

Phrasal Verbs

Use of Phrasal Verbs

You must be using phrasal verbs in your everyday language, without being aware of it. The passage below is a person's description of a typical morning. Read the paragraph and observe the underlined words. These are phrasal verbs uses that adds clarity to the writing.

The alarm goes off at 7:00. I wake up, lean over and turn off the alarm. I get up quickly and go downstairs. I put on the coffee. I go back upstairs and have a shower. I sing a song in the shower. I put on my clothes. When I come downstairs again, I have my first cup of coffee. Mmmmm! Then I have some toast and a second cup of coffee. I wash my cup and tidy up the kitchen. I take my bag and set off to work. It is 8:00 am. I lock up the house before I go. Sometimes I run to catch the bus. I get on the bus and go for three or four stops. Then I get off the bus. I go to work and say "GOOD MORNING!" to my first class. It is 8:45am.

It is best that you learn phrasal verbs through everyday reading and practice. Learning lists is a possibility but can be boring and not as effective. A list is provided for your reference. Remember this is not all-inclusive, but gives you a wide variety of phrasal verbs in everyday use.

The best way to become familiar with phrasal verbs (and you need to, as these are often set as "Complete the Sentence" exercises in your entrance exams. More than that, you need these in everyday conversation and in your written work.) is to be a regular reader of books. Fictional works are recommended, as are topical articles. You will really help yourself if you read fiction and make a note of all the phrasal verbs you encounter. With phrasal verbs, nothing succeeds like practice!

You will see just how many phrasal verbs are used in everyday language when you set about making sentences with the many phrasal verbs with 'up' in them:

act up	blow up	break up	bring up	brush up
catch up	clean up	close up	get up	give up
grow up	hang up	keep up	line up	look up
open up	pass up	show up	sign up	take up
tear up	throw up	turn up	wrap up	

Note: Separable phrasal verbs can remain together when using an object that is a noun or noun phrase.

- I picked Tom up. (separable) OR I picked up Tom (inseparable).
- They put their friends up (separable). OR They put up their friends (inseparable).

Separable phrasal verbs MUST be separated when a pronoun is used:

- We picked him up at the station. **NOT** We picked up him at the station.
- They put them up. **NOT** They put up them.

Provided below is a list (by no means exhaustive) of phrasal verbs, with their meanings and how they should be used in sentences.

Verb	Meaning	Example
blow up	explode	The terrorists tried to <u>blow up</u> the railroad station.
bring up	mention a topic	My mother <u>brought up</u> that little matter of my prison record again.
bring up	raise children	It isn't easy to <u>bring up</u> children nowadays.
call off	cancel	They <u>called off</u> this afternoon's meeting.
do over	repeat a job	<u>Do</u> this homework <u>over</u> .
fill out	complete a form	<u>Fill out</u> this application form and mail it in.
fill up	fill to capacity	She <u>filled up</u> the grocery cart with free food.
find out	discover	My sister <u>found out</u> that her husband had been planning a surprise party for her.
give away	give something to someone else for free	The filling station was <u>giving away</u> free gas.
give back	return an object	My brother borrowed my car. I have a feeling he's not about to <u>give</u> it <u>back</u> .
hand in	submit something (assignment)	The students <u>handed in</u> their papers and left the room.
hang up	put something on hook or receiver	She <u>hung up</u> the phone before she hung up her clothes.
hold up	delay	I hate to <u>hold up</u> the meeting, but I have to go to the bathroom.
hold up (2)	rob	Three masked gunmen <u>held up</u> the Security Bank this afternoon.
leave out	omit	You <u>left out</u> the part about the police chase down Asylum Avenue.
look over	examine, check	The lawyers <u>looked over</u> the papers carefully before questioning the witness. (They <u>looked</u> them <u>over</u> carefully.)
look up	search in a list	You've misspelled this word again. You'd better <u>look</u> it <u>up</u> .
make up	invent a story or lie	She knew she was in trouble, so she <u>made up</u> a story about going to the movies with her friends.
make out	hear, understand	He was so far away, we really couldn't <u>make out</u> what he was saying.
pick out	choose	There were three men in the line-up. She <u>picked out</u> the guy she thought had stolen her purse.
pick up	lift something off something else	The crane <u>picked up</u> the entire house. (Watch them <u>pick</u> it <u>up</u> .)
point out	call attention to	As we drove through Paris, Fleur <u>pointed out</u> the major historical sites.
put away	save or store	We <u>put away</u> money for our retirement. She <u>put away</u> the cereal boxes.
put off	postpone	We asked the boss to <u>put off</u> the meeting until tomorrow. (Please <u>put</u> it <u>off</u> for another day.)
put on	put clothing on the body	I <u>put on</u> a sweater and a jacket. (I <u>put</u> them <u>on</u> quickly.)
put out	extinguish	The fire-fighters <u>put out</u> the house fire before it could spread. (They <u>put</u> it <u>out</u> quickly.)
read over	peruse	I <u>read over</u> the homework, but couldn't make any sense of it.
set up	To arrange, begin	My wife <u>set up</u> the living room exactly the way she wanted it. She <u>set</u> it <u>up</u> .
take down	make a written note	These are your instructions. <u>Take</u> them <u>down</u> before you forget.

