

A visit to Halifax, or a visit in Halifax?

Opening doors to language through learners' dictionaries and online corpus resources

The resources we used to research answers to our questions:

Merriam Webster Learners' Dictionary www.learnersdictionary.com

Some features

- Definitions use 3000-word vocabulary base
- 2-5 example sentences for most meanings of most words
- Pronunciation: IPA and sound file for American pronunciation.
- Can save words looked up; personal vocab. list/ dictionary

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online www.ldoceonline.com

Some features

- Definitions use 2000-word vocabulary base
- 3-5 example sentences for most meanings of most words. Common collocations. Can get many more example sentences: Examples from the corpus
- Pronunciation: IPA and sound files for British and American pronunciation
- Grammar boxes and thesaurus boxes with information keyed to language learners

COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) <https://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>

Some features

- 560 million words
- Texts from 1990-2017; roughly 20 million words from each year
- U.S. sources
- Roughly equal amounts of text from 5 genres:
 - Spoken, radio + TV (transcribed speech)
 - Popular magazines
 - Newspapers
 - Fiction
 - Academic journals
- Limited free online access. Will be asked to create an account (with email address) after a few searches. Free account/limited searches
- Query syntax can be a problem; for novices, it's easier to search exact phrases or words with POS (part of speech) tags from dropdown menu.
- Relatively easy to search by genre (for example, only academic journals; only fiction and spoken; everything except academic journals)
- Comparison of COCA with other online corpora (and links to those corpora): <https://corpus.byu.edu/>

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The questions we researched for this presentation:

(Lianjing) “The test consists of 4 parts”/ “The test is consisted of 4 parts” A classmate and I had different intuitions about which was correct. Can we use “consist” in both active and passive voice? Is there disagreement about the correct way to use “consist”?

(Ruolin) I want my students to know the sentence patterns for the verb “insist”. We can’t say “insist to do something” but we can use either “insist on” + noun or-ing form, or “insist that” + a clause. I need good example sentences to help them learn and remember these patterns.

(Huan Lucy) In a grammar correcting exercise, I saw this sentence and thought the preposition was a mistake: “I’m enjoying my visit to Canada” I thought it should be “in Canada” like “I’m enjoying my stay in Canada.” Is “a visit to Canada” okay? Is “a visit in Canada” okay?

(Monideepa) I always thought “here” should be used as an adverb, without a preposition. When I heard people in Canada saying “in here,” I thought it was like slang or careless speech, but I heard it used by a professor in class lecture! Is “in here” grammatical?

The query terms we used to search COCA:

To find examples of all forms of the verb “consist”:	[consist]
To find examples of “consist” in passive voice:	[be] consisted
To find examples of prepositions after noun “visit”:	visit_n* _i*
To find examples of “in here”:	in here
To find examples of any preposition followed by “here”:	_i* here
To find examples of all forms of the verb “insist”: (we didn’t use this search in our presentation)	[insist]