

# Phrasal Verbs

CAE

Grammar

Grammar

8 Activities

Phrasal verbs are multi-word verbs made up of a **main verb** + one or more **particles** (prepositions or adverbs) that, together, create a meaning different from the individual words.

Phrasal verbs are common in spoken English and informal writing, and are often used instead of more formal verbs.

Example:

He **put off** the meeting. = He **postponed** the meeting.

## Why are phrasal verbs important at C1 level?

- They are essential for boosting fluency and helping you sound more natural.
- They help to better understand everyday conversations.
- They are widely used in films, podcasts, music and even newspapers.

- It's important to learn phrasal verbs in context and the meaning of the verb and particle together.
- Keeping a phrasal verb notebook is a good idea, with the meaning and examples in context.
- It might help to group the verbs by topic (e.g. travel, health), by the verb (all phrasal verbs with 'come') or by the particle (all phrasal verbs with 'up').

## Top Tips for the Exam!

- Phrasal verbs are often tested in Part 1 of the Reading and Use of English exam. This multiple choice exercise will test your knowledge of common phrasal verb collocations.
- In the Use of English Part 2, you are often required to fill in the gap with either the verb or the particle to make up the complete phrasal verb.
- In the Use of English Part 4, the key word given is often the part of a phrasal verb, so watch out!
- Be sure to use phrasal verbs in the speaking exam as it will show your fluency and range of vocabulary.
- In the writing exam, if you are given an informal writing task, phrasal verbs are essential to make your writing sound more natural.

## Activity 1

Read the conversation below and underline 10 phrasal verbs.



You know, I've been learning Italian on and off for years, but I really only started making progress once I did away with all those boring grammar drills and started listening to podcasts and watching Italian TV. I used to get so frustrated, but I've realised that you just have to bounce back from those moments when you feel stuck. A big turning point for me was when I stumbled across someone who posts videos online where they break everything down in a way that really gets through to me. I've also been trying to brush up on my pronunciation by mimicking native speakers – it's made a huge difference!



That sounds brilliant. I've had a different experience with French to be honest. I've really come up against some confidence issues when speaking – I always worry about making mistakes, and a couple of bad classroom experiences really put me off. I felt that I just couldn't take anything in anymore. For a while I thought about giving it up altogether, but a friend of mine eventually talked me into joining a local conversation group. It's actually been great – way more relaxed and I'm finally starting to enjoy the language learning process again.

## Activity 2

Now, match the phrasal verbs from Activity 1 to their definitions.

- |                                   |                                           |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1 do away with _____              | 6 come up against _____                   |
| 2 bounce back _____               | 7 put (somebody) off _____                |
| 3 stumble across _____            | 8 take (something) in _____               |
| 4 get through to (somebody) _____ | 9 give (something) up _____               |
| 5 brush up on _____               | 10 talk (somebody) into (something) _____ |

- |                                                                                             |                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A to persuade someone to do something                                                       | F to have to deal with a problem                                                       |
| B to improve your knowledge of something already learnt but partly forgotten                | G to make someone dislike something or discourage them from doing something            |
| C to start being successful again after a difficult period, e.g. after experiencing failure | H to stop doing something before you have finished, usually because it's too difficult |
| D to understand completely the meaning of something                                         | I to succeed in making someone understand or believe something                         |
| E to get rid of something or stop using something                                           | J to discover something by chance                                                      |

## Activity 3

Complete the sentences with a phrasal verb from the box in the correct form.

|             |          |              |             |          |
|-------------|----------|--------------|-------------|----------|
| come across | make out | bump into    | catch out   | cut out  |
| mull over   | let up   | come down to | stand up to | catch on |

- 1 I \_\_\_\_\_ an old university friend at the station yesterday – completely out of the blue.
- 2 It takes a lot of confidence to \_\_\_\_\_ a manager when you disagree, especially early in your career.
- 3 The pressure from work hasn't \_\_\_\_\_ all month. I could really do with a proper break.
- 4 Since \_\_\_\_\_ dairy, I've noticed a huge improvement in my energy levels and concentration.
- 5 He \_\_\_\_\_ as confident in meetings, but I think he's actually quite unsure of himself.
- 6 It took a while but the new learning platform has finally \_\_\_\_\_ among adult language learners.
- 7 I've been \_\_\_\_\_ the idea of applying for a teaching job abroad, but I haven't made a decision yet.
- 8 In the end, it all \_\_\_\_\_ how much effort you're willing to put in outside the classroom.
- 9 He \_\_\_\_\_ that the project had been a success, but the data told a very different story.
- 10 The examiner tried to \_\_\_\_\_ me \_\_\_\_\_ with a tricky follow-up question, but I managed to answer it clearly.

