

A Being busy

Nick: I haven't seen you for ages. Have you **been a bit tied up**¹ at work?

Tim: Yes, I've been incredibly busy. I was away for a conference and the work just **piled up**² while I was away. I've **been snowed under**³ ever since. Although I **slave away**⁴ till seven at night and even work at weekends, I still can't seem to **catch up with**⁵ everything!

Nick: Sorry, I asked!

¹ been so busy that you are unable to see or speak to anyone else or go anywhere (informal)

² became more and more (used of something unpleasant, e.g. work, bills or debts)

³ had so much work to do that I have problems dealing with it

⁴ work very hard with little or no rest

⁵ do something you did not have time to do earlier

B Working hard

Ray: How are things going for you at work at the moment, Stella?

Stella: Well, we're **branching out**¹ into a new product line – children's clothes – so I'm pretty busy. At the moment I'm **working on**² some new designs for leisurewear. We're **working towards**³ having a complete range for children of all ages. It's quite difficult but I'm sure I'll develop some good designs if I **keep at**⁴ it.

Ray: Well, you always were good at **sticking at**⁵ things.

Stella: Well, I'd certainly rather do a project myself than have to **chase up**⁶ other people to make sure they're doing what they promised to do. But sometimes you have to do that just to keep things **moving along**⁷.

Ray: Do you think you could **squeeze in**⁸ lunch with me sometime?

Stella: Mm, possibly, but not till next week.

Ray: That's fine. But don't try to **wriggle out of**⁹ it at the last minute!

¹ starting to do something different from what you usually do

² spending time working in order to produce something

³ trying hard to achieve

⁴ continue working hard at something difficult or something which takes a long time

⁵ continuing to work hard at something even though it is hard or takes a long time

⁶ ask people to do something that they said they would do but have not done yet

⁷ developing in a satisfactory way

⁸ manage to see someone or do something when you are very busy and do not have much time available

⁹ avoid doing something that other people think you should do, often in a dishonest way (informal)



Mr Benbow stuck at his job in the glue factory for 25 years before retiring.

TIP

When phrasal verbs have very strong visual images associated with the verbs they are made from, for example **squeeze in**, **stick at** and **wriggle out**, try to picture the meaning of the verb alone to help you remember the meaning of the verb and particle together.

Exercises

- 46.1** Which phrasal verbs in A opposite do these pictures make you think of? Write the correct phrasal verb under each one.

1



3



2



4



- 46.2** Use the phrasal verbs from exercise 46.1 to rewrite these sentences. Use each phrasal verb once only.

- 1 I've been working incredibly hard in a restaurant to pay for my studies.
- 2 Sorry, I was incredibly busy all last week, so I couldn't go to any of the meetings.
- 3 Paperwork has just increased and increased recently. I don't know where to start.
- 4 I'm sorry I can't do the report this week. I'm just so terribly busy.

- 46.3** Complete these sentences using the correct particles.

- 1 I've been working all day this essay and I still haven't finished it.
- 2 Whenever there's a difficult task to do she always tries to wriggle it.
- 3 Why should we slave till we're 65 and get nothing but a small pension?
- 4 Could we squeeze a quick meeting before lunch?
- 5 I must catch housework before my visitors arrive this weekend.

- 46.4** Each line of the text below contains one mistake with a phrasal verb. Cross out the incorrect word and write the correct word in the box next to that line.

I need to chase ~~out~~ Gerald's report so that we can keep things moving away with the European sales campaign. I know he's been working in it and I know he's been working upwards the same goals as all of us to branch up into new markets in Europe, but he's not good at sticking for things and you need to keep in it with campaigns like this one.

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