

Phrasal verbs

What are phrasal verbs?

- *Jan turned down the chance to work abroad.*
 - *Buying that new car has really eaten into my savings.*
 - *I don't think I can put up with his behaviour much longer.*
- **PHRASAL VERBS** (sometimes called **MULTI-WORD VERBS**) are verbs that consist of two, or sometimes three, words. The first word is a verb and it is followed by an adverb (turn **down**) or a preposition (eat **into**) or both (put **up with**). These adverbs or prepositions are sometimes called **PARTICLES**.
- In this dictionary, phrasal verbs are listed at the end of the entry for the main verb in a section marked **PHRV**. They are listed in alphabetical order of the particles following them:

PHRV **fight back (against sb/sth)** to resist strongly or attack sb who has attacked you: *Don't let them bully you. Fight back!* ◊ *It is time to fight back against street crime.*
fight sth ↔ back/down to try hard not to do or show sth, especially not to show your feelings: *I was fighting back the tears.* ◊ *He fought down his disgust.* **fight sb/sth ↔ off** to resist sb/sth by fighting against them/it: *The jeweller was stabbed as he tried to fight the robbers off.* ◊ *(figurative) Vitamin A helps your body fight off infection.*
fight out sth | fight it out to fight, argue or compete until an argument or competition has been settled: *The conflict is still being fought out.* ◊ *They hadn't reached any agreement so we left them to fight it out.*

Meaning of phrasal verbs

- *He sat down on the bed.*
 The meaning of some phrasal verbs, such as **sit down**, is easy to guess because the verb and the particle keep their usual meaning. However, many phrasal verbs have idiomatic meanings that you need to learn. The separate meanings of **put**, **up** and **with**, for example, do not add up to the meaning of **put up with** (= tolerate).
- Some particles have particular meanings that are the same when they are used with a number of different verbs:
 - *I didn't see the point of hanging around waiting for him, so I went home.*
 - *I wish you wouldn't leave all those books lying around.***Around** adds the meaning of 'with no particular purpose or aim' and is also used in a similar way with many other verbs, such as **play**, **sit** and **wait**.

- The meaning of a phrasal verb can sometimes be explained with a one-word verb. However, phrasal verbs are frequently used in spoken English and, if there is a one-word equivalent, it is usually more formal in style:
 - *I wish my ears didn't stick out so much.*
 - *The garage projects five metres beyond the front of the house.*

Both **stick out** and **project** have the same meaning—'to extend beyond a surface'—but they are very different in style. **Stick out** is used in informal contexts, and **project** in formal or technical contexts.

Grammar of phrasal verbs

- Phrasal verbs can be **TRANSITIVE** (they take an object) or **INTRANSITIVE** (they have no object). Some phrasal verbs can be used in both ways:
 - *For heaven's sake, shut her up.* (transitive)
 - *He told me to shut up.* (intransitive)

INTRANSITIVE phrasal verbs are written in the dictionary without **sb** (somebody) or **sth** (something) after them. This shows that they do not have an object:

eat out to have a meal in a restaurant, etc. rather than at home: *Do you feel like eating out tonight?*

Eat out is intransitive, and the two parts of the verb cannot be separated by any other word.

You can say:

- *Shall we eat out tonight?*
- **BUT NOT** *Shall we eat tonight-out?*

In order to use **TRANSITIVE** phrasal verbs correctly, you need to know where to put the object. With some phrasal verbs (often called **SEPARABLE** verbs), the object can go either between the verb and the particle or after the particle:

- *She tore the letter up.*
- *She tore up the letter.*
- When the object is a long phrase, it usually comes after the particle:
 - *She tore up all the letters he had sent her.*
- When the object is a pronoun (for example **it** standing for 'the letter'), it must always go between the verb and the particle:
 - *She read the letter and then tore it up.*

- In the dictionary, verbs that are separable are written like this: **tear sth ↔ up**

The double arrow between the object and the particle shows that the object may come either before or after the particle:

call sth ↔ off to cancel sth; to decide that sth will not happen: *to call off a deal/trip/strike*
 ◇ They have called off their engagement (= decided not to get married). ◇ The game was called off because of bad weather.

You can say:

- They **called the deal off**.
- AND They **called off the deal**.
- With other phrasal verbs (sometimes called **INSEPARABLE** verbs), the two parts of the verb cannot be separated by an object:
 - I **didn't really take to her husband**.
NOT ~~I didn't really take her husband to~~.
 - I **didn't really take to him**.
NOT ~~I didn't really take him to~~.

In the dictionary, verbs that are inseparable are written like this:

take to sb

When you see **sb** or **sth** after the two parts of a phrasal verb, and there is no double arrow, you know that they cannot be separated by an object:

run into sb (informal) to meet sb by chance: *Guess who I ran into today!*

You can say:

- I **ran into Joe yesterday**.
BUT NOT ~~I ran Joe into~~.
- There are a few phrasal verbs in which the two parts of the verb must be separated by the object. You can say:
 - They **changed the plans and messed everyone around**.
 - BUT NOT ~~They changed the plans and messed around everyone~~.
- In the dictionary, these verbs are written like this:

mess sb around

When you see **sb** or **sth** between the two parts of a phrasal verb and there is no double arrow, you know that they must be separated by the object.

- Some transitive phrasal verbs can be made passive:
 - The deal **has been called off**.

When this is common, you will find an example at the dictionary entry.

Phrasal verbs used with phrases and clauses

- Like other verbs, some phrasal verbs can be used with another phrase or clause. The different types of clause and phrase are explained on pages R5–6. When a phrasal verb can be used with a particular type of clause or phrase, an example is given in the dictionary entry, labelled with a special frame:

~ that	<i>We found out later that we had been at the same school.</i>
~ how, what, etc ...	<i>I can't figure out how to do this.</i>
~ to do sth	<i>It didn't occur to her to ask for help.</i>
~ doing sth	<i>I didn't bargain on finding Matthew there as well.</i>
+ speech	<i>'Help!' he cried out.</i>

Related nouns

- A particular phrasal verb may have a noun related to it. This noun will be mentioned at the verb entry:

break 'in to enter a building by force: *Burglars had broken in while we were away.* ➔ related noun **BREAK-IN**
break sb/sth 'in 1 to train sb/sth in sth new that they must do: *to break in new recruits* ◇ *The young horse was not yet broken in (= trained to carry a rider).* 2 to wear sth, especially new shoes, until they become comfortable
break 'in (on sth) to interrupt sth: *She longed to break in on their conversation but didn't want to appear rude.* ◇ + speech *'I didn't do it!' she broke in.*
break 'into sth 1 to enter a building by force; to open a car, etc. by force: *We had our car broken into last week.* ➔ related noun **BREAK-IN** 2 to begin laughing, singing, etc. suddenly: *As the president's car drew up, the crowd broke into loud applause.*

break 'out (of war, fighting or other unpleasant events) to start suddenly: *They had escaped to America shortly before war broke out in 1939.* ◇ *Fighting had broken out between rival groups of fans.* ◇ *Fire broke out during the night.* ➔ related noun **OUTBREAK** **break 'out (of sth)** to escape from a place or situation: *Several prisoners broke out of the jail.* ◇ *She needed to break out of her daily routine and do something exciting.* ➔ related noun **BREAKOUT**

A noun is often related in meaning to only one or two of the phrasal verbs using a particle. **Break-in** is related to **break in** and the first meaning of **break into sth**, but not to **break sb/sth in** or **break in (on sth)**. **Breakout** is related to **break out (of sth)**, whereas the noun **outbreak** relates to **break out**.