

56 of the Most Useful Phrasal Verbs in English

Below are some of the most common phrasal verbs in the English language. We organized them alphabetically so they're easy to find, but you can group them however you want when you're learning them!

Bring

Bring up — To mention something. (Note: The two parts of this phrasal verb *can* be separated.)

*"Mark was sick and had to miss the party, so please don't **bring it up**, I don't want him to feel bad for missing it."*

Bring on — To cause something to happen, usually something negative. (The two parts of this phrasal verb can be separated by what's happening.)

*"His lung cancer was **brought on** by years of smoking."*

Bring it on! — To accept a challenge with confidence.

*"You want to have a race? **Bring it on!** I can beat you!"*

Call

Call on — This can mean either to visit someone, or to use someone's or something's knowledge.

To visit someone: *"I'll **call on** you this evening to see how you're feeling."*

To use someone's knowledge: *"I may need to **call on** the university's excellent professors in order to answer your question."*

Call off — To cancel something.

*"The picnic was **called off** because of the rain."*

Cheer

Cheer on — To support someone by giving them words of encouragement. (Can be separated by the name or pronoun of the person/people being cheered on).

*"Even though Samantha was in the last place, her brother **cheered her on** through the entire race."*

Cheer up — This phrase can either be used as a phrase of encouragement said to someone who seems sad (just saying "cheer up!" to them), or it can mean to try to make someone happier.

*"Andrew was having a bad day, so his girlfriend **cheered him up** by taking him out for ice cream."*

Come

Come up (with something) — To think of an idea.

*"I **came up** with this idea for a TV show about a woman living with her best friend and daughter. I call it 'Two and a Half Women.'"*

Come up — To bring up a topic, or when something happens unexpectedly.

To bring up a topic: *"I wanted to tell her that I got a new job but the chance never **came up**."*

Unexpected occurrence: *"I was going to meet my friends for dinner, but something **came up** so I had to cancel."*

Come in — To enter.

*"**Come in**, the door is open!" said the grandmother to the wolf."*

Come across — To meet or find by chance.

*"I was cleaning the attic and I **came across** my high school uniform. Can you believe it still fits?"*

Come forward — To volunteer information about something, like a crime.

*"The police are encouraging people to **come forward** with any information about the kidnapped girl."*

Cut

Cut off — This phrase can be used in several ways, but its general meaning is "to interrupt or stop something." (Can be separated.)

While driving, to get in front of another car suddenly: *"That red car just **cut me off** and I almost crashed into it."*

To stop supplying things to or communicating with someone: *"His father is rich but he **cut him off** without any money of his own."*

Cut (it) out — This phrase has the same meaning as saying "Stop it."

*"Hey, **cut it out!** I was watching that movie, so stop changing the channel!"*

Cut in — To interrupt someone when they are speaking.

*"I was about to ask that girl on a date, but her friend **cut in** and I lost the chance."*

Drop

Drop by/in — To stop by for a visit, for a short time.

*"Andrew is such a great boyfriend, when he heard that his girlfriend had a cold he **dropped by** to bring her some soup."*

Drop off — To leave something or someone in their destination. (Can be separated by the object being dropped off.)

*"I can give you a ride and **drop you off** at work."*

Fall

Fall apart — This phrase means "to break into pieces," but it can be used to talk about things that are not physical, like a marriage or a person.

*"They tried to save their marriage by going to therapy but in the end it **fell apart** anyway."*

Fall down — To drop to the ground, usually by accident.

*"My friend slipped on a banana peel and **fell down**. I thought that only happened in [cartoons](#)!"*

Fill

Fill (someone) in — To give someone the details about something. (Is usually separated by the person getting filled in).

*"Quickly, let's go! There's no time to explain, I'll **fill** you **in** on the way."*

Fill up — To become completely full.

*"The little girl **filled up** on candy before dinner, and didn't want to eat any of the chicken."*

Get

Get away — To escape. You may have heard the phrase "getaway car." That's the car used by criminals to run away from a crime scene, like a bank robbery.

*"Carmen's neighbor tried to show her pictures of all her cats, but Carmen managed to **get away**."*

Get around — To solve a problem by avoiding the main issue. This phrase can also be used very informally to refer to someone who has many sexual partners. As you can imagine, it's not very nice to say that someone "gets around"!

*"Some people know all the different ways to **get around** tax laws."*

Get along (with) — To have a friendly relationship with someone.

*"Some people are surprised that I **get along with** my mother-in-law really well!"*

Get up — To stand up, or to wake up.

*"I have so much trouble **getting up** in the morning that I have to set three alarms."*

Get back to — To return to someone or something. This phrase is often used to say that you will return with an answer to a question or a request at a later time.

*"Derek's coworker wasn't sure what time the meeting was, so he said he'd **get back to** him with the time."*

Get back at — To get revenge on someone.

*"Her ex-husband took her house so she **got back at** him by taking his dogs."*

Give

Give out — This phrase can mean to break down or stop working, or to hand out or distribute something.