take off	remove clothing	It was so hot that I had to <u>take off</u> my shirt.
talk over	discuss	We have serious problems here. Let's <u>talk</u> them <u>over</u> like adults.
throw away	discard	That's a lot of money! Don't just <u>throw</u> it <u>away</u> .
try on	put clothing on to see if it fits	She <u>tried on</u> fifteen dresses before she found one she liked.
try out	test	I <u>tried out</u> four cars before I could find one that pleased me.
turn down	lower the volume	Your radio is driving me crazy! Please <u>turn</u> it <u>down</u> .
turn down (2)	reject	He applied for a promotion twice this year, but he was <u>turned down</u> both times.
turn up	raise the volume	Grandpa couldn't hear, so he <u>turned up</u> his hearing aid.
turn off	switch off electricity	We <u>turned off</u> the lights before anyone could see us.
turn off (2)	Repulse	It was a disgusting movie. It really <u>turned</u> me <u>off</u> .
turn on	switch on the electricity	<u>Turn on</u> the CD player so we can dance.
use up	exhaust, use completely	The gang members <u>used up</u> all the money and went out to rob some more banks.
These phrasal verbs and their meanings are literal, and you should have no difficulty remembering them.		

Practice : Make another sentence using each of the words given above. You may need to use the dictionary to get the meanings.

Inseparable phrasal verbs always remain together. It makes no difference if a noun or pronoun is used.

- We set off for the beach. / We set off for it.
- They are looking after the children. / They are looking after them.

Verb	Meaning	Example
call on	ask to recite in class	The teacher <u>called on</u> students in the back row.
call on (2)	visit	The old minister continued to <u>call on</u> his sick parishioners.
get over	recover from sickness or disappointment	I <u>got over</u> the flu, but I don't know if I'll ever <u>get over</u> my broken heart.
go over	review	The students <u>went over</u> the material before the exam. They should have <u>gone over</u> it twice.
go through	use up; consume	They country <u>went through</u> most of its coal reserves in one year. Did he <u>go through</u> all his money already?
look after	take care of	My mother promised to <u>look after</u> my dog while I was gone.
look into	Investigate	The police will <u>look into</u> the possibilities of embezzlement.
run across	find by chance	I <u>ran across</u> my old roommate at the college reunion.
run into	Meet	Carlos <u>ran into</u> his English professor in the hallway.
take after	Resemble	My second son seems to <u>take after</u> his mother.
wait on	Serve	It seemed strange to see my old boss <u>wait on</u> tables.
The meaning of these phrasal verbs is not literal and you will find it helps if you make your own sentences right away and <i>go over</i> them often.		

Practice : Make another sentence using each of the words given above. You may need to use the dictionary to get the meanings.

Three-word Phrasal Verbs

Some verbs are followed by two prepositions (or adverbs). These phrasal verbs are **ALWAYS** inseparable.

- I'm looking forward to meeting John. OR I'm looking forward to meeting him.
- They didn't get on with their mother. OR They didn't get on with her.

