and the expressions as well as of course something we're not talking about today, the grammatical structures and those rules which are also important, then I'm almost there because as I start writing or speaking, the words flow naturally because I've made my choices.

It's not as if at every moment I've got so many choices. I don't. It's when we think we have the choices it really means that we're lost. We don't know what to say because we don't know what choice to make. We don't have them available to us because we simply don't know the words. That's when we begin learning another language and we're going and people are saying what do you want to say? I don't know. I don't know the words.

Take for example what I've got here. It's an introductory sentence that paraphrases the question and also puts forward my position. Remember this is pretty important in these things, okay, in this type of essay, to what extent do you agree with the statement. I'm going to paraphrase the

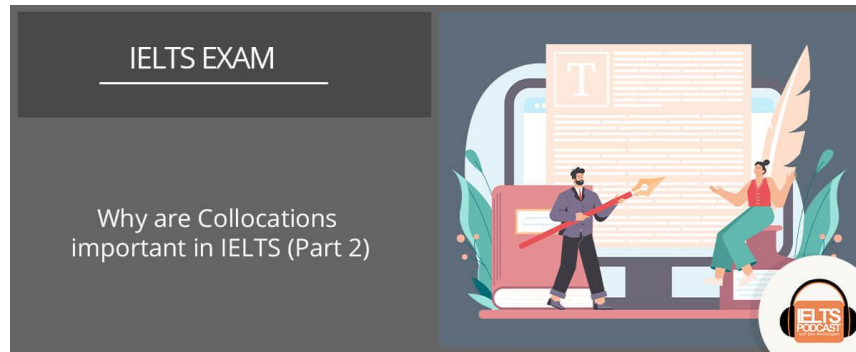


question and then give my opinion and I've done it like this. And see how almost everything here is a collection of collocations. Listen.

One of the main sources of environmental pollution is the disposal of plastic waste in particular plastic bags into rivers, seas, and oceans as well as on land. There are strong arguments in favor of placing a total ban on the sale of such bags something which I am in total agreement with.

I've just noticed I've used the word total twice. I'm not happy about that. I didn't see that before. Never mind. Never mind. We can look again and maybe think of changing my second total. Oh, I don't know. It's difficult one that one. Listen again and this time I'm going to read it and remind you of the collocations. Here we go.

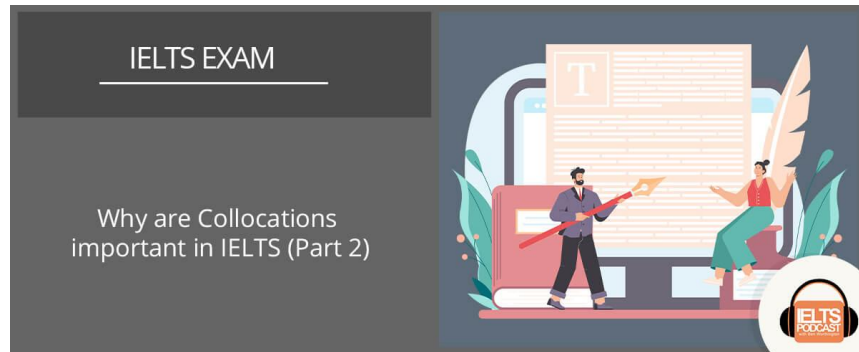
One of the main sources of-- the main sources of. One of them. One of the main sources of environmental pollution-- adjective + noun-- is the disposal of plastic waste. Noun, preposition,



other noun group with an adjective and a noun plastic using as an adjective. The disposal of plastic waste in particular plastic bags into rivers, seas, and oceans as well as on land.

And then I've got something I haven't mentioned before, the idea of arguments and argument collocates with an adjective like strong. I could also perhaps use good. I think strong is better than good because good is-- well, there are good arguments. It's a good argument. But strong argument suggests yes, maybe an even better one would be convincing. There are convincing arguments. But if you want to convince somebody, I think your arguments really should be very, very strong don't you think so?

