

Phrasal verbs

Adapted from "First Certificate Language Practice" by Michael Vince

Explanations

Understanding • Verbs are often followed by particles like *back, off, through, up*, etc. **phrasal verbs** *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. • Phrasal verbs with two particles.
- Phrasal verbs with one particle; there must be an object; the particle is inseparable.
- 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*)

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 offer* (make arrangements)

Stand for

I won't stand for such rudeness! (tolerate)
Andrew is standing for parliament. (be a candidate for)

See to

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

Take after

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