

# Introducing Phrasal Verbs to ESL Students

Getting students to come to terms with phrasal verbs is a constant challenge. The fact of the matter is that phrasal verbs are just rather difficult to learn. Learning phrasal verbs out of the dictionary can help, but students really need to read and hear phrasal verbs in context for them to be able to truly understand the correct usage of phrasal verbs. This lesson takes a two pronged approach to helping student learn phrasal verbs. It begins with a reading comprehension which can also serve to introduce some interesting student stories for discussion. This comprehension is peppered with phrasal verbs which can then be discussed as a class. The second part of the lesson includes a brainstorming session for students to create lists of phrasal verbs to share with one another.

**Aim:** Improve phrasal verb vocabulary

**Activity:** Reading comprehension followed by brainstorming session and discussion

**Level:** Intermediate to upper intermediate

**Outline:**

- Have the students read the short story full of phrasal verbs.
- Ask them some general comprehension questions about the text. Once they have read the text, ask them to tell a story of their own from their youth.
- Now that you have discussed the text, ask the students to find the phrasal verbs from the list which occur in the reading selection. Once the students have found these phrasal verbs, ask the students to provide synonyms for the phrasal verbs.
- Tell the students a little bit about what you have done that teaching day:

**Example:** *I got up at seven this morning. After I had breakfast, I put together tonight's lesson plan and came to school. I got into the bus at X square and got off at Y square....*

- Ask students which of the verbs you used were phrasal verbs and ask them to repeat those verbs. At this point, you might want to ask them if they have ever taken a look under the heading 'get' in a dictionary. Ask them what they discovered.
- Explain that phrasal verbs are very important in English - especially for native speakers of the language. You can point out that it might not be important for them to be able to use a lot of phrasal verbs if they use their English with other non-native speakers. However, it is important that they have a passive knowledge of phrasal verbs, as they will need to understand more and more phrasal verbs as they become used to reading, listening, seeing and exploring authentic materials in English. Obviously, if they are going to use their English with native speakers, they will really need to buckle down and get used to using and understanding phrasal verbs.
- Write a list of common verbs that combine with prepositions to make phrasal verbs. I would suggest the following list:
  - Take
  - Get
  - Make
  - Put
  - Bring
  - Turn
  - Be
  - Carry
- Divide students into small groups of 3-4 each, ask students to choose three of the verbs from the list and then brainstorm to come up with as many phrasal verbs using each of the three verbs that they can. They should also write example sentences for each of the phrasal verbs.
- As a class, ask students to take notes while you write the phrasal verbs down that each group provides. You should then give a spoken example or two for each of the phrasal verbs so that students can understand the phrasal verbs from the context of what you are saying.

- Once you have provided the students with examples, ask the students to read their own examples and check to make sure that they have used the phrasal verbs correctly.

**NOTE** Don't introduce the idea of separable and inseparable phrasal verbs at this point. The students will already be dealing with almost too much new information. Save that for a future lesson!

### Adventures Growing Up

I was brought up in a small town in the countryside. Growing up in the countryside offered lots of advantages for young people. The only problem was that we often got into trouble as we made up stories that we acted out around town. I can remember one particular adventure in particular: One day as we were coming back from school, we came up with the brilliant idea to make out that we were pirates looking for treasure. My best friend Tom said that he made out an enemy ship in the distance. We all ran for cover and picked up a number of rocks to use for ammunition against the ship as we got ready to put together our plan of action. We were ready to set off on our attack, we slowly went along the path until we were face to face with our enemy - the postman's truck! The postman was dropping off a package at Mrs. Brown's house, so we got into his truck. At that point, we really didn't have any idea about what we were going to do next. The radio was playing so we turned down the volume to discuss what we would do next. Jack was all for switching on the motor and getting away with the stolen mail! Of course, we were just children, but the idea of actually making off with a truck was too much for us to believe. We all broke out in nervous laughter at the thought of us driving down the road in this stolen Postal Truck. Luckily for us, the postman came running towards us shouting, "What are you kids up to?!". Of course, we all got out of that truck as quickly as we could and took off down the road.

### Phrasal Verbs

- to make out
- to make off with
- to drop off
- to set off
- to get out of
- to get into
- to get ready
- to be up to
  
- to take off
- to grow up
- to make up
- to set off
- to turn down
- to get into
- to bring up
- to break out