

50 PHRASAL VERBS YOU NEED TO KNOW

In this lesson, you will learn 50 of the most common phrasal verbs. I've prepared 5 short stories for you to see how these phrasal verbs are used in context. This way, you can learn how to use them in real-life situations. I will give you their meanings, transcriptions and example sentences, too. I've also included additional vocabulary to ensure you understand each story. Don't forget to take the quiz at the end to see how much you've learnt!

Emily's First Job

Way back in my uni days, my best friend, Emily, started her first job as a waiter in a bustling café. Nervous but determined, she decided to **look up** some tips while sitting on the bus to work. Just as she was starting to relax, the bus suddenly **broke down**.

She quickly **got off** the bus and **shot off** on foot. Her new colleague, Sarah, helped her **calm down** and **get on with** her duties. Emily **came across** challenging customer after challenging customer, but she managed to keep her cool. Sarah's guidance was invaluable as she continued to **look after** Emily throughout her shift.

During the busy lunch rush, Emily **knocked over** a tray of glasses onto her phone. Her phone went black and wouldn't **turn on**. As the day came to an end, Emily felt a sense of relief. What a day!

● PHRASAL VERBS

(t) - A transitive phrasal verb requires a direct object, which shows who or what receives the action in a sentence.

(i) - An intransitive phrasal verb does not require a direct object. Intransitive phrasal verbs cannot be separated.

(s) - A separable phrasal verb allows the object to go between the main verb and the particle or after the particle.

1. **to look up** (t-s) / ˌlʊk 'ʌp/ - to search for information or advice
She looked up the recipe online before attempting to bake the cake.
2. **to break down** (i) / ˌbreɪk 'daʊn/ - to stop functioning or fail suddenly
Unfortunately, my car broke down on my way out of town.



3. **to get off** (t) /ˌget 'ɒf/ - to leave or exit from a vehicle or transportation
We need to get off at the next station.
4. **to shoot off** (i) /ʃu:t 'ɒf/ - to move quickly or suddenly
As soon as the bell rang, the children shot off towards the playground.
5. **to calm down** (i, t -s) /ˌkɑ:m 'daʊn/ - to become less anxious or agitated
I always try to take a deep breath to calm down before giving a presentation.
6. **to get on with (sth.)** (t) /ˌget 'ɒn wɪð 'sʌmθɪŋ/ - to continue with a task or activity, especially after an interruption
Right, that's enough TV - time to get on with your homework,
7. **to come across** (t) /ˌkʌm ə'krɒs/ - to encounter or find a person or thing unexpectedly
You won't believe who I came across at the bookshop today!
8. **to look after** (t) /ˌlʊk 'ɑ:ftə/ - to take care of or provide assistance to someone
Jane will look after the children while we're at dinner.
9. **to knock over** (t-s) /ˌnɒk 'əʊvə/ - to accidentally cause something to fall or tip over
The strong wind knocked over many of the newly planted trees in the park.
10. **to turn on** (i, t-s) /ˌtɜ:n 'ɒn/ - to activate or start a device or appliance
Can you turn on the heater? It's freezing in here!

This is an ergative verb. It can be transitive and intransitive.

● EXTRA VOCABULARY

bustling adj /'bʌslɪŋ/ - full of busy activity

The market was bustling with shoppers preparing for the festival.

to keep one's cool phr /ki:p wʌnz ku:l/ - to remain calm and composed, especially in a stressful situation

Even when the meeting became intense, Maria kept her cool.

invaluable adj /ɪn'veljʊəbl/ - extremely useful or valuable

Phil's advice was invaluable to the success of our project.



lunch rush *phr* /'lʌntʃ rʌʃ/ - the period during lunchtime when restaurants and cafes are especially busy

We should avoid going out during the lunch rush if we want a quiet meal.

Arthur's Tea Shop

Now I want to tell you about the time my cousin, Arthur, decided to **set up** a charming little tea shop in our hometown. He was known for **whipping up** tasty scones and aromatic brews. However, when he applied for a loan, the bank manager **turned** him **down**, believing his venture wouldn't **work out**. Despite this minor setback, Arthur refused to **give up** on his dream.

