VOCABULARY & COLLOCATIONS BANK

100+ Essential Canadian Collocations & Vocabulary List

High-frequency collocations, sentence frames, and Canadian idioms for the workplace, community, and daily life.

Canadian English Mastery

High-scoring workplace, community, and conversational vocabulary for CLB 9+

Scan to practice vocabulary exercises online

High-Frequency Canadian Expressions

Integrate these idiomatic collocations and sentence frames into Writing Tasks 1 & 2 and Speaking Tasks 1–8.

Section 1: Workplace Professionalism (Use for Writing Task 1 & Speaking Tasks 5, 6)

Review 10 phrases per day

Structure: Professional Verb + Noun Collocation

To touch base - To briefly communicate to check status. (e.g., 'I wanted to touch base regarding the upcoming project deadline.')

Streamline the process - To make a system more efficient. (e.g., 'By adopting this software, we can streamline our workflow.')

Take the initiative - To act independently to resolve an issue. (e.g., 'I took the initiative to organize the files.')

Mitigate risks - To reduce the severity or danger of a situation. (e.g., 'We need a strategy to mitigate potential financial risks.')

Circle back - To discuss an issue again at a later time. (e.g., 'Let's circle back to this idea next week.')

Move the needle - To make a noticeable difference. (e.g., 'This marketing campaign will really move the needle for our sales.')

Bring to the table - To contribute something of value. (e.g., 'She brings a lot of experience to the table.')

Think outside the box - To think creatively and unconventionally. (e.g., 'We need to think outside the box to solve this bug.')

Get the ball rolling - To start a process or project. (e.g., 'Let's get the ball rolling on the new product design.')

Stay ahead of the curve - To anticipate future trends or developments. (e.g., 'Continuous learning helps us stay ahead of the curve.')

Raise the bar - To set a higher standard. (e.g., 'The new software update really raises the bar for security.')

Leverage resources - To use existing assets to maximum advantage. (e.g., 'We should leverage our internal resources before hiring consultants.')

Align with - To agree with or match an overarching strategy. (e.g., 'This proposal aligns with our core company values.')

Best practices - The most effective and standard way of doing things. (e.g., 'We must adhere to industry best practices.')

Secure buy-in - To get agreement or support from others. (e.g., 'We need to secure buy-in from the management team.')

Actionable insights - Information that can be acted upon directly. (e.g., 'The survey provided several actionable insights.')

Core competencies - Primary areas of expertise. (e.g., 'Customer service is one of our core competencies.')

Deliverables - Tangible or intangible goods provided as a result of a project. (e.g., 'The final deliverables are due on Friday.')

Due diligence - A comprehensive appraisal or investigation. (e.g., 'We must conduct our due diligence before signing the contract.')

Value proposition - An innovation or feature that makes a company attractive to customers. (e.g., 'Our value proposition relies on unmatched speed.')

Win-win situation - A scenario where all parties benefit. (e.g., 'Negotiating this deal is a win-win situation.')

Bottom line - The final total or the most important factor. (e.g., 'The bottom line is that we need to cut costs.')

Benchmark - A standard against which things may be compared. (e.g., 'These results will serve as a benchmark for future tests.')

Flesh out - To add more detail to a plan or idea. (e.g., 'Let's flesh out the details in our afternoon meeting.')

Loop in - To keep someone informed. (e.g., 'Please loop me in on any email correspondence regarding this client.')

SENTENCE FRAME

'I am writing to [touch base] regarding [Project Name], and to suggest a way we might [streamline the process].'

QUICK REFERENCE: **touch base** **streamline** **initiative** **mitigate** **leverage**

Section 2: Civic & Community Engagement (Use for Writing Task 2 & Speaking Task 7)

Crucial for high-scoring survey responses

Structure: Formal Persuasive Phrasing

Allocate funds - To distribute money for a specific purpose. (e.g., 'The municipality should allocate more funds to public transit.')

Foster a sense of community - To encourage people to feel connected. (e.g., 'Building a new park will foster a greater sense of community.')

Detrimental impact - A very harmful effect. (e.g., 'Increased traffic will have a detrimental impact on local air quality.')

Implement a policy - To put a rule or plan into action. (e.g., 'The city council plans to implement a strict recycling policy.')

Civic engagement - Active participation in community affairs. (e.g., 'Promoting civic engagement is vital for a healthy democracy.')