To stop working: *"The city had to rebuild the bridge completely, because it was about to **give out** and fall down."*

To distribute: *"He has a lot of contacts because he **gives out** his business card to everyone he meets."*

Give in — To surrender, especially in a fight or argument.

*"Ben's mother **gave in** and let him stay out late with his friends."*

Give away — To hand things out for free. (Can be separated by the item being given away.)

*"When Linda's cat had kittens, she **gave** them all **away** to good homes."*

Give up — To stop trying, surrender.

*"After two weeks of trying to build my own table, I **gave up** and just bought one."*

Go

Go out (with) — To go on a date with someone.

*"Sarah was so happy when Peter finally asked her to **go out with** him!"*

Go ahead — To go in front of someone, or to give permission to do or say something.

*"**Go ahead**, explain to me why there is a car on my roof."*

Grow

Grow up — To grow up, sometimes used to tell someone to stop acting childish.

*"Some people tell Steve he needs to **grow up**, but he loves acting like a child."*

Grow apart — To get distant from someone, like a friend.

*"When my friend moved to a different country I tried to stay close with her, but we slowly **grew apart**."*

Hang

Hang on — To keep something.

*"When everyone else was getting fired, Paul managed to **hang on** to his job."*

Hang out — To spend time with someone, casually.

*"My friends and I used to **hang out** in the park after school."*

Hang up — To end a call on the phone, especially if it's before the other person is ready.

*"I was in the middle of a sentence, and he **hung up** on me! How rude."*

Hold

Hold on — To hold something tightly. This phrase can also be a way of asking someone to wait for a moment.

*"You'd better **hold on** to your hat, it's windy out there!"*

Hold back — To stop yourself from doing or saying something.

*"Amy has a great voice but whenever she's singing in public she feels shy and **holds back**."*

Log

Log in (to) — Used with computers, this phrase means to sign into your account on a website or computer.

*"Don't forget to **log in** to your [FluentU](#) account to learn English better and faster."*

Log out/off — Also used with computers, this phrase means to sign out of your account.

*"You should always **log out** of your accounts when you use a public computer."*

Look

Look up — To check the meaning of something. (Can be separated by the item being looked up).

*"If you don't know the meaning of a word, you should **look it up** in the dictionary."*

Look out — To watch out for something.

*"**Look out**, there's a baseball coming your way!"*

Pay

Pay back — To give someone back money that you owe them. (Can be separated by the person getting paid back.) When it's written as one word, "payback" means revenge.

"Thanks for getting me lunch when I forgot my wallet at home!

*I'll **payyou back** tomorrow."*

Pay for — This phrase can either mean to give someone money for a particular purpose (like paying for a new car), or to suffer because of something you did.

*"He'll **pay for** all the problems he caused me by being late today!"*

Put

Put out — This phrase can mean to extinguish a fire, or to irritate someone by asking them for a favor. (In the case of annoying someone, can be separated by the person getting annoyed.) Be aware that in very informal slang, this phrase has [a more offensive meaning](#).

To extinguish a fire: *"The firefighters managed to **put out** the fire before it spread to other houses."*

To irritate someone: *"I'd ask you to make me dinner but I don't want to **put you out**."*

Put on — To get your clothes or makeup on.

*"Every morning she **puts on** her dress, lipstick, shoes and hat—in that order."*

Take

Take off — This phrase can mean to remove clothing, or to leave for a journey (i.e. planes *take off* when they begin their flights).

*"She was very happy when she finally got home and **took off** her shoes. They had been hurting her feet all day!"*

Take out — To remove something, like from a pocket or a bag. This phrase can also mean to take someone on a date. (Can be separated by the item or person being taken out.) The phrase can also mean to remove someone, as in by killing them—but this is probably not something you would need to use in everyday conversation!

To remove something: *"The children sat at their desks and **took out** their pens and paper."*

To take someone on a date: *"He **took her out** to the most expensive restaurant in the city."*

Turn

Turn on/off — To switch a machine or light on or off.

*"**Turn off** the light, I'm trying to sleep!"*

Turn around — To move so that you're facing the opposite direction.

*"Sally was about to get on the plane, but she **turned around** when someone called her name."*

Turn up — When someone that was lost is found unexpectedly.

*"Anything I lose usually **turns up** under the couch. It's my cat's favorite hiding place."*

Warm

Warm up (to) — To start liking someone or something more as you spend more time with them, especially if you didn't really like them in the beginning.

*"The new puppy was scared of my husband when we first got him, but he **warmed up to** him pretty quickly."*

Work

Work out — To exercise.

*"I try to **work out** every morning, by repeatedly lifting a heavy donut to my mouth."*

Work (something) out — To come up with a solution or a compromise with someone.

*"Don't worry, I'm sure we can **work something out** so that everyone is happy."*

How many of these phrasal verbs did you already know? English phrasal verbs are everywhere! Don't be afraid of how many there are—just start with a few at a time and soon you'll be an expert.