Using the Word and Phrase Online Resource

The Word and Phrase resource can support you in better understanding how language has been used by other writers. After searching for a particular word, you can explore patterns of language use in the sample sentences that Word and Phrase provides.

The information below will guide you through major aspects of Word and Phrase searches. You can also watch our screencast tutorials, which will walk you through the search process, on our DukeWrites Suite page. Transcripts are provided for each tutorial: https://dukewritessuite.com/word-and-phrase/

Doing a Sample Search

• Click on the link below, then click on Frequency List on the left side of the page http://www.wordandphrase.info/

• Enter the word focus in the WORD search field on the upper left

  Note: For a frequency list search, you need to choose one word to search. For a noun, use a singular or non-count form (the plural word problems will not yield search results; use problem instead).

• Click on "Search" to the right of the search field

  Note: This resource houses a smaller collection of words than an online dictionary would, so your chosen word might not always be included

• Notice on the top right that you can choose focus as a verb or noun
  You could click on V for verb or N for noun ~ or on FOCUS to the right of one of those. For this sample search, click on the V to see verb examples

• Consider if you are only interested in seeing academic samples with that word
  If so, below the V and N and to the left of DEFINITIONS, click on the vertical rectangle that appears below the word ACADEMIC

Examining Sample Sentences

• On the lower part of the page, examine the sample sentences. As you scroll down, notice that various forms of the verb focus appear in the center of those sentences. Although this resource will not let you search for the verb form focused, you can find sample sentences containing that word by searching for focus. (If you do a search for focused on Word and Phrase, the results will be for the adjective.)

• Notice that the words are color coded to indicate their parts of speech. Prepositions (e.g., for, in, on, with) are highlighted in yellow
• Consider what patterns you see in how the word focus (with or without verb endings) is used in those sentences. In scrolling down, what word do you often see in yellow to the right side of focus? That would indicate what preposition writers often use with the verb

Exploring Collocates

• Scroll to the top of the sentences. To the right of the bar graph figure, the word COLLOCATES appears. A collocate is a word frequently used with another word. The verb focus plus one of its collocates would typically seem natural together

• Click on the collocate word attention. After a delay, you will then see sample sentences containing both the word focus and its collocate attention

• Notice what patterns you see with that pair of words in those sentences

What preposition (in yellow) often appears after focus attention?

What kinds of words often appear between the words focus and attention? You might notice that possessive forms (his, her, its, my, our, their) often appear there as well as words that refer to quantities (more, most, much)

Related Resources

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