

The Corpus of Contemporary American English, known as COCA, is a valuable resource for exploring language use. COCA allows you to search its extensive collection of written texts to better understand how language has been used in academic journals, news broadcasts, and other sources. This handout focuses on the Word search feature in COCA, a newer aspect of the corpus. In this part of COCA, a search for one word can yield a wealth of information on its use, including on the word clusters associated with that particular word.

Our screencasts featuring COCA walk you through several types of searches. You can access those video tutorials and accompanying transcripts through our DukeWritesSuite site here:

<https://dukewritesuite.com/coca-corpus-of-contemporary-american-english/>.

### Logging in and Registering

- Click on the link to access COCA: <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>
- Log in at the top right of the page (above the word ACCOUNT) by clicking on the square profile symbol. If you have not previously registered (for free), click on that profile symbol above ACCOUNT to register

### Preparing for a Word Search

- Click on SEARCH at the top left, then click on WORD below SEARCH
- Notice that on the right, information is provided about the Word search feature (for example, that this part of COCA shares information on 60,000 words)

### Conducting a Word Search

- Enter the word **focus** in the search field below WORD
- Click on See detailed info for word, located below the search field

If your chosen word does not yield Word search results, check the Oxford <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/?cc=global> and Longman <https://www.ldoceonline.com/> dictionaries. They provide collocations and sample sentences as well as definitions.

### Exploring the Results

- Notice on the top left, to the right of **focus**, that this page features the verb form (We'll examine this verb page. Click on NOUN to instead explore that word form.)

- Notice, near the top left, the provided bar graphs as well as the shaded box below that

The bar graphs indicate the distribution of the verb **focus** within the COCA collection of sources. Below that are definitions along with hyperlinks to access **focus** on several dictionary websites. The E link directs you to details on word origin.

Links to sites where you can hear the word pronounced are shared below the definitions area. Translation websites and synonym information are then provided. Toward the top right of the page, a section on related topics is shared.

### Exploring Collocates

- Notice the COLLOCATES section below the related topics (on right side of page)

Collocates are words often found with or near a particular word. **Focus** tends to be paired with the nouns, verbs, and such listed there. Knowing common collocates can be helpful.

- Click on (more) to the right of COLLOCATES

After clicking there, you'll reach a page sharing collocates used within four words to the left or right of **focus** within the COCA collection. Take a look at the columns of collocate nouns (e.g., **attention**), adjectives, and such there. The words located near the top of each column appear with **focus** more frequently in COCA than those below. Click on the back arrow of your browser (e.g., Firefox) to return to the **focus** results page.

### Exploring Clusters

- Scroll down the page to the examples of common CLUSTERS that include the verb **focus** (focus on, will focus, focus more on, need to focus, focus on the positive)
- Click on (more) to the right of CLUSTERS to access more examples. Then, click on the back arrow of your browser (e.g., Safari) to return to the **focus** results page. Below the CLUSTERS section are websites that might frequently use the word

### Exploring Sample Excerpts

- Scroll to the lower part of the page to reach the CONCORDANCE LINES (sample excerpts), then scroll through those to examine the words appearing just to the *right* of **focus**  
**Question:** What preposition (at, of, on...) is often used immediately after the verb **focus**?

The concordance lines are sorted in alphabetical order by the words to the right of **focus**. If you click on (more) to the right of CONCORDANCE LINES, you can click on SORT (near the top of page) above the word **focus** to sort for the middle column. To sort excerpts based on the words immediately to the left of **focus**, click on SORT above the left column.

### Search Tip and Related Resources

After completing a Word search, visit the COCA homepage and click on Reset (below the search field) to facilitate other types of searches. Access our COCA screencast tutorials, including one focused on the WORD search, here: <https://dukewritessuite.com/coca-corpus-of-contemporary-american-english/>.