

38. FOCUS ON: the verb **keep** and adverbs and adverbials showing degrees of variability

Phrasal verbs with **keep**

Several phrasal verbs are based on the verb **keep**, and it is important to understand that the essential meaning of **keep** in these phrasal verbs is **no change**. As you study these verbs, remember that in each meaning of each verb something is not changing, something is continuing in the same direction or in the same manner, or something is staying in the same place or in the same condition.

Adverbs and adverbials showing degrees of variability

A variety of adverbs and adverbial groups of words that together function as adverbs are used to modify phrasal verbs that relate to something variable, such as distance, time, cost, speed, temperature, amount, or quantity.

Adverbs and adverbials allow the speaker to be more precise about what is being measured — to say whether it was a **little** or a /of or to be precise about exactly **how much**. But the verb must be something that is variable. It cannot be something either/or, such as **shut off**, for example (a TV is either on or off — it cannot be in between). Adverbs and adverbials are used to strengthen the meaning of the verb:

He fell asleep on the train and **went well beyond** his stop.

She **fell way behind** in her work when she was sick.

Keep far away from the fire.

to weaken the meaning of the verb:

I **went a bit over** my budget.

Keep slightly to the right on that road.

He fell a little behind.

The meeting may **run somewhat over.**

or to be exact:

We **planned two weeks ahead.**

Go three floors up.

Sometimes, in informal English, **way** is repeated for extra emphasis:

What Jim said **went way, way, way beyond** impolite — it was outrageous.

Infinitive				
	present tense	-ing form	past tense	past participle
keep at	keep at & keeps at	keeping at	kept at	kept at

1. keep at p.v. When you **keep at** it, you continue with an activity even though it may be difficult. When you say "**Keep at it**" to people, you encourage them to finish with an activity that is difficult.

I know this work is difficult, but you have to **keep at** it.

Keep at it; you're almost finished.

keep away

**keep away & keeps away
away**

keeping away

kept away

kept

1. keep away (from) p.v. When you **keep away** or **keep away** from people, you do not come close to them or associate with them. When you **keep away** or **keep away** from things, you do not touch them, come close to them, or use them. When you **keep away** or **keep away** from places, you do not come close to them or go to them.

Mark was very sick yesterday, so everyone **kept away** from him.

We're going to eat dinner in a few minutes, so **keep away** from those cookies.

That's a bad neighborhood, so **keep away** from it,

2. keep... away (from) p.v. When you **keep** people or things **away** or **keep** them **away** from something or someone else, you do not allow them to come close to or associate with someone or come close to or touch something.

That dog is dangerous, so **keep it away**.

Paul has an alcohol problem, so **keep him away** from the bar at the party tomorrow.

keep down

**keep down & keeps down
down**

keeping down

kept down

kept

1. keep ... down p.v. When you **keep** the cost, quantity, or amount of something **down**, you keep it a low level.

The company tried to **keep** its prices **down**.

They wanted a small wedding, but they have such large families that it was hard to **keep** the number of guests **down**.

2. keep... down p.v. When you **keep** the volume of noise, music, or conversation **down**, you keep it at a low level. When people are being noisy and you want them to be quieter, you tell them to **keep it down**.

Will you please **keep it down**; I'm trying to study.

You kids can watch TV, but **keep** the volume **down** — your mother is taking a nap.

Infinitive

	present tense	-ing form	past tense	past participle
keep from	keep from & keeps	keeping from	kept from	kept from

1. keep from p.v. When you **keep from** doing something, you do not do it even though it is hard not to.

I was so angry that I don't know how I **kept from** punching that guy in the nose.

The movie was so sad that I couldn't **keep from** crying.

2. keep... from p.v. When you **keep** people **from** doing something, you stop them from doing it.

Jim's girlfriend's parents don't like him, and they try to **keep him from** seeing her.