Now, after seeing them in context, try to write a definition for each of the phrasal verbs on the previous page.

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1 come across

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2 make out

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3 bump into

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4 catch out

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5 cut out

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6 mull over

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7 let up

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8 come down to

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9 stand up to

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10 catch on

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#### Activity 4

Find and correct the mistakes with phrasal verbs in these sentences.

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1 Could you clear down your things from the kitchen table? I need space to prepare for dinner.

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2 She gradually built back an impressive portfolio of work that really showcases her range as a designer.

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3 He fainted during the heatwave but thankfully came over after a few minutes and some water.

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4 I know it was a mistake, but there's no point dwelling in it – just learn from it and move on.

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5 No one knows what lies behind after graduation, but I'm trying to stay open-minded about the possibilities.

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6 The painkillers kicked up about twenty minutes after I took them and I finally started to feel human again.

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7 The government has come about increasing pressure to improve mental health services in schools.

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8 Police closed down the entire street while they investigated the suspicious package.

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9 We spent the afternoon drawing down a list of potential candidates for the new role.

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10 Sally read over on the company's recent projects before her interview so she could speak about their work.

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## Activity 5

For questions 1-8, read the text below and think of the word that best fits each gap. Use only **one word** in each gap.

### The Joys and Chaos of Travelling

Have you ever dreamed of just packing a bag and heading off somewhere new? Travelling can be incredible, but let's be honest – it's not always smooth sailing. For a start, long journeys and tight schedules can be exhausting, especially when you're trying to take everything **1** . Then, finding the time to read **2**  on destinations and local customs can feel overwhelming. And even if you manage to get all of that under control, you might come up **3**  a language barrier or a cultural misunderstanding. We know that in stressful moments, it's easy to dwell **4**  what went wrong rather than focus on the bigger picture. But when it comes **5**  to it, the hassles are part of what makes travel so rewarding because they help you to learn and grow. For instance, you might stumble **6**  a unique activity or destination that you didn't expect, but it ends up being the best part of your trip. A friend may **7**  you into doing something completely outside your comfort zone and it could be exactly what you needed. So even when the going gets tough, don't let that **8**  you off because travelling will always be worth your while.

## Activity 6

For questions 1-6, complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word. You must use between **three and six words**. There is one example.

**Example:** 0 They encountered many obstacles during the project, but managed to overcome them.

**AGAINST**

They **came up against many obstacles** during the project, but managed to overcome them.

1 Eventually, she accepted the idea that working abroad might benefit her.

**CAME**

She finally \_\_\_\_\_ of working abroad.

2 At the interview, he gave the impression of being rather arrogant.

**AS**

At the interview, \_\_\_\_\_ quite arrogant.

3 After such a major setback, I was impressed by how quickly she recovered.

**BACK**

I was impressed by \_\_\_\_\_ after such a major setback.

4 The company decided to eliminate the old-fashioned reporting system.

**DO**

The company \_\_\_\_\_ the old-fashioned reporting system.

- 5 She was reluctant to try the new restaurant, but her colleagues convinced her to do so.

TALKED

Her colleagues \_\_\_\_\_ the new restaurant.

- 6 I tried to explain the situation to him, but he just didn't understand.

GET

I tried to explain the situation to him, but I \_\_\_\_\_.

### Activity 7

You have received an email from your English friend. Read the email, then complete the sentences with your own ideas.

Lately I've been feeling really overwhelmed with everything: studying, social stuff, even just trying to relax feels like hard work. I was wondering if you ever feel the same way, and if so, how you handle it. Do you have any tips or strategies for dealing with stress when things pile up? I'd really appreciate your advice.

Thanks,

Matt

- 1 One thing that really helped me was to **cut out**...

\_\_\_\_\_

- 2 In my experience, coping with stress often **comes down to** how well you...

\_\_\_\_\_

- 3 You could try to **brush up on** some techniques for switching off mentally – even just...

\_\_\_\_\_

4 Things might not improve overnight, but they usually **let up** once you've...

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5 I wasn't sure it would help at first, but a friend **talked me into** trying a weekend mindfulness retreat – and honestly,...

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6 A lot of people **come up against** pressure to be constantly productive, but...

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7 Whatever you do, try not to **dwell on** every single thing that goes wrong – instead...

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8 I wasn't actively looking for help, but I **stumbled across** a brilliant video that...

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