

Understanding phrasal verbs

- Verbs are often followed by particles like *back, off, through, up*, etc (the word *particle* means *adverb* or *preposition*). Sometimes both verb and particle have their normal meaning. At other times there is a new meaning when they are put together. Compare:

Can you **bring up** the radio from downstairs? (normal meaning)

She has **brought up** two children on her own.

(new meaning = look after until adult)

The term 'phrasal verb' is used for the second case, where the verb + particle together has a special meaning. Phrasal verbs are common in informal English.

- Often one phrasal verb can have several different meanings and the correct one is only clear from the context.
- There are four types of phrasal verbs. These are covered in Grammar 26 and 27.
 - Grammar 26:
 - phrasal verbs with two particles.
 - phrasal verbs with one particle; there must be an object; the particle is inseparable.
 - Grammar 27:
 - phrasal verbs with one particle; there must be an object; the particle can be separated from the verb.
 - phrasal verbs with one particle; there is no object.

Verbs with two particles

A selection of phrasal verbs is listed here with examples. Others, and other meanings of those listed here, are included in the Practice section. Most of the verbs in the list need an object, and the object can only come at the end (so the verbs are inseparable).

I'm looking forward to my holidays.

But some verbs are marked with an asterisk *. With these verbs there is another form: there is no object, and the final particle is not used.

I've decided to cut down on smoking. I've decided to cut down.

Cut down on*

I've decided to cut down on smoking. (reduce the amount of)

Catch up with*

They are too far ahead for us to catch up with them. (reach the same place as)

Come up against

I'm afraid we've come up against a problem we can't solve. (meet, find)

Come up with

Have you come up with an answer yet? (think of)

Drop in on*

*I **dropped in on** Bill and Sheila on my way home.* (visit for a short time)

Face up to

*You must **face up to** reality!* (accept, deal with)

Feel up to

*You must **feel up to** going to work.* (have the strength and energy to do)

Get away with

*Jack stole the money and **got away with** it.* (do something bad and not be punished)

Get along/on with*

*Do you **get along/on with** your new boss?* (have good relations with)

Get on with

*Stop talking and **get on with** your work!* (continue with)

Get out of

*I managed to **get out of** working late.* (avoid a responsibility)

Get round to

*I haven't **got round to** decorating yet.* (find time to do)

Get up to

*What has young Bill been **getting up to**?* (do something bad)

Go in for

*Do you **go in for** sailing?* (have as a hobby)

Grow out of

*Julie has **grown out of** playing with dolls.* (become too old for)

Keep up with*

*You're going too fast! I can't **keep up with** you!* (stay in the same place as)

Look down on

*Our neighbours **look down on** anyone without a car.* (feel superior to)

Look up to

*I really **look up to** my teacher.* (respect)

Look forward to

*We are **looking forward to** our holiday.* (think we will enjoy)

Make up for

*This wonderful dinner **made up for** the bad service.* (compensate for)

Put up with

*I can't **put up with** these screaming children!* (accept without complaining)

Run out of*

*Oh dear, we've **run out of** petrol!* (have no more of)

Stand up for

*You must learn to **stand up for** yourself!* (defend)

Verbs with one particle: transitive and inseparable

These phrasal verbs take an object, and the object must come after the particle. It cannot go between the verb and the particle.

*I love coffee. I can't **do without it** in the morning!* (NOT ~~do it without~~)

FIRST CERTIFICATE LANGUAGE PRACTICE

Ask after

Jim asked after you yesterday. (ask for news of)

Call for

I'll call for you at six. (come to your house and collect you)

Call on

I called on some friends in Plymouth. (visit for a short time)

Come across

Joe came across this old painting in the attic. (find by chance)

Come into

Sue came into a large sum of money. (inherit)

Count on

I'm counting on you to help me. (depend on)

Deal with

How can we deal with the traffic problem? (take action to solve a problem)

Do without

We'll have to do without a holiday this year. (manage without having)

Get at

What are you getting at? (suggest)

Get over

Barry has got over his illness now. (recover from)

Go over

Let's go over our plan once more. (discuss the details)

Join in

Try to join in the lesson as much as you can. (take part in, contribute to)

Live on

They live on the money her father gives them. (have as income)

Look into

The government is looking into the problem. (investigate)