Public consultation - Seeking input from the general public. (e.g., 'A public consultation will be held before the road expansion.')

Sustainable development - Growth that meets present needs without compromising future generations. (e.g., 'The new housing project focuses on sustainable development.')

Urban sprawl - The uncontrolled expansion of urban areas. (e.g., 'We must protect greenbelts to prevent urban sprawl.')

Local amenities - Useful features or facilities in a neighborhood. (e.g., 'Improving local amenities will increase property values.')

Infrastructure upgrades - Improvements to physical and organizational structures. (e.g., 'The tax increase will pay for much-needed infrastructure upgrades.')

Grassroots movement - Action driven by local community members rather than politicians. (e.g., 'The initiative started as a grassroots movement.')

Stakeholder involvement - Participation from individuals who have an interest in the outcome. (e.g., 'Stakeholder involvement is critical to the project's success.')

Bridge the gap - To connect two disparate groups or ideas. (e.g., 'This program aims to bridge the gap between seniors and youth.')

Cultural mosaic - A mix of diverse cultures existing side-by-side. (e.g., 'Canada is proudly known as a cultural mosaic.')

Common good - What is shared and beneficial for all members of a community. (e.g., 'Citizens must sometimes make sacrifices for the common good.')

Social cohesion - The willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other. (e.g., 'Community festivals promote social cohesion.')

Demographic shift - A change in the statistics of a population. (e.g., 'The demographic shift toward an aging population requires healthcare reforms.')

Municipal governance - The administration of a city or town. (e.g., 'Transparency in municipal governance builds public trust.')

Public discourse - Open discussion regarding matters of public interest. (e.g., 'We need respectful public discourse on urban planning.')

Social safety net - Welfare programs to prevent citizens from falling into poverty. (e.g., 'A robust social safety net protects our most vulnerable residents.')

Zoning bylaws - Municipal laws dictating how land can be used. (e.g., 'Current zoning bylaws prevent the construction of high-rises here.')

Marginalized groups - Communities that experience discrimination or exclusion. (e.g., 'The policy aims to provide better support for marginalized groups.')

Tax bracket - A range of incomes taxed at a given rate. (e.g., 'The reform will slightly increase the rate for the highest tax bracket.')

Equal opportunity - The policy of treating employees and others without discrimination. (e.g., 'The municipality prides itself on equal opportunity hiring.')

Community outreach - Providing services and information to local populations. (e.g., 'Our community outreach program helps new immigrants settle.')

SENTENCE FRAME

'While the first option is appealing, if the city were to [allocate funds] toward [Option B], it would significantly [foster a sense of community].'

QUICK REFERENCE: **allocate** **foster** **detrimental** **implement** **sustainable**

Section 3: Canadian Cultural Nuances (Authenticity for Speaking Tasks)

Sprinkle naturally into casual prompts

Structure: Canadian Terms > Generic Equivalents

- Washroom (Not Restroom/Bathroom) - 'Could you point me to the nearest washroom?'
- Hydro (Not Electricity) - 'Our hydro bill was unusually high this winter.'
- Bylaw (Local municipal law) - 'We need to check the local noise bylaws before hosting the party.'
- Eavestrough (Gutters) - 'I spent the weekend cleaning out the eavestroughs.'
- Toque (Winter beanie) - 'Don't forget to wear a toque, it's freezing outside!'
- Runners (Sneakers/Running shoes) - 'I need to buy a new pair of runners for the gym.'
- Klick (Kilometer) - 'The cottage is about fifty klicks down the highway.'
- Pop (Soda/Soft drink) - 'Would you like a can of pop with your lunch?'
- Garburator (Garbage disposal unit) - 'Don't put potato peels in the garburator, they'll clog it.'
- Grade one (Not First Grade) - 'My son is starting grade one in September.'
- Postal code (Not Zip code) - 'Could you confirm your address and postal code for me?'
- Fire hall (Not Fire station) - 'The new fire hall is being built on Main Street.'
- Parka (Heavy winter coat) - 'You'll definitely need a parka if you're visiting Edmonton in January.'
- Write a test (Not Take a test) - 'The students are writing their final math test today.'
- Toonie (Two-dollar coin) - 'Do you have a toonie for the parking meter?'
- Loonie (One-dollar coin) - 'I found a loonie on the sidewalk this morning.'
- Double-double (Coffee with two creams, two sugars) - 'I'll grab a double-double from Tim Hortons.'
- Freezie (Ice pop) - 'The kids were eating freezies to stay cool in the summer heat.'
- Mickey (A 375ml bottle of liquor) - 'He picked up a mickey of rum for the party.'