When I was young, my poor health **kept me from** doing a lot of things the other kids did.

keep off

keep off & keeps off	keeping off	kept off	kept off
<p>1. keep... off p.v. When you keep off something, you do not walk or stand on it. When you keep other people or things off something, you do not allow them to walk or stand on it.</p> <p>The sign says "Keep off the grass." You should keep your kids off the streets and in school.</p>			
<p>2. keep... off p.v. When you keep off drugs, cigarettes, or other addictive substances, you do not use them. When you keep people off drugs, cigarettes, or other addictive substances, you prevent them from using them.</p> <p>Since getting out of jail, Hank has been able to keep off drugs.</p> <p>Ned is a nice guy as long as you can keep him off booze.</p>			

keep on

keep on & keeps on	keeping on	kept on	kept on
<p>1. keep on p.v. When you keep on doing something, you continue doing it.</p> <p>I told her to be quiet, but she just kept right on talking.</p> <p>Don't stop — keep on going.</p>			
<p>2. keep... on p.v. When you keep people on at their place of employment, you continue to employ them.</p> <p>The company decided against laying all the workers off and will instead keep a few on to maintain equipment until business improves.</p> <p>Everyone on the hotel staff was fired after the hotel went out of business, except for two guys who were kept on to clean and paint the building.</p>			

Infinitive

	present tense	-ing form	past tense	past participle
keep to	keep to & keeps to	keeping to	kept to	kept to

1. **keep... to p.v.** When you **keep** information **to** yourself, you do not tell anyone.

This is a secret, so **keep it to** yourself.

I wish she would **keep** her racist comments **to** herself; I don't want to hear them.

2. **keep... to p.v.** When you **keep** something **to** a certain cost, quantity, or amount, you do not let the cost, quantity, or amount go higher than that level.

Here's my credit card, but **keep** your spending **to** a minimum — don't go crazy with it.

The room doesn't hold a great many people, so we have to **keep** the number of guests **to** 200.

3. **keep to p.v.** When you **keep to** the right or left, you continue moving to the right or left.

When you pass a big red barn on the highway, **keep to** the right; the exit is right after the barn.

Faster cars are supposed to **keep to** the left.

keep up

1. keep... up p.v. When you **keep** an activity **up**, you continue doing it.

Leopards can run extremely fast, but they can't **keep it up** longer than a minute or two.

I told you to stop doing that. If you **keep it up**, I'm going to get angry.

2. keep up (with) p.v. When you are in a group that is studying, working, and so on, and you are able to learn or work at the same rate as the others, you **keep up** or **keep up** with the group. **Fall behind** is the opposite of **keep up**.

Lydia missed several days of school last month, and now she's having a hard time **keeping up** with the rest of the class.

The assembly line was going so fast that no one could **keep up**.

3. keep up (with) p.v. When you **keep up** or **keep up** with people or things that are moving, you are able to move at the same rate. **Fall behind** is the opposite of **keep up**.

Bob walks so fast that it's hard to **keep up** with him.

The wounded soldiers couldn't **keep up** with the rest of the army.

4. keep up (with) p.v. When you can understand and respond to a situation that is changing, you are able to **keep up** with the situation.

Computer technology is changing so fast. How can anyone **keep up** with it?

Jane always has some new idea. I can't **keep up** with her.

5. keep... up p.v. When people or things **keep** you **up**, they prevent you from going to bed, or if you are in bed, they prevent you from falling asleep.

Ned just would not leave last night; he **kept me up** until 2:00 in the morning.

That noisy party across the alley **kept me up** all night.

EXERCISE 38a — Complete the sentences with phrasal verbs from this section. Be sure the phrasal verbs are in the correct tense.

1. The student's excuse for not doing his homework was so ridiculous that his teacher couldn't _____ laughing.
2. What I'm going to tell you is highly confidential, so _____ it _____ yourself.
3. The baby's crying _____ Judy _____ half the night.
4. Don't quit now — you're almost finished. _____ it.
5. The company increased its profits by _____ costs _____.
6. I've tried to quit smoking a hundred times, but I just can't _____ cigarettes longer than a day.
7. Slower traffic should _____ the right.
8. Now that I live in New York, I can't _____ with local news in my hometown.
9. Sally is really angry at your brother, so it would be a good idea to _____ him _____ from her.