Focused on proving them wrong, he **took on** the challenge of transforming our grandmother's dilapidated cottage into a delightful tearoom. He **dusted off** some old family recipes, **figured out** the perfect blend of teas and even **caught up on** the latest baking trends.

As the grand opening day approached, villagers started to queue outside his tearoom, eager to taste his treats. Arthur had truly turned the tables on his doubters. His tearoom became a thriving success, and even the bank manager had to eat humble pie when he came to enjoy a cuppa. Arthur never missed the chance to offer his doubters a treat when they came by as opposed to **telling them off**. He made sure not to **faff about** when it came to achieving his dreams.

● PHRASAL VERBS

11. **to set up** (t-s) /,set 'ʌp/ - to establish or create something, like a business or organisation

Sarah decided to set up a charity to help underprivileged children in her community.



12. **to whip up** (t-s) /ˌwɪp 'ʌp/ - to quickly and skillfully prepare something, usually food
My mum used to whip up the most delicious pasta in just a few minutes.
13. **to turn down** (t-s) /ˌtɜːn 'daʊn/ - to reject an offer, request or opportunity
Unfortunately, we've had to turn down several incredible job applicants due to budget constraints.
14. **to work out** (i) /ˌwɜːk 'aʊt/ - to have a positive outcome
I haven't found a publisher for my book yet, but I'm sure it'll all work out.
15. **to give up (on)** (i, t) /ˌɡɪv 'ʌp/ - to quit or stop trying, usually due to difficulties or challenges
After hours of trying to solve the puzzle, she finally gave up.
16. **to take on** (t-s) /ˌteɪk 'ɒn/ - to accept a responsibility or challenge
Mark was eager to prove himself to the higher-ups and quickly agreed to take on the team leader role.
17. **to dust off** (t-s) /ˌdʌst 'ɒf/ - to revive or reuse something neglected or forgotten
Ali decided it was time to dust off the guitar he bought as a teenager and learn to play once and for all.
18. **to figure out** (t-s) /ˌfɪɡə(r) 'aʊt/ - to find a solution to a problem or discover a way to do something
He read the instructions several times but still couldn't figure out how to assemble the bookshelf.
19. **to catch up (on)** (i, t) /ˌkætʃ 'ʌp/ - to get up to date or reach the same level as others
After missing a few classes, Lisa needed to catch up on her coursework.
20. **to tell off** (t-s) /ˌtel 'ɒf/ - to scold or reprimand someone for their behaviour or actions
We sat in silence as Ms Langford told Rachel off for being 10 minutes late to class.

Adding 'on' makes the action more targeted, requiring the use of an object.

When we use 'on' we need a direct object.



21. **to faff about** (i) /ˌfæf əˈbaʊt/ - to waste time or engage in unproductive activities

Instead of studying for his exams, Tom would often faff about on social media.

● EXTRA VOCABULARY

scone *n* /skɒn/ - a small, round and usually slightly sweetened bread or cake, often served with tea

She baked fresh scones and served them with clotted cream and jam.

aromatic *adj* /ˌærəˈmætɪk/ - having a strong and pleasant smell

The kitchen was filled with the aromatic scent of roasted garlic.

loan *n* /ləʊn/ - an amount of money that is borrowed, usually from a bank and has to be paid back

They took out a loan to buy their first house.

venture *n* /ˈventʃə/ - a risky or daring journey or undertaking

Starting his own business was a big venture for him.

dilapidated *adj* /dɪˈlæpɪdeɪtɪd/ - (of a building or object) in a state of disrepair or ruin due to age or neglect

They decided to renovate the dilapidated old mansion.

to turn the tables *idiom* /tɜːn ðə ˈteɪblz/ - to reverse a situation, making one's own position stronger and the opponent's weaker

The underdog team turned the tables in the second half and won the game.

to eat humble pie *idiom* /ɪt ˈhʌmbl paɪ/ - to admit one's mistake and apologise

After doubting her solution, he had to eat humble pie when she was proven right.

to come by *phr v* /kʌm baɪ/ - (AmE) to visit a place or person quickly

I will come by your house later to get the books.

My Childhood Dream

Have I ever told you about how I'd dreamt of becoming a professional violinist when I was younger? When I **brought up** my interest in the violin to my parents, they got me a beginner violin to practise with. But I always struggled to nail the right fingerings and bow technique. One day, I met an older woman named Isabella, who was a fantastic violinist. Her passion for music **rubbed off on** me instantly. Luckily, she took me under her wing and taught me a lot.

