VERB + NOUN COLLOCATIONS

Aim: to present and practise a set of 16 common verb + noun collocations

Level: intermediate to upper-intermediate

Class size: any size (large or small groups, one-to-one)

Time: 90 minutes

Lesson plan:

1. Lead-in (quick dictation + discussion)
2. Presentation
3. Communicative drill
4. Controlled practice (gap-fill)
5. Controlled practice (communicative speaking)
6. Discussion questions
7. Dictionary work/exam practice (multiple-choice text)
8. Revision activity (communicative speaking)

These activities can be done from start to finish as a complete 90-minute lesson, or they can be split up and spread out over several lessons.

The activities can be done with or without the Oxford Business English Dictionary. Some students may need to use a dictionary during the vocabulary presentation and the dictionary work sections (sections 2 and 7).

1. Lead-in (quick dictation + discussion)

Preparation: Make one copy of page 1 for each student in the class, or draw the bubbles on the board and ask students to do the same in their notebooks (each bubble should be large enough to contain several sentences). Make one copy of page 2 for each student in the class so that they can check their answers to the dictation.

Dictation sentences:

1. If you can’t speak English, you can’t get a good job.
2. You should never do business with your friends or family.
3. If you want to become rich, you have to take risks.
4. Successful business people do a lot of overtime.
5. Your work should always take priority over your family.
6. Big companies don’t care about their employees. They only care about making a profit.
Give each student a copy of the page 1. Tell students that you are going to read a sentence. They should listen and decide whether they agree with it or disagree with it. They should then write the sentence in the appropriate bubble on their page. If they are not sure whether they agree or not, they should write the sentence in the ‘Maybe. I’m not sure’ bubble.

Read sentence 1 aloud twice. Check that all the students have written it in one of the bubbles. Now do the same with each of the other five sentences.

Ask each student to swap his/her piece of paper with a classmate. Tell the students to check their classmate’s sentences and correct any mistakes (give the students a copy of page 2 in order to do this).

After the students have finished checking their sentences, ask them to get into pairs or small groups and compare their opinions for a few minutes. They should tell their partner(s) what they thought about each statement, but they must not show each other their pieces of paper – remind students that this is a speaking activity.

2 Presentation

Preparation: If you have not done so already (for part 1 above), make one copy of page 2 for every student in the class.

Write the following sentences from the dictation on the board:

1. If you can’t speak English, you can’t .................. a good job.

2. You should never .................. business with your friends or family.

Ask the students which words go in the gaps (get, do). Ask them whether you can use other words here - e.g. *make a job, *take a job; *make business, *take business (No, you can’t). Ask the students why you can’t use any other words here (Find out if any students are aware of the concept of collocation – words that often go together).

Explain that in English there are many words which often go together in this way. Elicit some basic verb + noun collocations that students may already know (e.g. *do homework, make a mistake). Try to elicit some ‘collocations’ in the students own mother tongue(s). Find out if these can be translated literally into English.

Ask the students to look at the sentences on the board and tell you which part of speech the words are (verb + noun). Explain that verb + noun collocations like this are very common in English. Tell the students that they are going to practise some important collocations used in business English.

Ask students to look at page 2 and put each noun into the correct column in the table. Tell them to work together and/or use their dictionaries.

If you think that your students will be unable to understand the nouns, you may wish to prepare a sheet of definitions from the Oxford Business English Dictionary. Alternatively, you can ask the more able students to explain any difficult words.

If any of the students finish quickly, ask them to think of some more words that could go in each column, or tell them to find some in their dictionaries.
When the students have finished filling in the table, read the correct answers for each column.
(Some students may suggest the following alternative answers: get training, get an appointment, get a fortune, do a job). Elicit any extra collocations that the students may have come up with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>do</th>
<th>make</th>
<th>get</th>
<th>take</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>business (with sb)</td>
<td>a complaint</td>
<td>a bonus</td>
<td>a break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overtime</td>
<td>a fortune</td>
<td>a job</td>
<td>classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>training</td>
<td>a profit</td>
<td>an email</td>
<td>priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
<td>an appointment</td>
<td>qualifications</td>
<td>risks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Communicative drill
Preparation: Make one copy of page 3 for every 6 students in the class (there are two copies of the cards on each sheet). Cut up the cards and put them into piles.