Two-four (A case of 24 beers) - 'Can you grab a two-four on your way over?'

Keener (A very eager person/try-hard) - 'He's such a keener, always finishing his work a week early.'

Snowbirds (Canadians who move south for the winter) - 'My grandparents are snowbirds; they spend January in Florida.'

Poutine (Fries with cheese curds and gravy) - 'We stopped at a food truck for some authentic poutine.'

Butter tart (Canadian pastry) - 'My aunt makes the best maple butter tarts for Thanksgiving.'

Nanaimo bar (No-bake Canadian dessert) - 'I bought a tray of Nanaimo bars for the office potluck.'

Penalty Trap: Forcing slang (like 'Double-double', 'Loonie', 'Mickey') into formal writing tasks. Keep these strictly for casual speaking tasks (like Task 1 or 8).

QUICK REFERENCE: **washroom** **hydro** **bylaw** **eavestrough** **garburator**

Section 4: Plug-and-Play Advanced Connectors (The 'Glue' Words)

Memorize to instantly boost Coherence scores

Structure: Transition -> Main Clause

Notwithstanding (Instead of 'Despite') - 'Notwithstanding the high upfront costs, the long-term benefits are substantial.'

Consequently (Instead of 'So') - 'The road was closed; consequently, we missed the flight.'

Conversely (Instead of 'On the other hand') - 'Option A is faster. Conversely, Option B is far more reliable.'

Furthermore (Instead of 'Also') - 'The design is flawless. Furthermore, it is incredibly cost-effective.'

Moreover (Instead of 'Plus') - 'He has top-tier qualifications; moreover, his work ethic is unmatched.'

Accordingly (Instead of 'Because of that') - 'Profits have dropped. Accordingly, we are reducing our budget.'

Nevertheless (Instead of 'Anyway/But') - 'The test results were mixed; nevertheless, we are proceeding to phase two.'

Nonetheless (Similar to nevertheless) - 'It was a challenging quarter; nonetheless, we met our core targets.'

Subsequently (Instead of 'After that') - 'He was promoted and subsequently moved to the Toronto office.'

Thus (Instead of 'So') - 'The ingredients were fresh, thus making the meal exceptional.'

Hence (Instead of 'Therefore') - 'The bridge is structurally unsound; hence, it will be closed indefinitely.'

Alternatively (Instead of 'Or') - 'We could fly. Alternatively, we could take the train and see the countryside.'

In contrast (Instead of 'But') - 'The North experiences harsh winters; in contrast, the West coast remains mild.'

Likewise (Instead of 'Same here') - 'The manager supported the initiative. Likewise, the CEO gave her approval.'

Similarly (Instead of 'Like that') - 'Trees clean our air. Similarly, oceans absorb vast amounts of carbon dioxide.'

Albeit (Instead of 'Even though it was') - 'The solution was effective, albeit temporary.'

Insofar as (To the extent that) - 'I will support the proposal insofar as it does not require additional funding.'

Provided that (Instead of 'If') - 'We will hit the deadline provided that there are no supply chain delays.'

Given that (Instead of 'Since') - 'Given that it is a statutory holiday, the banks will be closed.'

As a result (Instead of 'So') - 'The software crashed. As a result, three hours of data were lost.'

On the contrary (To deny the previous claim) - 'It wasn't a failure; on the contrary, it taught us what not to do.'

To that end (For that purpose) - 'We want to reduce waste. To that end, we are banning single-use plastics.'

In light of (Because of new info) - 'In light of recent events, we are updating our security protocols.'

Irrespective of (Instead of 'Regardless of') - 'The law applies to everyone irrespective of their income bracket.'

Barring (Unless there is) - 'Barring any unforeseen circumstances, we should launch next week.'

SENTENCE FRAME

Plug-and-Play Exercise: Take 3 basic sentences you wrote in a past practice test and rewrite them replacing 'but', 'so', and 'because' with advanced connectors.

QUICK REFERENCE: **notwithstanding** **consequently** **conversely** **subsequently** **nevertheless**