As the years **went by**, I began to lose interest in the violin, and I **cut back on** how much I was playing. It felt like I was **letting** Isabella **down** and my own dreams. I contemplated giving it up altogether. It was a difficult decision to make, but I decided to **call off** my pursuit of becoming a professional musician.

I **sorted out** my priorities and decided the best decision was to give up so I could pursue whatever truly made me happy. I found a new path in life, and I **looked forward to** all that life had in store for me.

In the end, the lessons I learnt from Isabella about passion, determination and following one's heart **paid off** in ways I couldn't have imagined. Life can be funny, but it always **turns out** exactly as it's supposed to.

● PHRASAL VERBS

22. **to bring up** (t-s) /ˌbrɪŋ 'ʌp/ - to mention or introduce a topic or subject in conversation
Sarah decided not to bring up the fact that she was moving out of the country during the family dinner.
23. **to rub off (on/onto sb.)** (i, t) /ˌrʌb 'ɒf (ɒn/'ɒntu)/ - to have a positive influence on someone, causing them to adopt certain qualities or habits

Her enthusiasm for volunteering began to rub off on her friends, inspiring them to join, too.

24. **to go by** (i) /ˌgəʊ 'baɪ/ - to pass or elapse

The years seemed to go by quickly as she watched her children grow up.

25. **to cut back (on sth.)** (i, t) /ˌkʌt 'bæk (/ɒn 'sʌmθɪŋ/) - to reduce something
I need to cut back on the amount of money I spend on takeaways.

26. **to let down** (t-s) /ˌlet 'daʊn/ - to disappoint or fail to meet someone's expectations

Marion says she will be here tomorrow - she won't let me down, will she?

27. **to call off** (t-s) /ˌkɔːl 'ɒf/ - to cancel or terminate an event, plan or activity

Due to bad weather, they had to call off the outdoor picnic and reschedule it.

28. **to sort out** (t-s) /ˌsɔːt 'aʊt/ - to resolve or organise a situation or problem
I've got to sort out the plumbing issue in the kitchen; it's becoming quite a nuisance.

29. **to look forward to** (t) /ˌlʊk 'fɔːwəd tuː/ - to anticipate or be excited about a future event or experience

The whole family looks forward to the annual reunion; it's the highlight of the year!

30. **to pay off** (i) /ˌpeɪ 'ɒf/ - to yield positive results or success as a result of hard work

Putting effort into your studies now will pay off in the long run.

31. **to turn out** (i) /ˌtɜːn 'aʊt/ - to result or develop in a particular way, often unexpectedly

Despite initial doubts, the project turned out to be a great success.

● EXTRA VOCABULARY

fingering n /'fɪŋgərɪŋ/ - the placement of the fingers on the strings of a stringed instrument to produce the correct notes

Proper fingerings are crucial for playing the piece accurately.



to take someone under one's wing *idiom* /teɪk 'sʌmwʌn 'ʌndə wʌnz wɪŋ/ - to guide, protect or mentor someone

When I was a new employee, Mrs Thompson took me under her wing.

to contemplate *v* /'kɒntəmpleɪt/ - to think deeply or carefully about something
He sat by the window, contemplating his life choices.

pursuit *n* /pə'sju:t/ - the action of chasing or seeking something
My younger sister travelled the world in pursuit of her dreams.

to have in store *phr* /həv ɪn stɔ:/ - to have something planned or ready for someone or for the future

You never know what life has in store for you.

A Love Gone Wrong

Now, let me tell you the juicy story of Tom and Elizabeth. They were inseparable throughout sixth form and were the envy of all their peers. But in our final year, something changed dramatically. Their relationship, once unbreakable, suddenly **fell apart** in the most public way possible, right in the common room. It was quite ugly, with harsh words exchanged and tears shed.

Despite their friends' encouragement to **make up**, they couldn't **come up with** a way to reconcile. It seemed like their love had withered, replaced by bitterness and resentment.

Tom, always the stubborn one, **insisted on** maintaining his distance. On the other hand, Elizabeth desperately wanted **to take back** what she'd said and rekindle what they once had.