Look round

Let's look round the town today. (look at everything)

Make for

Where are you making for exactly? (go in the direction of)

Pick on

My teacher is always picking on me. (choose a person to punish)

Run into

I ran into Steve in the supermarket yesterday. (meet by chance)

See about

We'll have to see about getting you an office. (make arrangements)

See to

Can you see to the dog's food? (attend to, take care of)

Stand for

I won't stand for such rudeness! (tolerate)

Andrew is standing for parliament. (be a candidate for)

Take after

Helen takes after her mother. (have the same characteristics as)

Practice

1 Rewrite each sentence so that it contains the phrasal verb in brackets. You may have to change the form.

a) Sorry, but I haven't found time to fix your bike yet. (get round to)

Sorry, but I haven't got round to fixing your bike yet.

b) Oh bother, we don't have any milk left. (run out of)

c) It took me a long time to recover from my illness. (get over)

d) Julie must be too old to bite her nails. (grow out of)

e) I think we've found an answer to the problem. (come up with)

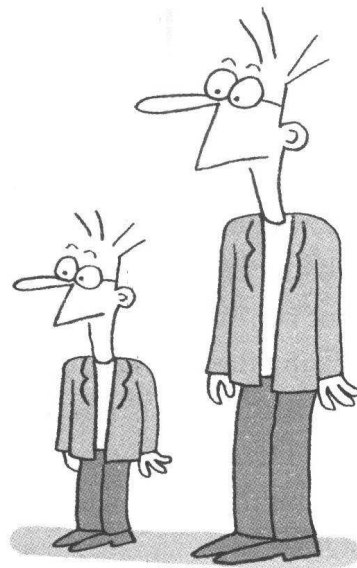
f) I don't think I'm well enough to play football today. (feel up to)

g) Ann is someone I really respect. (look up to)

h) I must arrange to have the kitchen painted. (see about)

i) Please help me. I'm relying on you. (count on)

j) Peter is just like his father! (take after)



2 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between two and five words, including the word given.

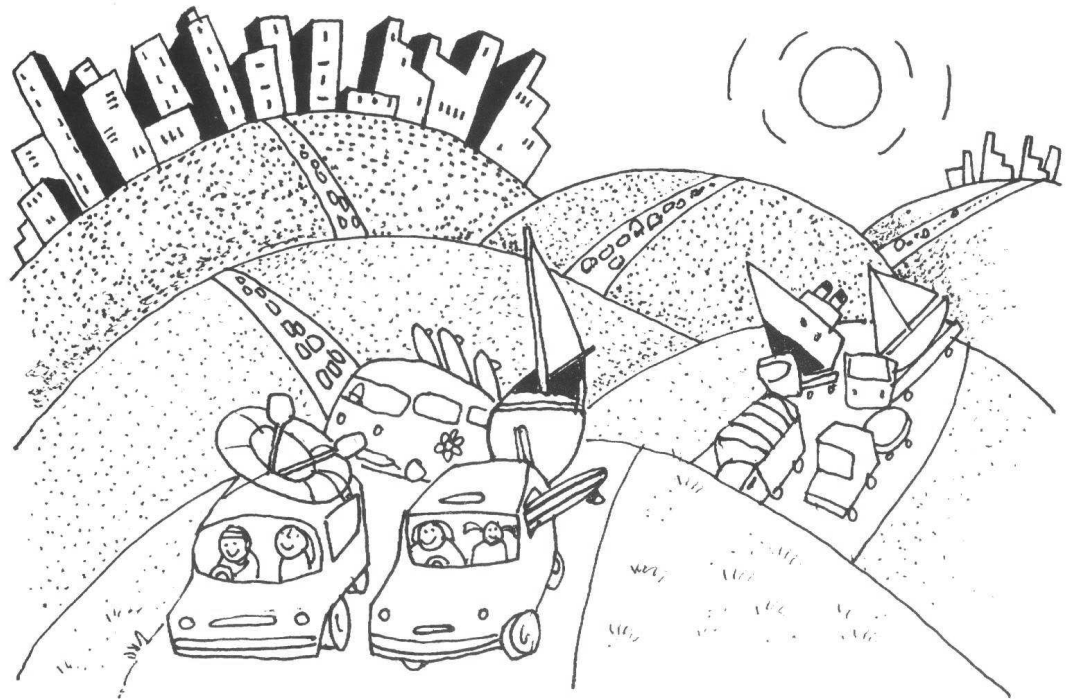
- a) Quite by chance, Brenda met Philip at the station.
ran
 Brenda *ran into Philip* at the station.
- b) You'll just have to learn to accept the facts!
face
 You'll just the facts.
- c) How can you bear so much traffic noise?
put
 How can you traffic noise?
- d) Charles cheated in his exams, and didn't get caught.
got
 Charles cheated in his exams, and it.
- e) I visited a few friends while I was in Manchester.
called
 I while I was in Manchester.
- f) What are you trying to say?
getting
 What at?
- g) I must go to the dentist, and get my teeth taken care of.
seen
 I must go to the dentist to.

