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# The Structure of the Collocational Dictionary

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*International Journal of Lexicography*, Volume 2, Issue 1, 1 March 1989, Pages 1–14,  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ijl/2.1.1>

**Published:** 01 March 1989

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## Abstract

This paper deals with the structure of collocational (combinatory) dictionaries, i.e., with the question of how collocations should be entered in such dictionaries. It shows that the collocational dictionary has drawn on various sources: learners' dictionaries, valency theory, Soviet lexicography

(especially the work of Mel'nik and his colleagues), and Hausmann's work on the structuring of dictionaries. The paper discusses a practical approach to the technique of placing collocations so that they can be found readily by learners of English.

To illustrate the relevant points about the structuring of a collocational dictionary, this paper describes the principles applied in the recently published *BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English* (BBI). The BBI was designed to help advanced learners of English by providing both lexical collocations and grammatical collocations with 'a preposition or grammatical structure' (BBI:ix). The BBI was tested in the summer of 1987 with the cooperation of a group of Soviet EFL teachers who were participating in a language program at the University of Pennsylvania. The test demonstrated that the teachers were able to find collocations in the dictionary quickly and easily. They also found the BBI to be an invaluable source of information on the differences between AE and BE (American English and British English).

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