Weeks **turned into** months, and the tension between them refused to budge. They would merely **brush** one another **off** when they were in the same room.

But time has a way of healing wounds, and slowly but surely, they began to **cheer up**. A sense of gratitude gradually **grew on** them, allowing them to **move on** separately.

● PHRASAL VERBS

32. **to fall apart** (i) /ˌfɔːl əˈpɑːt/ - to disintegrate or break down, often referring to relationships or structures

As the years passed, the once grand mansion began to fall apart, its walls crumbling.

33. **to make up** (i) /ˌmeɪk ˈʌp/ - to reconcile or resolve differences, typically after a disagreement or conflict

They knew they had to make up and mend the rift in their friendship after their heated debate.

34. **to come up with sth.** (t) /kʌm ˈʌp wɪð ˈsʌmθɪŋ/ - to devise or create a solution, plan or idea

In her quest for adventure, she often came up with creative ways to appreciate the small things in her life.

35. **to insist on** (t) /ˌɪnsɪst ˈɒn/ - to demand firmly, even if others disagree

Abraham's dedication to his art was evident; he insisted on perfection, even if it meant countless revisions.

36. **to take back** (t-s) /ˌteɪk ˈbæk/ - to admit that something you said or thought was wrong

She wanted to take back her hurtful words but knew the damage was already done.

37. **to turn into** (t) /ˌtɜːn ˈɪntuː/ - to become

Their casual flirtation turned into a deep, meaningful connection that neither could ignore.

38. **to brush off** (t-s) /ˌbrʌʃ ˈɒf/ - to dismiss or ignore someone or something casually, often without consideration

He refused to brush off criticism and instead used it as motivation.

39. **to cheer up** (i, t-s) /ˌtʃɪə(r) 'ʌp/ - to become happier or make someone feel happier

Music has a magical way of cheering up the soul, even in the most difficult times.

40. **to grow on** (t) /ˌgrəʊ 'ɒn/ - to gradually become more likeable or acceptable over time

At first, our new colleague seemed reserved, but over time, he began to grow on everyone.

41. **to move on** (i) /ˌmuːv 'ɒn/ - to continue with life after a challenging period

After a period of unemployment, she managed to move on by starting her own business.

● EXTRA VOCABULARY

envy *n* /'envi/ - a feeling of resentful longing for someone else's possessions, qualities or luck

She felt a pang of envy when she saw her friend's new car.

to reconcile *v* /'rekənsaɪl/ - to restore friendly relations

It took them years to reconcile after their big argument.

to wither *v* /'wɪðə/ - to become weaker or less important

The once vibrant community spirit in the neighbourhood had withered away, leaving behind a sense of isolation among its residents.

resentment *n* /rɪ'zentmənt/ - bitter feelings or anger at having been treated unfairly

He harboured resentment towards his boss for overlooking him for a promotion.

stubborn *adj* /'stʌbən/ - determined not to change one's mind or actions, even in the face of good arguments or reasons to

No matter how much evidence was presented, he remained stubborn in his beliefs.



to rekindle v /ˌriːˈkɪndl/ - to revive something that has been lost or diminished, like a feeling or relationship

They went on a trip to rekindle their romance.

to budge v /bʌdʒ/ - to move or shift slightly; (metaphorically) to change opinion, attitude or state

Despite numerous meetings, her stance on the issue wouldn't budge.

A Grand Adventure

One sunny afternoon, while I was busy working on a project at home, I accidentally left the garden gate slightly ajar. Diego, my mischievous dog, and Alfonso, my curious cat, seized the opportunity to **set out** on a grand adventure together.

I only **found out** about their escape when I heard a commotion outside and saw the gate wide open. Panic filled my heart as I rushed out, calling their names.

As I searched the village, I **ran into** my neighbour, Ms Jenkins, who told me that she had seen the unlikely duo gallivanting around the park. I wondered to myself what they could possibly be **getting up to**.

I hurried to the park, and there they were, Diego and Alfonso, chasing butterflies. I could see that they were **warming to** the excitement of their little adventure. Before I could reach them, they decided to make a dash through the bushes. My attempt to **cut them off** was useless. I ended up letting them have their day. I **tagged along** behind them wherever they went, just observing.