Put students into groups of three. Choose one student in each group to be a referee. Give each referee one set of cards and tell him/her not to show them to the other two students in his/her group.

The referee should take a card and say the noun written on it (e.g. ‘A job’) The other two students in the group should shout out the verb which the noun collocates with (e.g. ‘Get a job!’). The player who says the verb first wins and gets to keep the card. If both players shout out the verb at the same time, neither gets the card. When the referee has used all the cards in the pile, the player with the most cards wins.

It is a good idea to set a time limit for this activity, or ask the students to time themselves. It is also possible to do the activity as a class race - the group which finishes the pile of cards first (with correct answers!) is the winner.

4 Controlled practice (gap-fill)
Preparation: Make copies of page 4 for one half of the class, and copies of page 5 for the other half. Fold the pages along the dotted line so that students can see the questions but not the answers.

Divide the class into two groups, As and Bs. Give a copy of page 4 to each student in group A and a copy of page 5 to each student in group B. Tell the students to work together in their groups and fill in the missing words (without looking at the answers on the other side of the folded page!). Set a time limit for the activity, and if any students finish quickly, ask them to write their own sentences using the collocations.

When the students have finished filling in the gaps, tell them to open up the folded pieces of paper and check their own answers.
5 Controlled practice (communicative speaking)

Ask the students to swap seats and get into pairs so that each student A is sitting with one student B. Tell them to take their sheets of paper (from section 4 above) with them, but not to show them to their new partner (if necessary, get the students to sit back to back).

The students should test each other. One student should read a sentence from his/her sheet and indicate the gap with a funny noise or by saying the word ‘something’. For example, Student A might read his/her first sentence like this: ‘I’d like to BEEP! a complaint’, or ‘I’d like to SOMETHING a complaint.’ Student B should listen carefully and then suggest a verb to go in the gap.

The students should continue like this, taking it in turns to read and answer the questions.

6 Discussion questions

Preparation: Make one copy of page 6 and cut the boxes up into individual cards. Spread the cards face down on a chair or desk at the front of the classroom.

Divide the class up into groups of three. Ask one student from each group to come to the front of the room and choose a card at random. The student should take the card back to his/her group and ask his/her team-mates the question, inserting the correct collocation. The three students should discuss the question for a short time (making notes, if necessary) and try to practise the collocation in their answers.

When the group have finished discussing the question, another student from the group should return the card to the table at the front of the classroom and take a different card. He/she should then discuss the question with his/her team-mates in the same way.

The students should continue in this way, discussing different questions and trying to practise the collocations. Set a time limit for the activity – the students do not have to discuss every question.

At the end of the activity, elicit some answers and correct any mistakes that students may have made.

Extension:

If you want to revise the collocations and/or practise question formation, give students some answers based on the questions in the activity and ask them to reconstruct the questions. For example:

Answer = ‘Yes, every morning my inbox is full of emails!’

Question = Do you get a lot of emails?
7 Dictionary work/exam practice (multiple-choice text)

Preparation: Make one copy of page 7 for each student in the class. This activity can be done in class or set for homework.

This activity shows students how a good dictionary can help them to learn collocations and to answer exam-style questions. Students can find all of the answers to this activity by looking up entries in the *Oxford Business English Dictionary*.

Answers:

1. (d) setting up
2. (b) massive
3. (a) heavily
4. (b) pay off
5. (b) take on
6. (d) turning
7. (a) doing
8. (b) break into
9. (d) niche
10. (d) strategy
11. (a) attract
12. (a) do
13. (d) draw up
14. (d) take
15. (c) make

8 Revision activity (communicative speaking)

Preparation: Make one copy of page 8 for every pair of students in the class. Cut the sheets up into individual cards.

Put the students into pairs. Give each pair one set of cards and tell them to place the cards face down on the desk. One student should take the top card and read the first part of the text to his/her partner. For example:

'I want to learn how to be a computer programmer, but I don’t want to teach myself. What should I do?'

The second student should listen to the problem and then reply using a sentence that contains one of the collocations. If the reply is the same as (or similar to) the suggested answer written on the card, the student gets to keep the card. If the reply is not correct, the card should go to the bottom of the pile.

The students continue like this, taking it in turns to draw cards and read them to each other, until all the cards have been read and answered correctly. At the end, the player who has collected the most cards is the winner.