

## Phrasal Verbs and Prepositions

Phrasal verbs consist of a verb and another word or phrase, usually a preposition. The resulting combination creates what amounts to a new verb, whose meaning can sometimes be puzzling to non-native speakers. Phrasal verbs often arise from casual uses of the language and eventually work themselves into the mainstream of language use. Phrasal verbs can be both intransitive (The children were sitting around, doing nothing. The witness finally broke down on the stand.) and transitive in meaning (Our boss called off the meeting. She looked up her old boyfriend.)

The problem with phrasal verbs is that their meaning is often, at first, obscure, and they often mean several different things. *To make out*, for instance, can mean to perceive or to see something; it can also mean to engage in light sexual play. If someone chooses to turn up the street that is a combination of a verb and a preposition, but it is not a phrasal verb. On the other hand, if your neighbours unexpectedly turn up (appear) at a party or your brother turns up his radio, those are phrasal verbs. *To come out* has eighteen different meanings.

Verbs can be combined with different prepositions and other words, sometimes with dizzying effect: stand out, stand up, stand in, standoff, stand by, stand fast, stand pat, stand down, stand against, stand for. Further, the verb and the word or phrase it connects to are not always contiguous: "Fill this out," we would say, but then we would say, "Fill out this form."

Following is a list of verbs is accompanied with brief definitions and examples; however, the list is a mere sampling of the hundreds of phrasal verb combinations.

### Separable Phrasal Verbs

The object may come after the following phrasal verbs or it may separate the two parts:

- You have to do this paint job over.
- You have to do over this paint job.

When the object of the following phrasal verbs is a pronoun, the two parts of the phrasal verb must be separated:

- You have to do it over.

### Separable Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal Verbs	Meaning	Example
blow up	explode	The terrorists tried to <u>blow up</u> the railroad station.
bring up	mention a topic	My mother <u>brought up</u> that little matter of my prison record again.
bring up	raise children	It isn't easy to <u>bring up</u> children nowadays.
call off	cancel	They <u>called off</u> this afternoon's meeting
do over	repeat a job	<u>Do</u> this homework <u>over</u> .
fill out	complete a form	<u>Fill out</u> this application form and mail it in.
fill up	fill to capacity	She <u>filled up</u> the grocery cart with free food.
find out	discover	My sister <u>found out</u> that her husband had been planning a surprise party for her.

give away	give something to someone else for free	The filling station was <u>giving away</u> free gas.
give back	return an object	My brother borrowed my car. I have a feeling he's not about to <u>give it back</u> .
hand in	submit something (assignment)	The students <u>handed in</u> their papers and left the room.
hang up	put something on hook or receiver	She <u>hung up</u> the phone before she hung up her clothes.
hold up	delay	I hate to <u>hold up</u> the meeting, but I have to go to the bathroom.
hold up (2)	rob	Three masked gunmen <u>held up</u> the Security Bank this afternoon.
leave out	omit	You <u>left out</u> the part about the police chase down Asylum Avenue.
look over	examine, check	The lawyers <u>looked over</u> the papers carefully before questioning the witness. (They <u>looked</u> them <u>over</u> carefully.)
look up	search in a list	You've misspelled this word again. You'd better <u>look it up</u> .
make up	invent a story or lie	She knew she was in trouble, so she <u>made up</u> a story about going to the movies with her friends.
make out	hear, understand	He was so far away; we really couldn't <u>make out</u> what he was saying.
pick out	choose	There were three men in the line-up. She <u>picked out</u> the guy she thought had stolen her purse.
pick up	lift something off something else	The crane <u>picked up</u> the entire house. (Watch them <u>pick it up</u> .)
point out	call attention to	As we drove through Paris, Francoise <u>pointed out</u> the major historical sites.
put away	save or store	We <u>put away</u> money for our retirement. She <u>put away</u> the cereal boxes.
put off	postpone	We asked the boss to <u>put off</u> the meeting until tomorrow. (Please <u>put it off</u> for another day.)
put on	put clothing on the body	I <u>put on</u> a sweater and a jacket. (I <u>put</u> them <u>on</u> quickly.)
put out	extinguish	The fire fighters <u>put out</u> the house fire before it could spread. (They <u>put it out</u> quickly.)
read over	peruse	I <u>read over</u> the homework, but couldn't make any sense of it.
Set-up	to arrange, begin	My wife <u>set-up</u> the living room exactly the way she wanted it. She <u>set it up</u> .
take down	make a written note	These are your instructions. <u>Write them down</u> before you forget.
take off	remove clothing	It was so hot that I had to <u>take off</u> my shirt.
talk over	discuss	We have serious problems here. Let's <u>talk them over</u> like adults.
throw away	discard	That's a lot of money! Don't just <u>throw it away</u> .
try on	put clothing on to see if it fits	She <u>tried on</u> fifteen dresses before she found one she liked.

try out	test	I <u>tried out</u> four cars before I could find one that pleased me.
turn down	lower volume	Your radio is driving me crazy! Please <u>turn it down</u> .
turn down (2)	reject	He applied for a promotion twice this year, but he was <u>turned down</u> both times.
turn up	raise the volume	Grandpa couldn't hear, so he <u>turned up</u> his hearing aid.
turn off	switch off electricity	We <u>turned off</u> the lights before anyone could see us.
turn off (2)	repulse	It was a disgusting movie. It really <u>turned me off</u> .
turn on	switch on the electricity	<u>Turn on</u> the CD player so we can dance.
use up	exhaust, use completely	The gang members <u>used up</u> all the money and went out to rob some more banks.

