

## Lesson 2 – Collocations: Personality & Behavior

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Yesterday we learned a number of words for describing people and how they act, and today we'll focus on some key words – namely character, behavior, act, and action – and expand your vocabulary with collocations.

We'll start with **character**, meaning a person's nature. When that nature is excellent and almost perfect, we can say the person has an **exemplary** or **impeccable character**.

If lots of other people love this person, then they have a **likeable/lovable character**.



Some people have a very **colorful character** meaning it's very varied and interesting and a little bit unusual. A **larger-than-life character** also refers to a "big" personality that is rather dramatic.



On the other hand, some people have a **ruthless character** meaning they have no compassion for others. A **shady/dubious character** is one that is suspicious, you think they might be dishonest. And a **volatile character** is one that might change mood or behavior often, and might “explode” at any time.

The qualities of a person can be called **character traits**. Sometimes people can **conceal** their character, meaning to hide it. But eventually their words or actions will **reveal/reflect** their character.

If someone does something that’s unusual for their main personality type, we can describe that strange action as **out of character** for that person.

Behavior can also be **exemplary** if it is excellent. In places like school and work where there are expected standards for behavior, we can talk about **acceptable and unacceptable behavior** for what is and is not OK.

**Antisocial behavior** refers to doing things that make it clear you don’t want contact or interaction with other people.



You can describe it as **strange/odd behavior** if it is different from what is normal and expected. My dog has been behaving strangely lately; he's constantly scratching his ears – I might have to get him checked out at the vet.

In a group environment, **disruptive behavior** disturbs the calmness and efficiency of the group – like kids arguing while the teacher is trying to give a lesson.

A behavior that happens often over time can be described as a **pattern of behavior**. Teachers often observe their students' patterns of behavior and alert the students' parents if there's cause for concern or cause for congratulations.

Let's look at collocations with **act** and **action**.

A **heroic act** is one that took a lot of courage, like a firefighter risking his life to save a child from a burning building. A **charitable act** is a generous one, like buying a meal for a homeless person.



A **hostile act** is one that demonstrates bad intentions; one country invading another would be a hostile act because it is violating their territory and maybe trying to start a war.

Something that is shocking and terrible can be described as an **appalling act**. If a famous actor sexually harassed the teenage actors he was working with, the public would be shocked by these **appalling acts**.

Acts that are horrible and hated can be described as **despicable**. When parents abuse their children by locking them in the basement and refusing to feed them, that would be a **despicable act**.

Many of us might do a **careless/foolish act** – one that was not smart and was done without thinking. An **impulsive act** is done without planning, and this could be good or bad. In contrast, a **deliberate/willful act** was done on purpose, with conscious intention and perhaps planning.

We have the expression a **balancing act** to describe a situation where it's challenging to find a middle ground that takes two or more needs/sides into consideration. Raising children is a balancing act between teaching them appropriate behavior and letting them find their own independence.



When someone is discovered in the middle of a crime or bad behavior, we say they're **caught in the act**. If wife came home to find her husband having sex with the neighbor, she caught him in the act.

Some situations need **swift action** – action that is done quickly – and some need **drastic action** – “big” and dramatic actions, not small ones.

When several people, companies, groups, or countries collaborate, it can be called a **collective / joint action**.

If a situation is going badly or things are headed in the wrong direction, you can take **corrective action** to bring the situation back to the right path. If your car starts to go off the road, you'd take corrective action with the steering wheel!

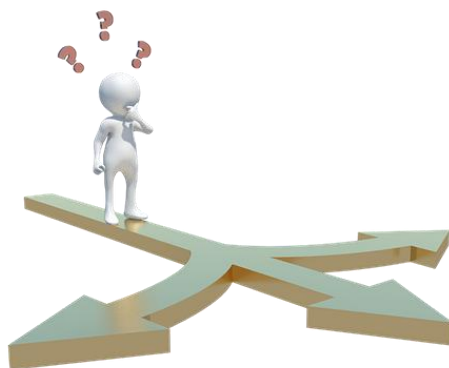
When we punish people for their bad behavior and to help them learn a lesson, this is **disciplinary action**. The school is considering the best form of disciplinary action for the teenagers who intentionally broke the windows.

When we take action quickly, suddenly, and with energy, we **leap/spring into action** – I would spring into action if I saw a pot of boiling milk about to overflow; I'd jump up and take it off the stove.



On the other hand, when we're reluctant or hesitant to take action, we might need a person or event to **prod/spur us into action** – meaning to motivate or cause us to take action when we're stopped.

Finally, you'll often hear people talking about the best **course of action**, meaning the best path or plan for things to do.



Right now, your best course of action is to go ahead and take the quiz for this lesson! It will help you review, remember, and apply the collocations you've learned.

