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**80 Most Common Phrasal Verbs**

[Matt Ellis](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/author/mattellis/)

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Phrasal verbs are two or more words that together act as a completely new word, with a meaning separate from the original words. For example, *pick up* means to “grab” or “lift,” very different from the definitions of *pick* and *up* alone. Popular in spoken English, phrasal verbs can be quite confusing because their definitions aren’t always easy to guess—and there are thousands of them. In fact, many phrasal verbs are distinct variations on the same base verb, which can add to the confusion.

For multilingual speakers, in particular, phrasal verbs are one of the most difficult topics in [learning English](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/how-to-learn-english/). To help simplify this complicated issue, what follows is our guide to understanding English phrasal verbs, including a list of the most common ones.

What is a phrasal verb?

A phrasal verb combines a normal [verb](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/verbs/) with an [adverb](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/adverb/) or a [preposition](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/prepositions/) to create an entirely new verbal phrase—the *phrasal verb*. The meaning of a phrasal verb is usually unrelated to the meanings of the words that comprise it, so think of a phrasal verb as an entirely new and independent word.

When used in a sentence, phrasal verbs act the same as other verbs for [conjugation](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/verb-conjugation/) and placement, although they do have special [grammatical](https://www.grammarly.com/grammar) rules about word order, which we talk about below. Phrasal verbs can be conjugated into [every type of verb form](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/verb-forms/), so you can use them anywhere you could use a normal verb.

Let’s look at the phrasal verb *get over* as an example. The verb *get* alone means to “acquire,” and the preposition *over* alone usually refers to being higher or going above something. However, put them together and the phrasal verb *get over* means to “recover” or “overcome,” a completely new definition that’s separate from the definitions of *get* and *over*.

You can use *get over* just like a normal verb, in any form or tense. Here are some quick examples:

[**Simple past tense**](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/infinitives/)**:**

*I had the flu last week but got over it.*

[**Infinitive**](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/infinitives/)**:**

*He wrote a song to get over his grandmother’s death.*

[**Gerund**](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/gerund/)**:**

*Getting over prejudice at work is never easy.*

[**Participle**](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/participle/)**:**

*Having finally gotten over the breakup, they were ready to return their partner’s things.*

How to conjugate phrasal verbs

When a phrasal verb is used as the [main verb](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/main-verb/) of a sentence, you conjugate the verb part and leave the other words as they are. Simply use whatever form of the verb you would use if it were alone.

*I get up at noon during the summer.*

*However, this morning I got up at sunrise.*

*I have gotten up early too many times this month.*

Notice how only the word *get* changes, but the word *up* remains the same. Also notice how *get*, an [irregular verb](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/irregular-verbs/), uses its irregular forms to fit whichever tense it needs.

In this way, you can use phrasal verbs in [all the verb tenses](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/verb-tenses/), so you’re able to communicate anything you want. Conjugation is also important for maintaining [verb tense consistency](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/verb-tense-consistency/) if you’re using phrasal verbs in a list with other verbs.

Types of phrasal verbs

To better understand phrasal verbs, it helps to organize them into two pairs: transitive and intransitive; separable and inseparable. A phrasal verb can belong to only one of each pair (although *all* separable phrasal verbs are transitive).

Transitive phrasal verbs

Transitive phrasal verbs use a direct object, just like normal [transitive verbs](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/transitive-and-intransitive-verbs/).

*Charlie couldn’t put up with the meowing cats any longer.*

Intransitive phrasal verbs

Likewise, intransitive phrasal verbs do *not* use an object.

*The regional director was late, so the sales team went ahead without her.*

Separable phrasal verbs

With transitive phrasal verbs, you can sometimes put the direct object in between the words, for example, “pick *you* up.” There are, however, a few rules to follow with separable phrasal verbs, so pay attention to our next section about word order.

*He forgot to shut the lights off before he left.*

Inseparable phrasal verbs

Inseparable phrasal verbs cannot be split up and must be used together.

*The wayward son carried on without his father.*

Word order with phrasal verbs

Most of the time, the words in a phrasal verb stay together. For intransitive and inseparable phrasal verbs, the verb and the participle *must* go next to each other and should never be split up.

Separable phrasal verbs follow different rules, however. For starters, separable phrasal verbs are always transitive, so they always have a direct object. **You can put the direct object in the middle of separable phrasal verbs**, in between the verb and the participle:

*Augustus would never let Hazel down.*

This is also true for noun phrases; place all words in a noun phrase in between the verb and the participle of a phrasal verb:

*You would never let any of your friends down.*

Some separable verbs require you to put the direct object in the middle *every* time. For example, let’s look at the phrasal verb *get down*.

*The beginning of the movie* Up *gets down everyone.*

*The beginning of the movie* Up *gets everyone down.*

On the other hand, sometimes it doesn’t matter whether the direct object comes in the middle or at the end of a phrasal verb. Both options are acceptable. Unfortunately, there’s no method for knowing whether or not you have to separate a phrasal verb; you just have to study and practice until it comes naturally.

