

Phrasal Verbs

A way to elevate your writing?

Phrasal verbs combine a verb with a preposition to give a whole new meaning to the phrase. (Phrase is just a string of words that IS NOT a full sentence) These phrasal verbs are a great way to mix up your vocabulary and to display a 'higher' standard of English. Phrasal verbs typically have more idiom-like meaning. Without context, their meaning can be hard to figure out. However, their meanings are generally straightforward when a background is given. Try to see if you can identify the meaning of the phrasal verbs below:

She needs to look after her younger brother while their parents are away.

Look after: take care of (someone/something)

He decided to back down when asked to drink more beer at the club.

Back down: Rejecting an offer / resignation from a situation

The old car broke down on the way to work.

Broke down: stopped functioning properly

They managed to pull off an incredible comeback in the final minutes of the game.

Pull off: achieve/ do something successfully (normally a hard task)

She's been zoning out a lot lately, probably due to stress.

Stop zoning out during the lesson, you won't learn anything!

Zoning out: not paying attention

As you can expect, to form a phrasal verb, we **put a preposition right after a verb**.

e.g. Wake up, turn down, scale down, carry out, turn in, etc.

As for the object, if your object is NOT a pronoun (he, she, it, me, us...), then you can put it between the verb and the preposition or after the whole phrase. If it is a pronoun, put it between the verb and the preposition.

e.g. Wake her up, tune down the excitement, turn the work in/turn in the work, etc.

(Go to next page for some examples)

Here is a list of 12 (common) phrasal verbs, match them to the correct sentence. For some sentences you might need to split up the phrasal verbs. You may also need to change tenses for some answers. The first 2 are done as an example.

Cut back on	Cross out	Dress up	Come across
Hand down	Hang on	Let down	Look over
Point out	Stick to	Take apart	Work out

1. We **ran out of** milk at the store this morning, so I ordered more to **fill up** the shelves.
2. He could not **turn** the offer **down** because the new job paid much better.
3. I _____ my parents _____ in this exam as I did not score well.
4. I asked my teacher to _____ my essay before I submitted it to the essay contest.
5. Please _____ unwanted answers on your exam papers since it makes it much easier for the markers to identify your intended answers.
6. I took three hours to _____ the answer to this complicated math question.
7. A week ago, I _____ my old reference books _____ to my younger brother as I no longer needed them after graduating.
8. Just _____ for a second, I will retrieve your records from the electronic system.
9. She _____ in a red silk dress for the ball.
10. I _____ this video while I was on YouTube.
11. During the meeting, the manager _____ the areas of improvement.
12. I don't think there is a need to change strategy, we should _____ the plan.
13. You are getting obese! I advise you to _____ eating fast food.
14. The repairman _____ her phone _____ to swap out the battery.

Sometimes, phrasal verbs might not be the nicest for a particular sentence. Especially in formal writings, phrasal verbs may sometimes be inappropriate for the tone. In the following sentences, change out the phrasal verbs for a normal verb. You can rewrite the whole sentence if you like.

1. We need to carry out the plan to see if his research is reliable or not.
2. He picked out a few areas where AI technology has not been applied to yet.
3. He set up the charity in a span of a few weeks.
4. He passed the sample essay around.
5. The company showed off their new phone in the convention yesterday.

6. They gave funding out for him to study on the moon rocks.
7. If you guys want to stay together, you must sort out the disagreements between you two.
8. With the new AI chatbot, the company pulled in a lot customers.
9. I looked through the computer for viruses but I could not find any.
10. He took out the drawer to lubricate the drawer railings.
11. Can you reach out to her to see if she can help us to edit the video?