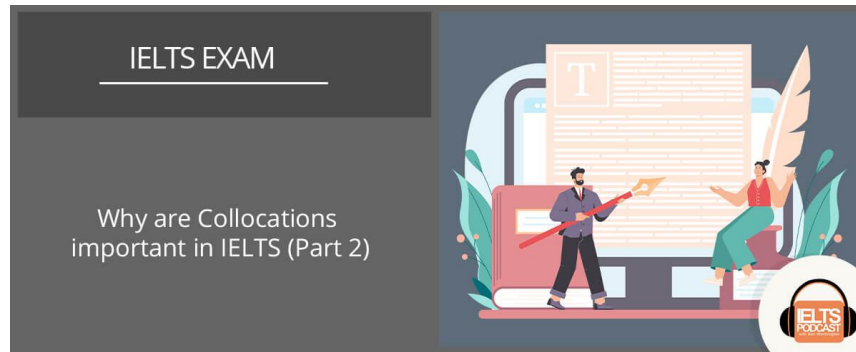
There are strong arguments in favor of placing. So, we place a ban. We place a ban. We put a ban. We place a ban. I like it. There are strong arguments in favor of placing a total ban. I want 100% ban, everything banned. A total ban on the sale of such bags. A total ban on the sale of.



All those little words go together in one breath as if they were always together. They're not always together, but if I see them together, I'm not surprised at all. A total ban on the sale of. I can make some changes. A partial ban on the manufacture of. A total ban on the use of. I can change some of those words, of course, but the basic pattern is pretty established, isn't it?

And then I'm talking about how I stand with regard to this and I'm saying something which I am in total agreement with. I am in total agreement with. Total again collocates very strongly with the noun agreement. Are you in agreement? Totally. I am in total agreement with you. I am 100% agreed with you.

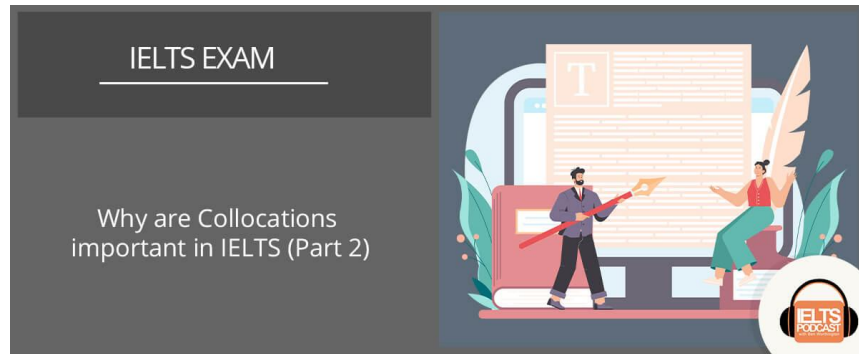
Okay. Now, what I'm saying really here is again this. In essence, those two sentences I wrote practically wrote themselves. Okay. I had a few choices, obviously. I could have written contamination instead of pollution or principle instead of main and why not begin the second sentence when I said there are strong arguments in favor? I could have said something like there



are those that believe that the sale of plastic bags should be prohibited. Why not? Why not? Why not?

I just didn't. That's all. I made my choices. I have my choices. The other choices are made for me from my knowledge of the language on the topic I'm writing about. That's all, but once I decide what word or combination of words to use, those that follow on from it come quite naturally. The choices are limited by the context and also by the grammar of course. The grammar helps me there. I know like what have we got there? Let me just go back a second. Where is it? I think I wrote something like this, wasn't it? Let me see here. Oh, yes, of course. Yes.

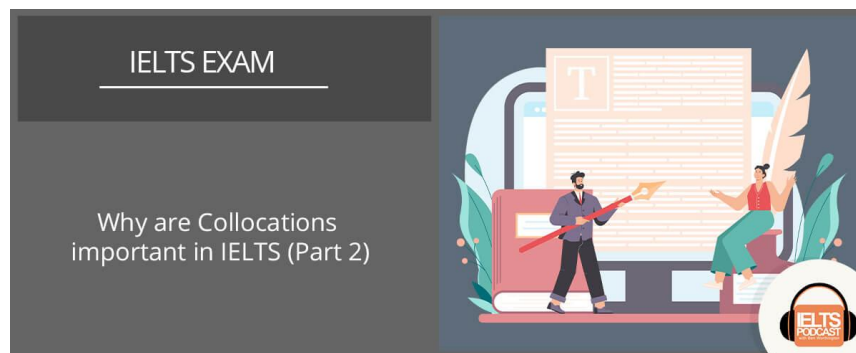
In favor of. If it's a preposition then I'm going to use a gerund afterwards. I know that. So, I just say in favor placing. That's the grammar part, isn't it? The grammar tells me that is correct. I know that. That is the way to do that one.



Okay. Being a native speaker like myself, of course, all that comes pretty easy to me most of the time and it will do for you of course in your native languages. If you're studying English through study and practice, study and practice again and again and again, yes. On occasions, yes. And increasingly over time. It takes time. It will flow naturally in a very similar way and in particular writing.