*Pick the box up and carry it to the* kitchen.

*Pick up the box and carry it to the kitchen.*

However, [pronouns](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/pronouns/) follow a special rule when it comes to separable phrasal verbs: **If the object is a pronoun, it must be placed in the middle of a phrasal verb.** Pronoun direct objects cannot go at the end.

*Pick up it and carry it to the kitchen.*

*Pick it up and carry it to the kitchen.*

Remember that **not all transitive phrasal verbs are separable**. Transitive phrasal verbs can be either separable or inseparable, so be careful of where you put your object. For example, the transitive phrasal verbs *get through*, *come between*, and *go against* are all inseparable, so the direct object comes after them every time.

*Nothing comes us between.*

*Nothing comes between us.*

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80 common phrasal verbs (with meanings and examples)

**back [x] up**

support or defend someone

*When the class was making fun of me, only the teacher backed me up.*

**break down**

stop working, especially when referring to machines

*The ice cream machine at McDonald’s is always breaking down.*

**call around**

contact multiple people

*Roy called around to find a nearby mechanic.*

**calm down**

relax after an energetic or irritated state

*I need a few minutes to calm down after that match.*

**call [x] off**

cancel

*We called the party off.* / *We called off the party.*

**check [x] out**

verify a person or thing (can sometimes be flirtatious when used in reference to a person)

*I’ll check the contract out.* / *I’ll check out the contract.*

**clean up**

be extremely successful in an endeavor, such as business, sports, or gambling

*Our hockey team cleaned up at the tournament and went home undefeated.*

stop questionable behavior, such as consuming drugs or alcohol

*Her boss said she had to either clean up or find a new job.*

**clean [x] up**

clean a general area

*John cleaned the living room up.* / *John cleaned up the living room.*

**cheer [x] up**

make someone happy, especially if they were previously sad

*Reading always cheers me up on a rainy day.*

**come around**

change an opinion or see a new point of view

*I never liked seafood, but came around after trying fried calamari.*

**come between**

disturb a relationship

*After more than fifty years of marriage, nothing could come between them.*

**come down on**

attack or punish harshly

*Ever since last month’s accident, police have been coming down on drunk driving.*

**come down with**

become sick

*After sitting in the rain for hours, Chandra came down with a nasty cold.*

**come out of**

happen as a consequence of another event

*We missed a day of school, so at least some good came out of our boring class trip.*

**come up**

become the topic of discussion or receive attention

*Everyone talked about how much they enjoyed the movie, but the run time never came up in the conversation.*

approach or come near

*While walking outside the fence, a cow came up right next to me and licked my face.*

happen or occur, as with an event or situation

*Don’t worry about a problem until after it comes up.*

**come up with**

think of an idea, especially as the first person to do so, or to produce a solution

*Sahar comes up with her best story ideas at night, so she writes them down before she forgets them.*

**count on**

rely or depend on

*If I’m ever making a mistake, I can count on my friends to warn me.*

**dive into**

occupy oneself with something; to pore over quickly or reach into quickly

*I’ll dive into that new TV show later tonight.*

**dress up**

wear nice clothes or put forth in the best light

*Abed dressed up for the award ceremony.*

**end up**

eventually reach some conclusion or destination

*After thinking for a day, he ended up taking the job.*

**fall apart**

break into pieces

*My new dress completely fell apart after just two washes.*

suffer from mental or emotional distress

*He endured all kinds of harassment at work without flinching but completely fell apart when his cat got sick.*

**fill [x] up**

fill something completely

*Bruce filled his wine glass up to the brim.* / *Bruce filled up his wine glass to the brim.*

**find out**

discover or learn

*We’ll have to wait until the next TV episode to find out who the killer is.*

**get [x] across**

communicate or explain something clearly

*The professor spoke for hours but didn’t get anything across to the students.*

**get ahead**

succeed or progress

*You’ll never get ahead at this company unless you follow the rules.*

**get around**

travel from place to place

*It’s impossible to get around this city without a car.*

**get around to [x]**

do something eventually

*I’ll get around to fixing the table after the playoffs.*

**get away with**

escape punishment or some other unpleasantness

*Shirley thought she got away with cheating until the teacher asked her to stay after class.*

**get along with**

be friendly with

*My dog gets along with everyone as long as they’re not a cat.*

**get at**

reach

*There’s an itch on my back that I can’t get at.*

attempt to prove or explain

*What these graphs are getting at is that we’ll be bankrupt by next week.*

**get away**

escape or depart from

*Lucio liked to go to the lake every weekend, just to get away from the city.*

**get away with**

escape punishment for a crime or misdeed

*The boss’s nephew gets away with much more than any of the other employees.*

**get [x] back**

have something returned

*Rodger got his pencil back from Greta.* / *Rodger got back his pencil from Greta.*