### Inseparable Phrasal Verbs (Transitive)

With the following phrasal verbs, the lexical part of the verb (the part of the phrasal verb that carries the "verb-meaning") cannot be separated from the prepositions (or other parts) that accompany it: "Who will look after my estate when I'm gone?"

### Inseparable Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal Verb	Meaning	Example
call on	ask to recite in class	The teacher <u>called on</u> students in the back row.
call on (2)	visit	The old minister continued to <u>call on</u> his sick parishioners.
get over	recover from sickness or disappointment	I <u>got over</u> the flu, but I don't know if I'll ever <u>get over</u> my broken heart.
go over	review	The students <u>went over</u> the material before the exam. They should have <i>gone over</i> it twice.
go through	use up; consume	They country <u>went through</u> most of its coal reserves in one year. Did he <u>go through</u> all his money already?
look after	take care of	My mother promised to <u>look after</u> my dog while I was gone.
look into	investigate	The police will <u>look into</u> the possibilities of embezzlement.
run across	find by chance	I <u>ran across</u> my old roommate at the college reunion.
run into	meet	Carlos <u>ran into</u> his English professor in the hallway.
take after	resemble	My second son seems to <u>take after</u> his mother.
wait on	serve	It seemed strange to see my old boss <u>wait on</u> tables.

### Three word Phrasal Verbs (Transitive)

Phrasal Verb	Meaning	Example
break in on	interrupt (a conversation)	I was talking to Mom on the phone when the operator <u>broke in on</u> our call.
catch up with	keep abreast	After our month-long trip, it was time to <u>catch up with</u> the neighbours and the news around town.

check up on	examine, investigate	The boys promised to <u>check up on</u> the condition of the summer house from time to time.
come up with	to contribute (suggestion, money)	After years of giving nothing, the old parishioner was able to <u>come up with</u> a thousand-dollar donation.
cut down on	curtail (expenses)	We tried to <u>cut down on</u> the money we were spending on entertainment.
drop out of	leave school	I hope none of my students <u>drop out of</u> school this semester.
get along with	have a good relationship with	I found it very hard to <u>get along with</u> my brother when we were young.
get away with	escape blame	Janik cheated on the exam and then tried to <u>get away with</u> it.
get rid of	eliminate	The citizens tried to <u>get rid of</u> their corrupt mayor in the recent election.
get through with	finish	When will you ever <u>get through with</u> that program?
keep up with	maintain pace with	It's hard to <u>keep up with</u> the Joneses when you lose your job!
look forward to	anticipate with pleasure	I always <u>look forward to</u> the beginning of a new semester.
look down on	despise	It's typical of a jingoistic country that the citizens <u>look down on</u> their geographical neighbours.
look in on	visit (somebody)	We were going to <u>look in on</u> my brother-in-law, but he wasn't home.
look out for	be careful, anticipate	Good instructors will <u>look out for</u> early signs of failure in their students
look up to	respect	First-graders really <u>look up to</u> their teachers.
make sure of	verify	<u>Make sure of</u> the student's identity before you let him into the classroom.
put up with	tolerate	The teacher had to <u>put up with</u> a great deal of nonsense from the new students.
run out of	exhaust supply	The runners <u>ran out of</u> energy before the end of the race.
take care of	be responsible for	My oldest sister <u>took care of</u> us younger children after Mom died.
talk back to	answer impolitely	The star player <u>talked back to</u> the coach and was thrown off the team.
think back on	recall	I often <u>think back on</u> my childhood with great pleasure.
walk out on	abandon	Her husband <u>walked out on</u> her and their three children.

### Intransitive Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal Verb	Meaning	Example
break down	stop functioning	That old Jeep had a tendency to <u>break down</u> just when I needed it the most.
catch on	become popular	Popular songs seem to <u>catch on</u> in California first and then spread eastward.
come back	return to a place	Father promised that we would never <u>come back</u> to this horrible place.
come in	enter	They tried to <u>come in</u> through the back door, but it was locked.

come to	regain consciousness	He was hit on the head very hard, but after several minutes, he started to <u>come to</u> again.
come over	to visit	The children promised to <u>come over</u> , but they never do.
drop by	visit without appointment	We used to just <u>drop by</u> , but they were never home, so we stopped doing that.
eat out	dine in a restaurant	When we visited Paris, we loved <u>eating out</u> in the sidewalk cafes.
get by	survive	Uncle Heine didn't have much money, but he always seemed to <u>get by</u> without borrowing money from relatives.
get up	arise	Grandmother tried to <u>get up</u> , but the couch was too low, and she couldn't make it on her own.
go back	return to a place	It's hard to imagine that we will ever <u>go back</u> to Lithuania.
go on	continue	He would finish one Dickens novel and then just <u>go on</u> to the next.
go on (2)	happen	The cops heard all the noise and stopped to see what was <u>going on</u> .
grow up	get older	Charles <u>grew up</u> to be a lot like his father.
keep away	remain at a distance	The judge warned the stalker to <u>keep away</u> from his victim's home.
keep on (with gerund)	continue with the same	He tried to <u>keep on</u> singing long after his voice was ruined.
pass out	lose consciousness, faint	He had drunk too much; he <u>passed out</u> on the sidewalk outside the bar.
show off	demonstrate haughtily	Whenever he sat down at the piano, we knew he was going to <u>show off</u> .
show up	arrive	Day after day, Efrain <u>showed up</u> for class twenty minutes late.
wake up	arouse from sleep	I <u>woke up</u> when the rooster crowed.