ESL LAB

Lexical Extension Templates

Six reusable templates that turn any vocabulary worksheet into chunk and collocation practice. Find the exercise on your worksheet, print the matching template, and students work on the words the new vocabulary travels with. The numbers match the blog post on esllaboratory.com.

LEVEL	STUDENTS	WORKS WITH	TIME
A2 to C1	Adults	Any worksheet or text	10 to 15 minutes each

Find your template

IF YOUR WORKSHEET HAS	USE	STUDENTS MAKE	
Complete the sentences with words from the box	1 **Chunk Hunt**	A list of the chunks around each new word, sorted into three kinds	**Page 2**
Match the words to their definitions	2 **Collocation Grid**	The adjectives, verbs and phrases each word usually comes with	**Page 3**
Match the problems to their causes	3 **Cause and Effect Frames**	Full sentences that join each pair with because, due to, led to	**Page 4**
Odd one out, or sort the words into groups	4 **Does It Fit?**	A grid that tests which words fit the same chunk, and a rule	**Page 5**
Match the situations to the advice	5 **Strength Ladder**	The worksheet's phrases sorted from strong to mild, used on new situations	**Page 6**
A longer gap-fill, a report or a short text	6 **Steal the Frame**	New sentences on a new topic, built on frames from the text	**Page 7**
Not sure how a template looks when it is done	✓ **Worked example**	All six filled in for a winter weather worksheet	**Pages 8-9**

Three kinds of chunk students will look for

Collocation
Two or three words that usually go together: **heavy traffic**, **make a decision**, **deeply sorry**.

Fixed expression
A whole phrase you say the same way every time: **by the way**, **Be careful!**, **Not at all.**

Sentence frame
The start of a sentence with a gap to fill: **Watch out for ...**, **It's worth ...-ing**, **The thing is, ...**

How to use the templates

Do the worksheet first. The templates come after it. They work on words students already understand.

Print a blank once, use it all year. Nothing on pages 2 to 7 is tied to one topic. The pink example rows use different topics on purpose.

Pairs, one-to-one or alone. Every template has three steps and a line for students working alone.

For the teacher: check a collocation before you teach it. A learner's dictionary shows example sentences, and SkELL (skell.sketchengine.eu) is a free tool that shows how often words appear together. The approach behind the templates is Michael Lewis's *The Lexical Approach* (1993): much of what fluent speakers say is made of ready-made chunks, not single words put together one by one.

TEMPLATE 1

Chunk Hunt

Any topic · A2-C1 · 10 min
Pairs or alone

Use it after: complete the sentences with words from the box. The worksheet taught the words. This page finds the words they travel with.

STEP 1
Go back to the finished sentences on your worksheet. Find each new word again.

STEP 2
Don't mark the word alone. Mark the whole chunk around it, with one of the three marks below.

STEP 3
Copy your five best chunks into the table and write a new sentence with each one.

MARK 1
Highlight
a collocation, two or three words that go together

MARK 2
Circle
a fixed expression, a phrase that never changes

MARK 3
Underline
a sentence frame, a start with a gap you can fill

CHUNK I FOUND	KIND OF CHUNK	MY OWN SENTENCE WITH IT
EXAMPLE **a strong coffee**	☑ Collocation ☐ Fixed expression ☐ Sentence frame	I need a strong coffee before my first class.
	☐ Collocation ☐ Fixed expression ☐ Sentence frame	
	☐ Collocation ☐ Fixed expression ☐ Sentence frame	
	☐ Collocation ☐ Fixed expression ☐ Sentence frame	
	☐ Collocation ☐ Fixed expression ☐ Sentence frame	
	☐ Collocation ☐ Fixed expression ☐ Sentence frame	

We say ..., not ... Pick one chunk where a similar word sounds wrong. Example: we say *strong coffee*, not *powerful coffee*.

Working alone? Do steps 1 to 3, then read your five sentences out loud and check each chunk in a dictionary example.

TEMPLATE 2

Collocation Grid

Any topic · A2-C1 · 15 min
Pairs or alone

Use it after: match the words to their definitions. Most words have a small set of regular partners. Learning them is what makes the word usable.

STEP 1
Write four words from the worksheet in the first column, one per row.

STEP 2
For each word, add the adjectives that come before it, the verbs it works with, and a phrase it often appears in.

STEP 3
Check every box in a dictionary example or on SkELL (skell.sketchengine.eu). Tick it when it is checked.