**get back at**

have revenge on someone

*Laila promised herself that she would get back at whoever started the rumor.*

**get by**

survive or manage at the bare minimum

*When Sheila lost her job, the family had to get by with only their savings.*

**get down**

enjoy oneself without inhibitions, especially with music or dancing

*Vicente may be overly formal at work, but he sure knows how to get down to hip-hop.*

**get [x] down**

depress or discourage someone

*Kima always gets everyone down with her stories from the hospital.*

record or write something down

*The President spoke quickly at the press conference, and reporters were struggling to get all of his comments down.*

**get down to**

begin or start

*Once everyone arrives, we’ll get down to picking teams.*

**get in on**

join an activity

*After Bitcoin started going up, everyone wanted to get in on cryptocurrency.*

**get into**

discuss something thoroughly

*I don’t want to get into our finances now; we’ll talk after our guests leave.*

**get [x] out of**

receive a benefit from something

*Babysitting the Cohles was a nightmare, but at least Janelle got some money out of it.*

**get over**

recover or overcome

*Drinking a lot of water helps in getting over an illness.*

**get through**

complete or endure an unpleasant task

*Alessandra can’t get through a morning without coffee.*

**get to**

annoy or bother someone

*People who don’t clean up after their dogs really get to me.*

**get together**

have a social event

*The volleyball team is getting together for dinner after practice.*

**give [x] away**

donate something or give something for free

*Mindy gave her prized doll collection away.* / *Mindy gave away her prized doll collection.*

**give up**

accept defeat, quit, or surrender

*Carin felt like giving up every time she saw the scoreboard.*

**give [x] up**

stop consuming or doing something, often a habit

*Minh gave chocolate up for his diet.* / *Minh gave up chocolate for his diet.*

**go against**

contradict, oppose, or fight against

*A group of students went against the school dress code yesterday and wore ripped jeans.*

**go ahead**

proceed or move forward

*Because of the snow, we can’t go ahead with the festival.*

**go along with**

agree with or pretend to agree with

*Even though Cedric hated weight lifting, he went along with it because his coach suggested it.*

**go for**

try or attempt to achieve something

*Carlos trains so hard because he is going for an Olympic gold medal.*

**go on**

continue doing something (see *keep [x] up*)

*The boys will go on digging until they hit a water pipe.*

**go over**

review or look at again

*Marie went over the study guide one last time before the test.*

**hand in**

submit (especially an assignment)

*The teacher wants us to hand in our essays through email.*

**hold [x] back**

prevent someone from doing something

*I wanted to become an architect, but my bad grades held me back.*

**keep [x] up**

continue doing something (see *go on*)

*Keep this pace up and you’ll set a new record!*

**leave [x] out**

omit or disregard

*Orna left the graph out of the presentation. /* *Orna left out the graph from the presentation.*

**let [x] down**

disappoint

*Kamal let Marco down when he arrived late.* / *Kamal let down Marco when he arrived late.*

**let go of**

release or free

*Don’t let go of the rope until I’m safe.*

**let [x] in**

allow to enter

*Close the door or you’ll let the flies in!*

**let [x] know**

tell someone something

*Let me know as soon as Leslie texts back.*

**look after**

take care of someone or something

*Thank you for looking after me when I was sick.*

**look up to [x]**

admire or idolize someone

*I looked up to this YouTuber until I read about their scandal.*

**mix up**

confuse something with something else

*It’s easy to mix up Chris Pine and Chris Pratt.*

**pull [x] up**

retrieve or bring something nearer

*Eugene pulled the document up on his computer.* / *Eugene pulled up the document on his computer.*

**put [x] on**

wear or add something to your person or an object

*I always put my backpack on before leaving the house.* / *I always put on my backpack before leaving the house.*

**put up with**

tolerate or condone

*Somehow Paz could put up with Janice’s cynical attitude.*

**run out of**

use all of or drain the supply of something

*Isabella ran out of toilet paper at the worst possible time.*

**see to**

make sure something is done

*I’ll see to watering the plants while you’re gone.*

**set [x] up**

arrange or organize

*Since no one invited me to join their study group, I set one up myself.*

**show off**

deliberately display abilities or accomplishments in order to impress people

*Panya didn’t need to shoot so many three-pointers; she was just showing off.*

**shut [x] off**

turn off, especially a machine

*Don’t forget to shut the water off after your shower.* / *Don’t forget to shut off the water after your shower.*

**take after**

resemble, especially with parents and their children

*Li takes after his father when it comes to politics.*

**take [x] out**

move something outside

*Please take the garbage out before dinner.* / *Please take out the garbage before dinner.*

**think [x] over**

consider something

*When his parents suggested selling his Pokemon cards, Yosef thought it over.*

**throw [x] away**

dispose of something

*Could you throw that old burrito away?* / *Could you throw away that old burrito?*

**turn [x] down**

reject or say “no”

*My crush turned me down after I asked them out.*