I know that from trying to write in languages that are not English. It took me a lot of time. I just had to do it and try it and suffer and sweat and cry sometimes and get exasperated, get angry with myself for making silly mistakes and going back and asking for good feedback. And that was the only way I could improve and now I feel okay, I can do it.

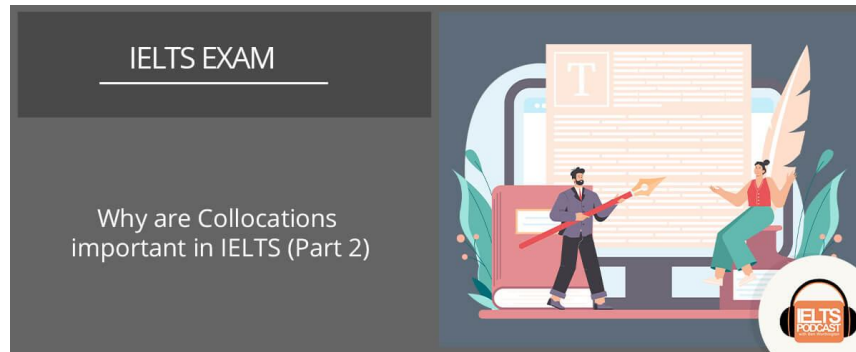
I'm not as happy writing in another language as I am in English. What takes me 20 minutes in English might take me twice the time in another language, but I'm pretty confident. I think I can put it together maybe with a few mistakes. If I were taking IELTS in that language, I'd get I hope a 7 maybe an 8 if you give me an 8, please.



Anyway, that's all for now. All I want to say is that going over what I've talked about today and in the last few podcasts I've been giving, I'm interested in vocabulary and I think that learning vocabulary is such an important part of being fluent in another language and if we're preparing for IELTS, it's also one of the most important keys I think to success in IELTS if you really want to push your score high.

We haven't talked about speaking. Maybe I could talk about that another time when an examiner will notice very clearly the correct use of collocations and give you an awful lot of credit for that and say yes, and think to themselves yes, this guy or this girl is good. She knows how to talk. He knows how to talk very fluently in the language. He gets it or she gets it right almost all the time. That's wonderful.

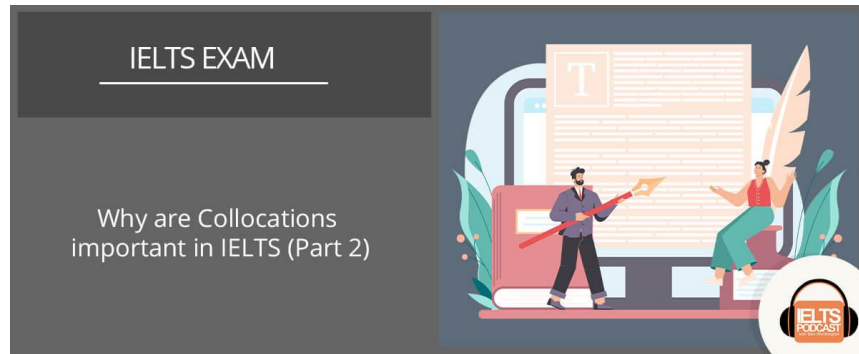
And the same in writing. An examiner will be on the lookout for collocations. It's part of the test. It's part of that 25% referring to lexical resource; the correct use of collocations and it's also of course extraordinarily useful when we're thinking of paraphrasing things and looking for



synonyms not only as we've seen today in the writing and speaking test, but also in the listening test as well as the reading test.

We could look at lots of examples. Take your time to notice these collocations. You don't have to spend all your time worrying about them because they are all around you. You're using them all the time. Of course you use them. It's the basis of all language how words fit together and mix together and occur very commonly.

Sometimes the combination is almost unique. Sometimes we've got some choices of course and some words like strong, heavy, other adjectives can collocate with lots of words, lots of different words although for example, we can say-- let me think-- I'm drinking some coffee and I might say this coffee is very strong. A strong coffee, but would I use the same word talking about something else? Let me think. Would I use-- let's think about it. Do I always use strong in all context? Would it always fit into all of them? Think about that. We'll talk about that another time, shall we?



Until then, have a good week. Have a good time. Keep studying. Don't forget to get into your IELTS Podcast website for all the help they're going to give you there. Sign on for those free samples of all kinds of things. Get into it. Have a look at what they've got to offer. It all very good and will help you improve and also to get the right kind of feedback that you've all been looking for. Until then, goodbye and take care.

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Female Speaker: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com.