WORD	ADJECTIVES BEFORE IT	VERBS WITH IT	PHRASES IT LIVES IN	CHECKED
EXAMPLE **deadline**	tight, strict, the final	meet, miss, extend	work to a deadline, by the deadline	☑ Yes
				☐ Yes
				☐ Yes
				☐ Yes
				☐ Yes

The partner I didn't expect: One combination that surprised you, and why.

Working alone? Fill in the grid, then cover the word column and try to guess each word from its partners.

TEMPLATE 3

Cause and Effect Frames

Any topic · A2-C1 · 10 min
Pairs or alone

Use it after: match the problems to their causes. Matching shows that two things are connected. These frames give students the words that connect them.

STEP 1
Take the pairs you matched on the worksheet: a problem and its cause.

STEP 2
Choose a different frame for each pair. Try to use all three columns at least once.

STEP 3
Write the full sentence. Your partner checks the grammar box below.

CAUSE FIRST	EFFECT FIRST	WHEN IT HAPPENS
Because of ___, ___.	**___ because ___.**	**When ___, ___.**
___ caused ___.	**___ due to ___.**	**If there is ___, ___.**
___ led to ___.	**___ was caused by ___.**	**As a result, ___.**

because + a full clause: *because the road was icy*

because of / due to + a noun: *because of the ice*, *due to the ice*

PAIR FROM THE WORKSHEET	FRAME I USED	MY FULL SENTENCE
EXAMPLE **bad headache + screen time**	led to	Six hours of screen time led to a bad headache.

Working alone? Write the sentences, then say each one twice: once with the cause first, once with the effect first.

TEMPLATE 4

Does It Fit?

Any topic · A2-C1 · 10 min
Pairs or alone

Use it after: odd one out, or sort the words into groups. Words in the same group often behave differently. This test shows which chunks each word can enter.

STEP 1
Write six words from the worksheet across the top, including the odd ones out.

STEP 2
Write a chunk or frame in each row. Take them from the worksheet or from your Chunk Hunt.

STEP 3
Test every word in every row: say it out loud, then mark it. Then write the rule you noticed.

✓ **sounds natural** ? **possible, but unusual** ✕ **sounds wrong**

CHUNK OR FRAME	coffee	tea	wind	rain	traffic	opinion
strong ___	✓	✓	✓	✕	✕	✓

Example rule: rain and traffic are *heavy*, not *strong*, even though they feel strong.

CHUNK OR FRAME						

The rule I noticed:

Working alone? Mark the grid, then check two of your ? marks in a dictionary example and change them to ✓ or ✕.

TEMPLATE 5

Strength Ladder

Any topic · A2-C1 · 15 min
Pairs or alone

Use it after: match the situations to the advice. The same advice can be a tip or an order. Sorting phrases by strength teaches which one fits.

STEP 1
Copy the advice and warning phrases from the worksheet onto the right rung of the ladder.

STEP 2
Add two phrases of your own to each rung. Keep the topic of the worksheet.

STEP 3
Your partner writes three new situations in the table. You choose the rung and say what you would say.

Strong Do it now. Danger or a must.	Example: See a doctor today.
Medium A clear warning or advice.	Example: You should rest for a day or two.
Mild A friendly tip. Your choice.	Example: It might help to drink more water.

NEW SITUATION (YOUR PARTNER WRITES)	RUNG	WHAT I WOULD SAY
EXAMPLE **A cold that started yesterday**	☐ Strong ☐ Medium ☑ Mild	It might help to go to bed early tonight.
	☐ Strong ☐ Medium ☐ Mild	
	☐ Strong ☐ Medium ☐ Mild	
	☐ Strong ☐ Medium ☐ Mild	

Working alone? Write three situations of your own on a slip of paper, mix them, then take one and answer it.

TEMPLATE 6

Steal the Frame

Any topic · A2-C1 · 15 min
Pairs or alone

Use it after: a longer gap-fill, a report or a short text. A text is full of frames students can reuse. Taking one out and changing the topic shows it is a template, not a one-off.

STEP 1
Find three sentences in the text that sound useful. Copy them into the first line of a box.

STEP 2
Keep the fixed words and replace the changeable part with a gap. That is the frame.

STEP 3
Write two new sentences with each frame, on a different topic from the text.

EXAMPLE	FROM THE TEXT	The meeting has been moved to Thursday.
	THE FRAME	**The ___ has been moved to ___.**
	MY VERSION 1	The deadline has been moved to Monday.
	MY VERSION 2	My dentist appointment has been moved to next week.