3 Complete each sentence with one of the words from the box.

across against ~~for~~ in into on round to up with

- a) I'll send someone to call *for* the parcel on Thursday.
- b) You'll have to work hard to keep with the rest of the class.
- c) Jean didn't expect to come up such difficulties.
- d) It's not fair. You're always picking me.
- e) Terry sang the first verse and then everyone joined
- f) I came one of your novels in a second-hand bookshop.
- g) I'm not interested in buying anything. I'm just looking
- h) Don't you think the manager should deal this problem?
- i) George came a lot of money when his uncle died.
- j) You look very guilty! What have you been getting up ?

4 Complete each sentence with the most suitable word or phrase.



- a) The weather was fine, and everyone was^B..... the coast.
 A) going in for B) making for C) joining in D) seeing about
- b) How much money do you manage to ?
 A) come into B) go in for C) deal with D) live on
- c) There isn't any sugar, I'm afraid. You'll have to
 A) run out B) put up with C) do without D) make for
- d) I was passing their house, so I Claire and Michael.
 A) dropped in on B) came up with C) got on with D) ran into
- e) I don't really winter sports very much.
 A) deal with B) face up to C) go in for D) get round to
- f) Losing my job was a great shock, but I think I'm it.
 A) seeing to B) putting up with C) standing for D) getting over
- g) Sheila's gone to having a new phone installed.
 A) see about B) deal with C) get round to D) ask after
- h) I've had to a lot of insulting behaviour from you!
 A) look down on B) put up with C) stand up for D) get on with
- i) The hotel was terrible, but the wonderful beach our disappointment.
 A) got over B) faced up to C) saw to D) made up for
- j) Jack has decided to the time he spends watching television.
 A) run out of B) see to C) cut down on D) come up with

5 Choose the most suitable ending for each sentence. Note that some of the phrasal verbs have a different meaning to the one given in the Explanations section.

- a) I can't put up with^B.....
 A) you if you should come to London. B) people who smoke all the time.
 C) the plates onto the top shelf.
- b) The chairperson of the committee then called on Tony
 A) but his line was engaged. B) to make a speech in reply.
 C) so that his voice could be heard above the crowd.
- c) Mary has been chosen to stand for
 A) the bad behaviour of her colleagues. B) herself in future.
 C) Parliament in the next election.
- d) After my holidays it takes me a few days to catch up with
 A) the people running in front of me. B) all the news I've missed.
 C) a really bad cold.
- e) Small children soon grow out of
 A) their shoes. B) all the good food they eat.
 C) the habits they have when they get older.
- f) I've decided to go in for
 A) eating fruit for breakfast. B) a few days rest in the country.
 C) a photography competition in *Photographer's Weekly*.
- g) I'm afraid that our plans to open a new factory have run into
 A) some old friends. B) a tree by the side of the road.
 C) a few unexpected difficulties.
- h) We find that this type of tyre makes for
 A) safer driving in wet weather. B) the first place it can stop.
 C) all smaller types of cars.
- i) I saw my old friend John last week. I couldn't get over
 A) my cold before I saw him, though. B) near enough to talk to him though.
 C) how young he looked.
- j) Here people are only worried about keeping up with
 A) others who are faster. B) late-night television programmes.
 C) the Joneses.

Key points

- 1 Check any new phrasal verb in a dictionary, to see how it is used.
- 2 Remember that many phrasal verbs have more than one meaning.
- 3 Phrasal verbs tend to be more common in spoken language and informal written language.

→ SEE ALSO

Grammar 30: Consolidation 6