Verb	Meaning	Example
break in on	interrupt (a conversation)	I was talking to my mother on the phone when the operator <u>broke in on</u> our call.
catch up with	keep abreast	After our month-long trip, it was time to <u>catch up with</u> the neighbours and the news around town.
check up on	examine, investigate	The boys promised to <u>check up on</u> the condition of the computer from time to time.
come up with	to contribute (suggestion, money)	After years of giving nothing, the old parishioner was able to <u>come up with</u> a thousand-dollar donation.
cut down on	curtail (expenses)	We tried to <u>cut down on</u> the money we were spending on entertainment.
drop out of	leave school	I hope none of my students <u>drop out of</u> school this semester.
get along with	have a good relationship with	I found it very hard to <u>get along with</u> my brother when we were young.
get away with	escape blame	Janik cheated on the exam and then tried to <u>get away with</u> it.
get rid of	eliminate	The citizens tried to <u>get rid of</u> their corrupt mayor in the recent election.
get through with	finish	When will you ever <u>get through with</u> that program?
keep up with	maintain pace with	It's hard to <u>keep up with</u> the Joneses when you lose your job!
look forward to	anticipate with pleasure	I always <u>look forward to</u> the beginning of a new semester.
look down on	despise	It's typical of narrow-minded citizens to <u>look down on</u> their geographical neighbours.
look in on	visit (somebody)	We were going to <u>look in on</u> my brother-in-law, but he wasn't home.
look out for	be careful, anticipate	Good instructors will <u>look out for</u> early signs of failure in their students.
look up to	respect	First-graders really <u>look up to</u> their teachers.
make sure of	verify	<u>Make sure of</u> the student's identity before you let him into the classroom.
put up with	tolerate	The teacher had to <u>put up with</u> a great deal of nonsense from the new students.
run out of	exhaust supply	The runners <u>ran out of</u> energy before the end of the race.
take care of	be responsible for	My eldest sister <u>took care of</u> us younger children after Mom died.
talk back to	answer impolitely	The star player <u>talked back to</u> the coach and was thrown off the team.
think back on	recall	I often <u>think back on</u> my childhood with great pleasure.
walk out on	abandon	Her husband <u>walked out on</u> her and their three children.

Phrasal Verbs which Don't Take Objects

Some phrasal verbs do not take objects. These phrasal verbs are **ALWAYS** inseparable.

- The thieves got away. The bus broke down on the way to work. She got up early.

Verb	Meaning	Example
Break down	stop functioning	That old Jeep had a tendency to <u>break down</u> just when I needed it the most.
catch on	become popular	Popular songs seem to <u>catch on</u> in Bangalore first and then spread around.
come back	return to a place	My father promised that we would never <u>come back</u> to this horrible place.
come in	enter	They tried to <u>come in</u> through the back door, but it was locked.
come to	regain consciousness	He was hit on the head very hard, but after several minutes, he started to <u>come to</u> again.
come over	to visit	The children promised to <u>come over</u> , but they never do.
drop by	visit without appointment	We used to just <u>drop by</u> , but they were never home, so we stopped doing that.
eat out	dine in a restaurant	When we visited Paris, we loved <u>eating out</u> in the sidewalk cafes.
get by	survive	Uncle Harish didn't have much money, but he always seemed to <u>get by</u> without borrowing money from relatives.
get up	arise	Grandmother tried to <u>get up</u> , but the couch was too low, and she couldn't make it on her own.
go back	return to a place	It's hard to imagine that we will ever <u>go back</u> to Pune.
go on	continue	He would finish one Dickens novel and then just <u>go on</u> to the next.
go on (2)	happen	The cops heard all the noise and stopped to see what was <u>going on</u> .
grow up	get older	Ramanuj <u>grew up</u> to be a lot like his father.
keep away	maintain distance	The judge warned the stalker to <u>keep away</u> from his victim's home.
keep on	continue with the same	He tried to <u>keep on singing</u> long after his voice was ruined.
pass out	lose consciousness,	He had drunk too much; he <u>passed out</u> on the sidewalk outside the bar.
show off	Show haughtily	Whenever he sat down at the piano, we knew he was going to <u>show off</u> .
show up	arrive	Day after day, Danesh <u>showed up</u> for class twenty minutes late.
wake up	arouse from sleep	I <u>woke up</u> when the rooster crowed.

Practice: Make a another sentence using each of the words given above. You may need to use the dictionary to get the meanings.

TIP!

If you are not sure whether a phrasal verb is separable or inseparable, **ALWAYS** use a noun or nouns phrase and **DO NOT** separate. In this manner, you will always be correct!