

## Software Quick Guide MonoConc from Athelstan

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MonoConc from Athelstan is a concordance program, letting students and teachers quickly see how a specific word or phrase is used in context.

For the concordance program to work, it needs a ‘**corpus**’ or ‘textbase’ – a collection of text to search. The larger the collection, the more likely that a search term will appear. A good place to look for corpora is Mike Barlow’s Corpus Linguistics site at <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~barlow/corpus.html#English>. Project Gutenberg at <http://www.promo.net/pg/index.html> offers a very large collection of books in the public domain. A small free spoken American English corpus is at <http://www.athel.com/cspa.html> (the full version is available for a fee). Some teachers also have compiled student essays into a student corpus and used it to compare their students’ use of language to that found in the media.

**Step 1:** Make sure you have a corpus. It needs to be in plain text format.

**Step 2:** After opening MonoConc, pull down the File menu to Load corpus. Select the corpus you want to use.

**Step 3:** Choose Concordance from the menubar and select Search, then type in a word to look for in the corpus. This is the ‘search term.’ The program will create a listing of the occurrences of the search term in the corpus, with a few of the words on each side.

**Step 4:** Look through the concordance to find the contexts in which the search term occurs, trying to see regularities that point to rules. You can double-click on any one of the occurrences to see the larger context in which it occurs.

Hint: A frequent question in English is about the prepositions that can be used with specific verbs. This is a good question to research with a concordance. The best way to see this is to Sort the concordance by 1st right – this means that it will sort the sentences by the first word to the right of the search term.

**Step 5:** Try the search again with a synonym to see if there are differences in grammar.

**Collocates** are the words that occur frequently with a given word, such as the prepositions that occur with verbs or words that occur in phrases, such as salt and pepper. To see a list of collocates, first choose Corpus frequency data to sort the list by frequency, then choose collocate frequency data from the frequency menu to see the collocates of a search term. This is a good way to see the difference between talk, say, and speak.

*A brief tour with more details is available from <http://www.athel.com/tour.html>. For more information about concordancing, also look at Leslie Opp-Beckman’s IELP site at <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~ielp/software/monoconc.htm>.*

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