Hours later, as the sun began to set, they finally turned up, looking tired and muddy. When Will arrived home, I **filled** him **in** on what had happened. All he could do was shake his head and laugh as he looked at our two exhausted pets, fast asleep on the floor.

● **PHRASAL VERBS**

42. **to set out** (i) /ˌset 'aʊt/ - to begin a journey or start an activity
The explorers set out to try to reach the South Pole.
43. **to find out** (t-s) /ˌfaɪnd 'aʊt/ - to discover or learn something, often unexpectedly
I found out too late that my favourite singer was coming to town.
44. **to run into** (t) /ˌrʌn 'ɪntuː/ - to meet someone or something by chance
While shopping, I ran into a childhood friend I hadn't seen in years.
45. **to get up to** (t) /ˌget 'ʌp tuː/ - to be involved in or busy with something, especially something unexpected
He used to get up to all kinds of mischief when he was younger.
46. **to warm to** (t) /ˌwɔːm 'tuː/ - to begin to enjoy something or become more enthusiastic about something
My dad finally warmed to the idea of moving in with us.
47. **to cut off** (t-s) /ˌkʌt 'ɒf/ - to block or intercept someone or something's path
My husband cannot walk in a straight line and always cuts me off whenever we walk down the street together.
48. **to tag along (with/behind)** (i, t) /ˌtæg ə'lon/ - to go somewhere with a person or group, usually when you have not been invited
I used to always tag along with my older sister and her friends when they went out for the day.
49. **to turn up** (i) /ˌtɜːn 'ʌp/ - to arrive at a place or event, often unexpectedly or after being missing

Just when we thought he wouldn't make it, he turned up at the party with a surprise gift.

50. **to fill sb. in (on sth.)** (t-s) /ˌfɪl sʌmbədi 'ɪn (ɒn 'sʌmθɪŋ)/ - to provide someone with information or details about an event or situation
Could you please fill me in on the details of the project? I've been out of the loop.

● EXTRA VOCABULARY

rascal n /'rɑːskl/ - a mischievous or cheeky person or animal

That little rascal has been stealing biscuits from the jar!

ajar adj /ə'dʒɑː/ - slightly open

He left the window ajar to let in some fresh air.

mischievous adj /'mɪstʃɪvəs/ - inclined to playfully annoy or cause trouble

Her mischievous grin gave away that she was up to something.

to seize an opportunity phr /siːz ən ˌɒpə'tjuːnɪtɪ/ - to take advantage of a chance or opportunity quickly or eagerly

When the company expanded, she seized the opportunity and applied for a higher position.

commotion n /kə'məʊʃn/ - a state of confused and noisy disturbance

There was a commotion outside as the parade passed by.

to gallivant v /'gælɪvænt/ - to go around from one place to another in the pursuit of pleasure or entertainment

Instead of working, he spent his days gallivanting around town.

to dash v /dæʃ/ - to run or move quickly and suddenly

She had to dash to catch the bus.

QUIZ!

Choose the correct phrasal verb to replace the underlined portion of each sentence.

1) The chef was able to quickly prepare a delicious meal with just a few ingredients.

- a. whip up
- b. take on
- c. turn into

2) He quickly devised a clever idea to get us out of the tricky situation.

- a. came up with
- b. insisted on
- c. took back

3) I accidentally met an old friend while I was out shopping.

- a. cut off
- b. tagged along
- c. ran into

4) He discovered through his own research that the company had a history of unethical practices.

- a. set out
- b. found out
- c. turned up

5) My little brother always accompanies me uninvited when I go out with my friends.

- a. cuts off
- b. tags along
- c. sets up

6) After driving around in circles for ages, they eventually arrived, albeit a bit late.

- a. turned up
- b. sorted out
- c. let down

7) The rainy weather forced them to cancel the plans for the scheduled outdoor event.

- a. turn down
- b. call off
- c. work out

8) We need to resolve the issue with our supplier as soon as possible.

- a. turn on
- b. set up
- c. sort out

9) He was very careful not to disappoint her by not keeping his promise.

- a. call her off
- b. let her down
- c. set her up

10) Her positive attitude began to influence her friends to become more optimistic.

- a. rub off on her friends
- b. go by her friends
- c. cut back on her friends

The End!

© 2019 English with Lucy