## Review & Practice Pronunciation:

<b>exemplary / impeccable character</b>	excellent / almost perfect character
<b>likeable / lovable character</b>	easy to like/love
<b>colorful character</b>	interesting and varied character
<b>larger-than-life character</b>	dramatic character
<b>ruthless character</b>	no compassion for others
<b>shady/dubious character</b>	suspicious, maybe doubtful or dishonest
<b>volatile character</b>	might "explode" at any time
<b>character traits</b>	qualities of a person
<b>conceal one's character</b>	hide one's true character
<b>reveal/reflect one's character</b>	show one's true character
<b>out of character</b>	behavior that is unusual for that person
<b>acceptable/unacceptable behavior</b>	OK / not OK
<b>antisocial behavior</b>	demonstrating that you don't want to interact with people
<b>strange/odd behavior</b>	different from normal and expected
<b>disruptive behavior</b>	disturbs calmness and efficiency of a group
<b>pattern of behavior</b>	happens often over time
<b>heroic act</b>	requires great courage
<b>charitable act</b>	a generous one
<b>hostile act</b>	shows bad intentions
<b>appalling act</b>	shocking and terrible
<b>despicable act</b>	horrible and hated
<b>careless/foolish act</b>	not smart; done without thinking
<b>impulsive act</b>	done without planning
<b>deliberate/willful act</b>	done with planning and intention
<b>balancing act</b>	situation where it's hard to find a middle path between two sides
<b>caught in the act</b>	discovered in the middle of secret bad behavior
<b>swift action</b>	done quickly
<b>drastic action</b>	big action
<b>collective/joint action</b>	when two or more parties collaborate



<b>corrective action</b>	to fix something going wrong
<b>disciplinary action</b>	punishing people for bad behavior
<b>leap/spring into action</b>	take action quickly and suddenly
<b>prod/spur someone into action</b>	motivate or cause them to take action
<b>best course of action</b>	best path or plan for what to do

## Quiz – Lesson 2

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Complete each sentence with a word from the box. Five words are not used!

caught in the	disciplinary	likeable	shady
charitable	drastic	out of	spring into
colorful	exemplary	pattern of	unacceptable
conceal	impulsive	prod	volatile
despicable	joint	reveal	willful

- The commander abandoned his troops in the middle of the battle – it was a \_\_\_\_\_ act of cowardice.
- My daughter doesn't like to do her homework, and I often have to \_\_\_\_\_ her into action.
- Anyone can make big claims, but it's their actions that really \_\_\_\_\_ their character.
- He always says he'll stop drinking, but starts again whenever he's stressed. It's not a healthy \_\_\_\_\_ behavior.
- His injuries were very severe and doctors had to take \_\_\_\_\_ action to save his life.

6. I admire him not only for his business success, but also for his \_\_\_\_\_ acts - he's given millions to organizations that help the less fortunate.
7. When his manager criticized his work, he quit on the spot - quite an \_\_\_\_\_ act.
8. I'm not going to send money to rent an apartment from some \_\_\_\_\_ character who contacted me online.
9. It's not like them to be late and not call - that's \_\_\_\_\_ character. I hope they're OK.
10. My brother has a \_\_\_\_\_ character and has always been popular.
11. There are so many \_\_\_\_\_ characters who perform at the city park - from breakdancers to balloon artists to classical musicians.
12. Throughout her 20-year political career, she has never been involved in corruption. Her character is \_\_\_\_\_.
13. After our son pushed another child at the playground, I told him that's \_\_\_\_\_ behavior.
14. When I was a child, I was scared of my father because of his \_\_\_\_\_ character - he punished me for the smallest things.
15. I don't have much respect for him, since he only apologized for stealing after he was \_\_\_\_\_ act.



## Writing Exercises – Lesson 2

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Write 1-3 full sentences for each question, and send your answers to [homework@espressoenglish.net](mailto:homework@espressoenglish.net) for feedback!

1. Describe someone you know with a larger-than-life character.
2. What do you consider your best and worst character traits?
3. What's a time you've seen someone do something that was out of character?
4. List some things that are considered acceptable and unacceptable behavior in your culture.
5. Describe an incident that was considered a heroic act in your country.
6. Do you tend to be more impulsive, or more deliberate? Give an example.
7. Talk about a time you did something careless or foolish.
8. When was the last time you were in an emergency and had to take swift action?
9. Give an example of a balancing act you've faced in your own life.
10. In your opinion, what's your country's most pressing problem, and what's the best course of action?

## Quiz Answers – Lesson 2

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1. despicable
2. prod
3. reveal
4. pattern of
5. drastic
6. charitable
7. impulsive
8. shady
9. out of
10. likeable
11. colorful
12. exemplary
13. unacceptable
14. volatile
15. caught in the