FRAME 1	FROM THE TEXT	
	THE FRAME	
	MY VERSION 1	
	MY VERSION 2	

FRAME 2	FROM THE TEXT	
	THE FRAME	
	MY VERSION 1	
	MY VERSION 2	

FRAME 3	FROM THE TEXT	
	THE FRAME	
	MY VERSION 1	
	MY VERSION 2	

Working alone? Do steps 1 to 3, then read only your new sentences to a partner, a friend or a recording, and listen for the frame.

WORKED EXAMPLE · 1 OF 2

Winter weather, extended

B1-B2 · for the teacher
Templates 1 to 3

The worksheet: a winter weather vocabulary sheet, like our **When Winter Gets Rough** (B1-B2). These are model answers, so you can see what a finished template looks like before your class starts. Other answers can be right too.

blizzard · black ice · frost · sleet · hail · windchill · icicles · slippery · heavy snow

1 · Chunk Hunt

TEMPLATE 1 · PAGE 2

CHUNK	KIND	NEW SENTENCE
heavy snow	Collocation	Heavy snow closed the mountain road last night.
covered with ice	Collocation	The car was covered with ice this morning.
Be careful!	Fixed expression	Be careful! The steps are slippery.
Watch out for …	Sentence frame	Watch out for black ice on the bridge.

We say **heavy snow**, not strong snow. We say **covered with ice**, not covered of ice.

2 · Collocation Grid

TEMPLATE 2 · PAGE 3

WORD	ADJECTIVES	VERBS	PHRASES
snow	heavy, light, fresh	falls, melts, covers	covered in snow, snow is expected
ice	black, thin	forms, melts, covers	covered with ice, watch out for ice
frost	hard, light, early	forms, covers	frost on the windows, a frosty morning
wind	strong, icy, biting	blows, picks up, dies down	strong winds are expected

3 · Cause and Effect Frames

TEMPLATE 3 · PAGE 4

PAIR	FRAME	SENTENCE
Many cars crashed + black ice	**due to**	Many cars crashed on the highway due to black ice.
The grass looks white + frost	**because**	The grass looks white because there was a frost last night.
We couldn't see + a blizzard	**because of**	We couldn't see the road because of the blizzard.

Then talk

NO PRINTING · FROM THE BLOG POST

SPEAKING TASK	FOR WINTER WEATHER	CHUNKS TO USE
Personal Experience Story	Tell your partner about a time winter weather caused you a problem.	heavy snow · because of the ice · Watch out for …
Expert Role-Play	A radio weather reporter gives the forecast; a caller asks about the roads.	We're expecting … · Avoid travel · Allow extra time
Text Message Chain	Three friends warn each other about a storm and change their plans.	Be careful! · the roads are slippery · leave early

WORKED EXAMPLE · 2 OF 2

Winter weather, extended

B1-B2 · for the teacher
Templates 4 to 6

4 · Does It Fit?

TEMPLATE 4 · PAGE 5

CHUNK OR FRAME	snow	rain	sleet	hail	frost	ice
Heavy ___ is falling.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
light ___	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✗
Watch out for ___ on the roads.	✓	?	?	?	?	✓

Rule: Frost and ice don't fall: they form. That is why heavy ___ is falling fails for both, even though they are winter words too.

5 · Strength Ladder

TEMPLATE 5 · PAGE 6

Strong	Stay indoors. · Do not drive unless you have to. · Avoid travel tonight.
Medium	Watch out for black ice. · Drive slowly. · Allow extra time.
Mild	It's a good idea to check the forecast. · You might want to leave early.

NEW SITUATION	RUNG	WHAT I WOULD SAY
Light frost overnight	**Mild**	You might want to leave five minutes early to clear the car.
Blizzard, almost zero visibility	**Strong**	Stay indoors. Do not try to drive tonight.

6 · Steal the Frame

TEMPLATE 6 · PAGE 7

FRAME 1	FROM THE TEXT	A major winter storm is approaching our area.
	THE FRAME	**A ___ is approaching ___.**
	MY VERSION	A heat wave is approaching the south coast.
FRAME 2	FROM THE TEXT	Strong winds will create blizzard conditions.
	THE FRAME	**___ will create ___ conditions.**
	MY VERSION	Heavy rain will create dangerous driving conditions.
FRAME 3	FROM THE TEXT	We're expecting heavy snow starting this afternoon.
	THE FRAME	**We're expecting ___ starting ___.**
	MY VERSION	We're expecting thunderstorms starting tonight.