

Lesson 1 – Family

Let's begin our study of collocations by learning some common expressions about the family. Your parents and siblings (brothers and sisters) are your **immediate family** – and your **extended family** includes all your relatives – uncles, cousins, great-aunts, etc.

You can use a **family tree** to diagram the relationships among your **family members**. A person who is related to you by a long series of connections can be called a **distant relative**.

If you're lucky, you have a **loving family** or a **close-knit family** – these expressions refer to a family that has good relationships, where everyone loves each other and helps each other. If you were raised in a loving family, then you probably had a **carefree childhood** – that means you had nothing to worry about when you were young.

On the other hand, a family in which the relationships are bad or unhealthy can be called a **dysfunctional family**. If the children experience abuse, poverty, or problems with the law, we can say they had a **troubled childhood**.

Perhaps the parents went through a **bitter divorce** – that means a separation in which there were bad/angry feelings between the husband and wife. It's also possible to have a **messy divorce**, with a prolonged legal battle involving lots of conflicts about the separation of the former couple's assets (money and possessions). The decisions about the separation of assets are made in the **divorce settlement**. A family in which there are divorces or separations is sometimes called a **broken home**.

Sometimes the mother and father fight over **custody of the children** – that refers to who has the primary responsibility of caring for the kids. A judge can **grant joint custody** – that means the ex-husband and ex-wife share the responsibility – or **sole custody** to only one parent. For example, a judge might **award sole custody** to the mother, and the father has to **pay child support** – regular payments to help with expenses for the kids.

If it was a **mutual divorce/separation** – that means the ex-husband and ex-wife agreed to separate without fighting – then they will probably stay **on good terms with each other** (meaning to have a polite relationship without conflicts).

If a woman **gets pregnant** without being married or in a relationship, then she will become a **single mother**. Some women in this situation choose to **have an abortion**, and others prefer to **give the baby up for adoption**. The time when the baby is planned to arrive is called the **due date** – you can also say the **baby is due** in mid-October, for example.

After the woman **has the baby** (or **gives birth** to the baby), the baby is given to the **adoptive parents**, who will **raise the child** or **bring up the child** as if it was their own. Sometimes, when the **adopted child** is older, he or she tries to find their **birth mother** (biological mother).

Lesson 1 Quiz

Circle the best word to complete each sentence:

1. A friend of mine **gave / took / went** birth to her son at home with the help of a nurse.
2. A number of the kids in my classroom come from **broken / damaged / hurt** homes.
3. After a **hostile / cruel / bitter** divorce from his wife of 20 years, the actor married a woman young enough to be his daughter.
4. I see my **excepted / expanded / extended** family once a year, during our annual family vacation.
5. I was raised in a very **joyful / loving / tender** family, in which everyone helped each other.
6. I was **created / grown / raised** by my grandparents after my parents passed away.
7. I'm on good **friends / relations / terms** with all my former boyfriends.
8. John had a **carefree / careful / careless** childhood, growing up with happily married parents and three brothers.
9. Many women regret **giving / having / taking** an abortion years afterwards.
10. My aunt's going through a **messy / sloppy / untidy** divorce; she's paying a fortune in legal fees.
11. My husband doesn't get along with a few of my family **people / individuals / members**.
12. Although my salary is low, I get child **assistance / provision / support** from my ex-husband.
13. My sister **got / had / made** pregnant immediately after she got married.
14. My son is making a diagram of our family **roots / tree / web** for a school project.
15. My wife is pregnant with twins. They're **come / due / here** in February.
16. Sally was granted sole **custody / guardian / keeping** of the children from her first marriage.
17. Teenagers who had a **distressed / troubled / worsened** childhood often have behavior problems in school.
18. The celebrity wrote a book about his **debilitated / defective / dysfunctional** family.
19. The divorce **contract / reimbursement / settlement** awarded the wife \$500,000.
20. There are four people in my **close / immediate / neighboring** family.
21. They have three biological children and two **adopted / adoptive / adopting** children.

Lesson 1 Quiz Answers

1. A friend of mine **gave** birth to her son at home with the help of a nurse.
2. A number of the kids in my classroom come from **broken** homes.
3. After a **bitter** divorce from his wife of 20 years, the actor married a woman young enough to be his daughter.
4. I see my **extended** family once a year, during our annual family vacation.
5. I was raised in a very **loving** family, in which everyone helped each other.
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14. My son is making a diagram of our family **tree** for a school project.
15. My wife is pregnant with twins. They're **due** in February.
16. Sally was granted sole **custody** of the children from her first marriage.
17. Teenagers who had a **troubled** childhood often have behavior problems in school.
18. The celebrity wrote a book about his **dysfunctional** family.
19. The divorce **settlement** awarded the wife \$500,000.
20. There are four people in my **immediate** family.
21. They have three biological children and two **adopted** children.