

Grammar Reference

Multi-word verbs / Phrasal verbs type 1, 2, 3 & 4

Meaning and use

Multi-word verbs are verbs that combine with one or two particles, which may be adverbs or prepositions, to make new verbs. They are sometimes called phrasal verbs. A lot of common verbs do this and many of them can combine with several different particles. Each one changes the meaning of the verb.

*Shall we **give away** all the old books in the office?* (give them to someone else)

*He kept on arguing so in the end I **gave in**.* (decide to agree with someone)

*I'll just have water. I'm trying to **give up** coffee.* (stop doing or using something)

Sometimes you can guess the meaning of a phrasal verb because it is related to the main verb. Look at this example again.

*Shall we **give away** all the old books in the office?*

The meaning is clearly related to the verb **give**. In the other two examples above though, the meaning has completely changed.

Phrasal verbs are often used in spoken and informal English instead of a more formal verb.

*I don't believe that story. I think he **made it up**!* (invented it)

*Come to my office and we'll **talk it over**.* (discuss it)

*'Is the meeting still on today?' 'No, they've **called it off**.'* (cancelled it)

Form

There are four different types of phrasal verbs.

Type 1 Separable phrasal verbs

They are transitive (= they have an object). Most phrasal verbs are this type.

*He's **set up** a meeting. / He's **set** a meeting **up**.*

*I've **worked out** the answer. / I've **worked** the answer **out**.*

Notice that you can put the object after the phrasal verb, but you can also separate the main verb and the particle.

If you use an object pronoun, you must always separate the main verb and the particle.

*He's **set it up***

NOT: *He's set up it.*

Type 2 Non-separable phrasal verbs 1

They are transitive (= they have an object), but you can never separate the two parts of the verb. Prepositional verbs (verbs that are followed by a preposition and not an adverb) are always of this type.

*You can **get on the bus** right outside the building.*

NOT: *You can get the bus on right outside the building.*

*I completely **disagree with him**.*

NOT: *I completely disagree him with.*

Type 3 Non-separable phrasal verbs 2

They are intransitive (=they don't have an object) and you can't separate the two parts of the verb.

***Watch out!** There's a car coming.*

*Unfortunately the deal has **fallen through**.*

*Why don't you **drop in** on your way home?*

Type 4 Three-part phrasal verbs

They have an adverb and a preposition followed by a direct object. You can't separate the parts of the phrasal verb.

*Mark's **come up with** a brilliant new idea.*

*I was nervous, but determined to **go through with** it.*

*You should always **stand up for** what you think is right.*

Take note: Type 3 and Type 4 phrasal verbs

Some phrasal verbs are both Type 3 and Type 4. You can add a preposition so that the Type 3 verb can have an object.

"Where's the paper for the photocopier?"

*"I think we've **run out**. Jake! Have we **run out of paper** for the photocopier?"*

Pronunciation

For most phrasal verbs, the main stress is on the adverb.

*He kept on arguing so in the end I gave **in**.*

*I don't think I can put **up** with it any more.*

But for prepositional verbs, the main stress is on the verb.

*I completely **agree** with you.*

For more practice of phrasal verbs, go to [Unit 21 of our Intermediate Course](#).