10. My algebra class is too difficult for me. I can't _____.
11. You're going to have to walk faster than that if you want to _____ with us.
12. Please _____ your dog _____ our lawn.
13. If you don't _____ your exercise program, you're going to gain all the weight back.
14. Could you _____ the music _____? Your mother's trying to sleep.
15. Parents try to _____ their children _____ making mistakes, but sometimes it isn't easy.
16. If you _____ eating so much butter and so many eggs, you're going to have a heart attack.
17. The new owner said the company was losing too much money to _____ all the workers _____ and that some would have to be laid off.
18. Look at the prices on this menu! Let's try to _____ it _____ a hundred bucks, okay?
19. I don't want to talk to you ever again, so _____ from me!

EXERCISE 38b — Write answers to the questions using phrasal verbs from this section. Be sure the phrasal verbs are in the correct tense.

1. My father asked me to speak more quietly. What did my father ask me to do?
2. I told the travel agent that we have only \$4,000 to spend on our vacation, so she has to make sure the cost doesn't go over that. What did I ask the travel agent to do?
3. My geometry class is so boring that I can't stop myself from falling asleep. What can't I do in my geometry class?
4. My teacher told me that calculus is difficult but that I have to continue trying to understand it. What did my teacher tell me?
5. The political situation in Washington changes every day, and it's hard to understand what is happening. What is it hard to do?
6. Sarah and I were running. I quit after three miles, but she continued running. What did Sarah do?
7. You've got to remain at a great distance from this area because it is radioactive. What have you got to do about the radioactive area?
8. Heather thinks Mike isn't telling her everything. What does Heather think about Mike?
9. Janice got excellent grades in her first year of college. I hope she can continue to do well. What do I hope Janice can do?
10. I asked my husband not to let the children near my computer. What did I ask my husband?
11. The economist said it's important not to let inflation go higher. What did the economist say?
12. Bill hasn't used drugs for five years. What has Bill done?

13. My son is eighteen, so I can't stop him if he wants to join the Army. What can't I do to my son?
14. Sarah's having a little trouble in school. It's hard for her to stay at the same level as the other students. What is hard for Sarah?

EXERCISE 38c — Write eight original sentences using phrasal verbs from this section.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

EXERCISE 38d, Review — Complete the sentences with these phrasal verbs from previous sections. Be sure the phrasal verbs are in the correct tense. To check their meanings, review the section number given after each one.

back down, 36	come on, 37	goof around, 33	leave over, 37
brush off, 37	fall behind, 33	hang out, 37	run down, 36
calm down, 36	fall down, 36	know about, 33	sit down, 36
come about, 33	go down, 36	lay down, 36	talk to, 37

1. Raul is constantly criticizing me, but I usually just _____ him _____.
2. I can barely hear this radio. The batteries must be _____.
3. When the electricians went on strike, the entire construction project _____ schedule.
4. Jake's claim that he accidentally shot Tony six times didn't _____ well with the jury.
5. The dictator _____ after three aircraft carriers started sailing toward his country.

6. I need to check the furnace. The temperature got below sixty degrees last night, but the heat didn't _____.

7. A big, old tree _____ last night and smashed a hole in our roof.
8. _____ — there's nothing to get upset about.
9. Several major changes in society _____ as a result of the industrial revolution.
10. Are you going to do any work at all today or will you just _____?
11. Don't waste your time asking Erik; he doesn't _____ anything _____ it.
12. Timmy's mother _____ him _____ and talked to him about his bad grades.
13. How much money was _____ after you finished paying for everything?
14. You can _____ those papers _____ over there.
15. I don't have anything to do today. I'm just going to _____ here and relax.
16. I'm so mad at her. I'll never _____ her again!