

THE LEGAL PROFESSION

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLOCATIONS

Collocations are words that form natural partnerships in English. For example, we say,

'Merry Christmas!'

but

'Happy New Year!'

Why can't we say 'Merry New Year'? It's because a native English speaker wouldn't expect these words to go together. They do not form a good collocation. Legal English is full of collocations. They might be:

- **verb + noun**
Do you **accept liability**?
- **adjective + noun**
She made a **fatal error**.
- **noun + verb**
The **gap** has **widened** between them.
- **adverb + adjective**
This is a **highly contentious** dispute.
- **verb + adverb**
Could we please **discuss** this matter **rationally**?

The key to learning accurate legal English is to have a good familiarity with collocation. Some nouns form good collocations with more than one verb. Some nouns form a good collocation with just one verb. The important thing is to start to notice accurate collocations and memorise them. For example:

Good collocation: to **draft** a contract
to **honour** a contract
to **breach** a contract

Bad collocation: to **write** a contract
to **respect** a contract
to **infringe** a contract

As you work through this book you will see many collocations. To help you notice and remember accurate collocations they have been put into a collocation bank for you. The symbol **m** means 'memorise'.

Collocation bank

- to **draft** a contract
- to **honour** a contract
- to **breach** a contract

Exercise 1

Look at these sentences. They contain collocations that are in Unit 1A. Complete the sentences with the correct collocation from the four choices on the next page.

- a Solicitors are allowed to _____ clients in court.
- b I am afraid I can't help you. I am a commercial lawyer and this is a criminal _____.
- c What are the _____ for your case?
- d I will _____ my final law exams in June of next year.
- e My client is _____ a new factory and he needs advice about the relevant health and safety regulations.