



Phrasal Verbs



MEANING AND FORM

The meaning of some phrasal verbs is clear:

I **picked up** the phone. (picked and up have their normal meanings)

Many phrasal verbs are idiomatic and you have to learn what they mean. They may contain the same verb but have different meanings, depending on the preposition or adverb which follows:

He **turned back** because he had left something at home. (= changed direction)

He **turned down** the invitation because he was feeling tired. (= refused)

They **turned up** unexpectedly. (= arrived)

Some phrasal verbs have several meanings:

She **put on** her clothes. (= she got dressed)

She **put on** weight. (= her weight increased)

She **put on** the light. (= she switched the light on)

The students **put on** a play. (= performed)

See Appendix 1 for a list of phrasal verbs you should understand.

The form of phrasal verbs can vary.

Some verbs have **two parts**: a verb (e.g. do, go) and another word (sometimes called a particle) which can be an adverb (e.g. back, out) or a preposition (e.g. at, into, from).

Some verbs have **three parts**: a verb (e.g. come), an adverb (e.g. up) and a preposition (e.g. against).

Phrasal verbs behave differently depending on whether they are:
a verb + preposition, a verb + adverb, or a verb + adverb + preposition.

VERB + PREPOSITION

When a phrasal verb consists of a verb and a preposition:

- it always has an object.
- the object (noun or pronoun) always goes after the preposition (the verb and preposition can't be separated):
The rest of the group **looked after** Donna. (not looked Donna after)
I **counted on** them. (not counted them on)
They **went over** their plans. (not went their plans over)
I really **cared about** them. (not cared them about)

“Doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way” 100

VERB + ADVERB

When a phrasal verb consists of a verb and its adverb:

- it doesn't always have an object:

They **got together** every Monday morning.
They **carried on** without me.

The object (when it is a noun) can come before or after the adverb (the verb and adverb can be separated):

They **didn't back Donna up** when she was in trouble.
or They **didn't back up Donna**.
They wanted to throw **Donna** out because of what she did.
or They wanted to throw out **Donna**.
They **called the concert off** or They **called off the concert**.

- the **object** (when it is a pronoun) must go between the verb and the adverb:

They **backed me up**. (~~not backed up me~~)
They wanted to **throw me out**. (~~not throw out me~~)
They couldn't do the concert without her so they **called it off** (~~not called off it~~)

- the object (when it is very long) is usually put after the adverb:

They **called off** the concert, which had already been postponed twice. (~~not called the concert, which had already been postponed twice, off.~~)

Some phrasal verbs have two meanings and take an object with one meaning and no object with the other meaning, e.g. give in:

I won't **give in** until they pay me what they owe. (verb + adverb + no object = surrender)
I **gave in** my homework on time. (verb + adverb + object = hand it to the teacher)

Some words (e.g. down, in, off, on, past, through, up, etc.) can be either prepositions or adverbs:

She **picked the book up**. or She **picked up the book**.
(verb + adverb can be separated)
She **went up the stairs**. (~~not went the stairs up.~~)
(verb + preposition can't be separated)

You can check if a phrasal verb is a verb + preposition or a verb + adverb by looking in a good dictionary.

VERB + ADVERB + PREPOSITION

When a phrasal verb consists of three parts:

- it always has an object.
the object (noun or pronoun) always goes after the phrasal verb (the three parts can't be separated):

I always **got on with** the other members of the group.
.. I **came up against** some problems ...
I **put up with** this for a while.
They're not going to **get away with** it.

PRACTICE BANK

A. Complete these sentences with words from the box to make phrasal verbs with get:

through	round to	round	over	out of	on
	down	by	away with	at	

- I can never get _____ telling a lie because my face always goes red!
- The news of their engagement got _____ the office very quickly.
- We don't keep things on the top shelf because we can't get _____ them without standing on the table.
- People think they need lots and lots of money we can get _____ with very little
- Johan hasn't had much success with his enterprise but I'm sure he'll get _____ in his new one.
- I tried to take a message but I didn't get _____ everything Amelia said.
- My grandmother got _____ the flu very quickly because she's such a fit woman.
- Michael always manages to get _____ doing the washing up because he says he has a lot of work at the office.
- Beckie's daughters must be on the phone all the time because I can never get _____ when I try to ring her.
- I finally got _____ watching the video of a film I recorded three months ago.

B. Fill in the gaps with phrasal verbs from the box which mean the same as the verbs in brackets:

turn up	turn down	take in	set off	ring up
put off	fill in	cut down	carry on	care for

I had been doing the same job for years and I didn't really 1 _____ (like) it any more, although it was very well paid. One day, I decided to search for another job, realizing I would need to 2 _____ (reduce) what I spent on personal luxuries. I 3 _____ (completed) lots of forms but all my applicants were 4 _____ (rejected). I didn't give up, so I 5 _____ (continued) looking for a job but nothing suitable 6 _____ (appeared) so I booked a holiday. The day before I was due to 7 _____ (leave). I was 8 _____ (telephoned) by a TV company who asked me to go for an interview the next day.

I 9 _____ (postponed) my holiday immediately. It was the job of my dreams! I could hardly 10 _____ (absorb) the news when they offered it to me.

C. Look up the phrasal verbs in a dictionary and decide if they are verb + preposition or verb + adverb or verb + adverb + preposition. Then decide if the underlined noun can go in any other place and rewrite the sentences where possible:

1. I could tell from his expression that he'd made up the excuse.
_____.
2. We've run out of coke-could you fetch some more?
_____.
3. Karla went over her work several times before she was satisfied.
_____.
4. Jon was so angry he broke up the washing machine.
_____.
5. Simon can't give up ice cream however hard he tries.
_____.
6. I can't put up with that noise any longer.
_____.
7. With is blue eyes and dark skin, she takes after her father.
_____.
8. This shop puts up its prices every month.
_____.
9. Don't forget to put out the lights when you leave home, Jess.
_____.
10. Susan looked after my children while I was travelling.
_____.

D. Rewrite these sentences with the correct phrasal verbs:

1. Henry had always respected his father.
_____.
2. The match was postponed for a week because the weather was terrible.
_____.
3. I really can't bear to sit in this heat any longer.
_____.
4. They arrived unexpectedly while we were watching a film.
_____.
5. By the time we started our walk, it was getting dark.
_____.
6. The desk is for books which are being returned to the library.
_____.
7. When the mechanic finished mending the car, he was faced with a problem he only could solve after two hours.
_____.

E. In eight sentences there is at least one wrong preposition. Underlined each mistake and write the correction.

1. Who is responsible of setting the burglar alarm?

2. I asked the boss for advice for training but he just shouted angrily with.

3. My brothers were brought to the cinema by my parents.

4. The girl was combing her hair by a gold comb.

5. No one's had any wine. What's the matter of it?

6. Did you drove that dish by purpose?

7. Lucy doesn't approve on wearing real fur, but Camile doesn't agree to her.

8. Ann, you know you shouldn't phone me in work!

9. Do you know the name of the thing you use for opening wine bottles?

10. Mark didn't understand what the play was in because there was a pillar on the way so he couldn't see properly.

APPENDIX: PHRASAL VERBS

These are some of the most common phrasal verbs. Many phrasal verbs have more than one meaning. Check them in a good dictionary and study this list.

ask after	come up against	get on with	keep back	pay off	stand up to
ask for	count on	get out	keep clown	pay up	stay in
back out of	count up	get out of	keep off	pick out	stay out
back up	cross out	get over	keep on	pick up	stick out
be away	cut across	get round	keep out	point out	stop off
be in	cut back	get round to	keep up	pull down	stop over
be into	cut down	get through	keep up with	pull in	switch on
blow up	cut in	get together	knock down	pull off	switch off
break down	cut out	get up	knock out	pull out	take after
break in	cut up	get up to	leave in	pull up	take away
break off	deal with	give away	leave on	put aside	take back
break out	do away with	give back	leave out	put away	take in
break up	do out of	give in	let down	put by	take off
bring about	do without	give out	let in	put down	take on
bring back	draw in	give up	let off	put off	take over
bring in	draw out	go after	let out	put on	take to
bring out	draw up	go by	let through	put out	take up
bring round	drop back	go down with	live on	put through	talk over
bring up	drop by	go for	live through	put up	think about
build up	drop in on	go in for	live up to	put up with	think of
burst in	drop off	go off	lock up	ring back	think out
burst out	drop out	go on	look after	ring off	think over
call for	face up to	go out	look at	ring up	throw away
call in	fall back on	go over	look back on	rub out	throw out
call off	fall behind	go through	look for	run away with	try on
call on	fall for	go with	look forward to	run down	try out
call on	fall in with	go without	look in	run into	turn back
care for	fall out	grow out of	look into	run out of	turn down
carry off	fall through	grow up	look on	run over	turn into
carry on	feel like	hand in	look out	see about	turn off
carry out	feel up to	hand on	look over	see off	turn on
catch on	fill in	hand out	look through	see through	turn out
catch up with	fill out	hand over	look up	see to	turn over
check in	find out	hang about	look up to	send for	turn up
check out	fit in	hang on	make for	send out	wash up
check over	get across	hang up	make up	set back	watch out
check up	get along with	have back	make up for	set in	wear off
clear out	get around	have on	miss out on	set off	wear out
clear up	get at	have round	mix up	set out	wipe off
come across	get away	hold back	move in	set up	wipe out
come clown	get away with	hold in	move out	show off	wipe up
come forward	get back	hold on	own up	show up	work out
come off	get by	hold on to	pass away	stand by	work up
come on	get down	hold out	pass off	stand for	write down
come out	get in	hold up	pass out	stand in for	write in
come round	get off	join in	pay back	stand out	write off
come up	get on	join up	pay in	stand up for	write up